

## The Great Apostasy



David Wilkerson May 7, 1986

Before the antichrist is revealed, there will be a *mystery of lawlessness already at work*. The one who is coming will appear after a furious activity of apostasy. Satan and all the powers of darkness will be setting the stage — destroying the faith of many. Because sin will be more rampant, the love of many of God's people will grow very cold. There will be shipwrecked believers on all sides.

God's greatest concern is not what Christians are falling into — but what they are falling away from! Multitudes of Christians — including pastors, deacons, ministry people of all kinds are losing their faith and confidence in the power of Jesus' name! They are turning away from Christ as the answer to everything. They are falling away from a childlike faith in Him alone as the solution to all life's problems. There is a wholesale turning toward methods, toward psychology, toward human expertise, toward the philosophies and doctrines of men.

All the prophet's foresaw this last great apostasy. Isaiah was given a message from God that deals specifically with our day. He foretold what is happening right now; he warned about a last-day people who would "go back to Egypt" for help — and who would reject the Lord as their source of supply.

God made sure there would be no mistaking who this prophecy was directed to. He told Isaiah: "Now go, write it before them on a tablet, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come forever and ever" (Isaiah 30:8). The literal translation is, "That it may be for future generations, for the latter days." The 30th chapter of Isaiah is God's message to this latter day church. How very accurate and true it is!

### I. The message begins with a revelation of God's grief over the cause of the apostasy!

"Woe to the rebellious children, declares the Lord, who execute a plan, but not Mine, and make an alliance, but not of My Spirit; in order to add sin to sin; who proceed down to Egypt, without consulting Me, to take refuge in the safety of Pharaoh, and to seek shelter in the shadow of Egypt!" (Isaiah 30:1,2).

Why does God call them rebellious children? Because they have now committed the ultimate sin, causing Him the utmost grief! Here is introduced a sin worse than adultery — worse than fornication, or stealing, or lying, or hating one's brother. It is the ultimate *sin of rebellion and apostasy!* God calls it a *compounded sin* — adding sin upon sin!

It is a *slap in God's face* — the consummate, ultimate, most brazen sin possible for a child of God to commit. *It is: proceeding down to Egypt rather than consulting the Lord!* This was directed to the leaders of Israel, under Hezekiah — but also to the church of these latter days.

Drug abuse, alcoholism, adultery, gambling, homosexuality, fornication, pornography — all these evil deeds are sins against the flesh, against society, and against the laws and commandments of God. But *this sin* is against the Lord Himself! it is a personal indignity against a Holy God!

Keep in mind — this is our grieved Lord who is speaking:

"You now make your plans without consulting Me!"

"You are now in league with those who lean on the arm of flesh, and not the Spirit!"

"You are going back to the very thing I delivered you from — back to seeking help from what once caused you all your pain and bondage."

"Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, who rely on horses, and trust in chariots because they are many, and in horsemen because they are very strong, but they do not look to the Holy One of Israel, nor seek the Lord!" (Isaiah 31:1).

Remember this is all about *how to be delivered from the enemy!* It has to do with deliverance! How do we deliver God's people from the raging enemies! The Assyrians are at the gate, threatening destruction. Assyria means *successful enemy*. This represents the on-rushing tide of evil that seems to be so successful today! How are God's leaders — His shepherds — His elders — going to face this formidable enemy at the gate? He has swept away everything before him; it seems as if he is unstoppable.

Israel Panicked! They got their eyes on the enemy — they did not turn to the Lord with full confidence and trust! They turned to the arm of the flesh. They sent ambassadors to Egypt, to the government leaders and generals in Zoan and Hanes. They took matters in their own hands.

Isaiah paints a vivid picture of the *emptiness* and anguish ahead of them. In going down to Egypt they were headed "through a land of distress and anguish, where dwells the lion, viper and serpent." They would find nothing but emptiness, vanity. "Therefore, I have called her *Rahab* who has been exterminated" (Isaiah 30:7).

Rahab here in Hebrew is, "*I have called Egypt, Greatmouth that sits still.*" Others render it, "*The Bragging people who are idlers.*" [Keil, Delitzsch]

The picture is terrible: Here are God's people, going backwards through the same desert they had been delivered from, returning for help to a boastful, bragging world system that could not move! They were willing to once again endure emptiness, pain, anguish — in a wilderness, looking to the world for help.

Look at the church today; look at its armies of trained experts; look at its shepherds and workers. Where are most of them headed? Back to the wilderness, back to *Great-Mouth Egypt!* Turning away from the *Man of Galilee*; away from the reproach of the Cross; away from the power of prayer; away from faith; away from the Word of God. "*For this is a rebellious people who refuse to listen to the instructions of the Lord*" (Isaiah 30:9).

Moses prophesied this very thing would happen *in the latter days!* He foretold of the *great falling away* of God's people. "Take this book of the law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may remain there as a witness against you. For I know your rebellion and your stubbornness; behold, while I am still alive with you today, you have been rebellious against the Lord; how much more, then, after my death? Assemble to me all the elders of your tribes and your officers, that I may speak these words in their hearing and call the heavens and the earth to witness against them. For I know that after my death you will act corruptly and turn from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days, for you will do that which is evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking Him to anger with the work of your hands" (Deuteronomy 31:26-29).

He warned, "You will turn away — evil will befall you in the latter days." Moses prophesied: "When I bring them into the land flowing with milk and honey, which I swore to their fathers, and they have eaten and are satisfied and become prosperous, then they will turn to other gods and serve them, and *spurn Me* and break my covenant" (Deuteronomy 31:20).

Let's tie it down and get to the point the prophets are making. What does it mean to *spurn* the Lord — to go down to Egypt? How does that interpret in these latter days? God is saying, "When you were first called — when I touched you and delivered you from the enemy, you wanted only Me! You prayed about everything! You had a childlike trust and faith in Me, that I would guide you, that I would miraculously supply all your needs. I was your joy — I alone was your satisfaction. You were not burned out; you had a yearning heart after Me!

"Now you have all your experts, your how-to books. You have modern methods, you don't need Me to supply your need now. You have experts to tell you how to raise money, how to write letters, how to make appeals. You have

seminars, training sessions, more experts, more advice — much of which incorporates the teachings of this world. You are learning how to do things better, but getting to know Me less! I am not the center of it all now, you do it in My name, busily engaged, hard working — but it leaves you weary, burned out, empty, because you are on the *road to Egypt*. You are headed in the wrong direction.

Our churches no longer have the power of God to attract the people. They go down to Egypt, borrow its music, its dancing, it's entertainment, hoping for a crowd! No passion for souls — *just crowds!* Church growth at any cost! Look at the average church bulletin; it looks like a theater calendar. The church wants to ride the swift horses of Egypt! *It is a stench in God's nostrils.*

Even the para-church ministries are *falling away, apostatizing!* Workers are parked in front of the TV idol. Many are reading psychology books. While some still have a passion for souls, even that often becomes worldly hype and human energy!

## II. There will follow a rejection of the message of holiness, judgment and repentance!

*"Who say to the seers, You must not see visions! and to the prophets, You must not prophesy to us what is right. Speak to us pleasant words, prophesying illusions" (Isaiah 30:10).*

An apostate church wants nothing to do with the visions or prophecies of men of righteousness. They want no message that disturbs, no upsetting of their successful world. They refuse any kind of correction. Everything is excused under the banner of love. They clamor for entertainment! They flock by the thousands to concerts, plays, social gatherings. They ridicule prophets. They mock what they call the doomsday preachers! They live with illusions. They don't want a preacher or evangelist to tell them the hard truth — to bring forth the sword of the Lord. They say, "Preach to us smooth things! Bless us! Make us happy! Make us feel good!"

They especially reject the message of holiness and separation. They say, "Get out of the way, turn aside from the paths.... Let us hear no more about the *Holy One* of Israel" (Isaiah 30:11).

I never thought I'd live to see the day that Assembly of God pastors would write me reproachful letters, telling me I am bringing confusion and gloom to the body of Christ. For what? *Preaching holiness, judgment and repentance?*

Jeremiah was sent to prophesy against the apostate Jews, the Lord's own people. God warned him, "They will fight you...the dread of the Lord is no longer in them...they prefer to drink from cisterns now, rather than living water" (Jeremiah 1,2,3).

Why do people embrace the prosperity message and reject correction and calls to repentance and holiness? It is because of their lifestyles. Prosperity preaching fits beautifully into their successful lifestyles. They flock to those teachers, because they want to feel comfortable in their world of materialism. They are in no mood to give up anything, or to sacrifice, or to hear of crosses and losses. They are into buying, acquiring, enjoying, climbing. They refuse to heed the prophetic warnings that the party will soon be over.

An apostate church simply endures the prophetic voice. They pass it by with a condescending smile. And that is worse than out-right rejection. "And they come to you as people come, and sit before you as My people, and hear your words, but they do not do them, for they do the lustful desires expressed by their mouth, and their heart goes after their gain. And behold, you are to them like a sensual song by one who has a beautiful voice and plays well on an instrument: for they hear your words, but they do not practice them" (Ezekiel 33:31,32).

To many Christians, even those sincere, who call themselves "His people," the call to rid their home of the TV idol, to shut down rock and roll and music of the devils, to get serious about total surrender, is all a novel message. It is a little on the entertaining side to them — they love to hear it — to "amen" it. But it does not affect them. They continue to follow the lusts of their hearts. You see, they are liberated, not under Law or legalism and refuse to permit the Holy Spirit to probe their inner man about its seeping corruption in their lives and homes.

According to the prophecy of Isaiah, *the apostate church of the last days will totally reject the call to repentance!* "For thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, *in repentance and rest you shall be saved, in quietness and truth is your strength. But you were not willing...and you said, no!*" (Isaiah 30:15,16).

God's message to the church now is this: *"Your one last hope, your only strength left, is to return to Me with all your heart; repent — trust Me only! Turn aside from Egypt, the world!"*

Tell that to the multi-million-dollar TV ministries! Tell that to the busy, prosperous pastors! Tell that to the money-mad crowds! Tell them that their *only salvation now is in repentance and holiness!* They don't even have the time to consider the question, let alone answer it! Isaiah says they will reject the message of repentance; reject the thought of quietness, rest and simple *trust* — they are too busy racing about on swift horses, fleeing — chasing their own dreams.

### **Isaiah predicts a sudden collapse of those individuals and ministries who reject the message of repentance.**

*"Therefore thus says the Holy One of Israel, Since you have rejected this Word, and have put trust in oppression and guile, and have relied on them, therefore this iniquity will be to you like a breach about to fall, a bulge in a high wall, whose collapse comes suddenly in an instant. And whose collapse is like the smashing of a potter's jar; so ruthlessly shattered" (Isaiah 30:12-14).*

There is coming a sudden, overnight, *ruthless shattering* — a collapse of ministries, churches, lifestyles — of those who are at ease in Zion! I have seen what Isaiah saw! There is coming, very soon, an economic calamity, so sudden, so unexpected — *the money flow will stop!* TV ministries will go bankrupt one after another. Many churches which are laden with debt will fall into bankruptcy.

Those who preach prosperity exclusively will become the most hated preachers in the land. Already we receive mail from those who were in that camp, but now in deep financial trouble — and the hurting ones are turning on their teacher, crying, "You deceived me! Why doesn't your stuff work now?" The teachers themselves will be in terror, beholding the collapse — overnight!

Believe me, it is all about to be shattered! Is Isaiah lying? Hear him: "Because you rejected this word of holiness, repentance and prophetic warnings, your high wall will develop a bulge; it will fall suddenly — it will all be over and done in a moment!"

Who can believe it? Today, millions of dollars flow freely! They build; they buy; they sell; they go about their dreams as if it will never end! But the day is just ahead — shortly, an awesome collapse is coming! So ruthless! So shattering! So suddenly! Who would have believed the frightful collapse of the oil market? Who would have believed that our shuttle would explode?

Thousands of *apostate shepherds* and their helpless flocks will tremble in shame and terror! "One thousand will flee at the threat of one man, you shall flee at the threat of five; until you are left as a flag on a mountain top, and as a signal on a hill" (Isaiah 30:17).

This means that fear will overcome them. They will be chased about to and fro, no hiding place, no rest, no quiet confidence, no inner strength — terrorized! They will become just a shadow of what once was!

The kingdom of self, of pride, of ambition, is coming down! The warnings of Isaiah will not be heeded — my warnings will be scoffed at. But they have been warned! When it come, *and it will*, what good will their message then be? Who will listen? Their dreams and illusions will be swept away! Their stages of entertainment decimated! Even the ungodly will say, "How could it be? Why has God done this to them?"

These warnings will not trouble those Christians who are shut in with God. The warnings of Jesus were stronger than the warnings just read — yet to the trusting ones He said, "Fear not." Read on saints — there is a glorious side to it all!

### **III. Out of the apostate church will arise a holy, repentant people who will yearn after the Lord!**

How our Lord yearns to have a people here who long for Him only! He grieves over the apostate thing, but His compassion will bring forth a people who return, who repent — who want only Him! "Therefore the Lord longs to be

gracious to you. And therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you. For the Lord is a God of justice; How blessed are all those who long for Him" (Isaiah 30:18).

Isaiah was addressing now a people of the future! He was speaking to a people who would make up the spiritual Zion — Jerusalem, which can never fall or collapse. It is a holy people whose main characteristic is *their yearning hearts after God!*

What was the mark of the apostate people? They did not yearn for the Lord, but longed after Egypt, the world, the flesh, the earthly. This is the sad lack of the church today! There is so little of this deep longing for Christ. So little of being shut in with Him, desiring Him as the fullness of life. We have a generation who will work for Him, we will witness, feed the poor, help the homeless, and minister to human need. But so few spend their days *yearning* for Him. God said, "My people have forgotten Me days without number" (Jeremiah 2:32).

While all around there will be collapse and weeping — this people will not weep! God is going to hear their cry and answer their prayer! "O people in Zion, inhabitant in Jerusalem, you will weep no longer. He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry; when He hears it, He will answer you" (Isaiah 30:19).

There will be privations! There will be oppression from Satan, from the world, from circumstances, but God will be manifest among this people. The presence of the Lord will be precious to them. "Although the Lord has given you bread of privation and water of oppression, He, your Teacher will no longer hide Himself, but your eyes will behold your Teacher" (Isaiah 30:20).

There will come forth a pure, clear and holy word. God will supply this people with true revelation. They will see what no others have seen! They will be led step by step by the Lord! There will be no famine of the true Word then, no more need for sermon tapes or far off seminars. The Lord already has in place an array of holiness and repentance preachers, awaiting the hour Christians will be ready to listen. No longer will they be maligned and ostracized — they will stand in the gap and proclaim the holy and pure word of the Lord to a trembling nation. "And your ears will hear a word behind you, This is the way, walk in it, whenever you turn to the right or to the left" (Isaiah 30:21).

This people will tear down all their idols! They will so yearn after their Lord, all the idols must go! "And you will defile your graven images, overlaid with silver, and your molten images plated with gold. You will scatter them as an impure thing; and say to them, Be gone" (Isaiah 30:22).

They will enjoy their greatest ministry when all around is fear, failure and shattering collapses. "Then He will give you rain for the seed which you will sow in the ground, and bread from the yield of the ground, and it will be rich and plenteous; on that day your livestock will graze in a roomy pasture" (Isaiah 30:23).

Praise God! This *yearning remnant* will have a glorious harvest in the day of ruin and calamity! They will not be running and hiding! They heard the sound of the trumpet and prepared. They hid themselves in Christ, the cleft of the rock.

For the past few years, and now in greater intensity, God has and is preparing a people He will call upon in the day of slaughter! They will not be shaken when all else is shaken by God. They will have that quiet rest and strength; confidence in Him!

They will not *burn out!* They will not be discouraged or cast down! There will be no confusion in them! They will know God has prepared them for this hour. They will be drinking from divine springs of water! "And on every lofty mountain and on every high hill there will be streams running with water on the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall" (Isaiah 30:25).

Do you believe that? In the day God tears down all the strongholds which men and the apostate church trusted in, when the great slaughter of man-centered ministries begins, they will be quietly drinking from streams of supernatural water!

Best of all, these bruised but trusting, yearning saints will come into the greatest, brightest revelation of Jesus Christ ever given to mankind. "And the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be seven times brighter, like the light of seven days, on the day the Lord binds up the fracture of His people and heals the bruise He has inflicted" (Isaiah 30:26).

Each remaining day before Christ returns — this repentant, trusting, yearning people will behold Him with ever-increasing light! This body will enjoy a revelation of Jesus Christ seven times more intense than all past revelations. We will meet Him, as His bride, clothed in His brightness.

If this message frightens or troubles you — better search your heart! This is not a message of doom or gloom to overcomers. Those who are trusting the Lord fully will rejoice — for our day of redemption draws near!

I am one of the most excited preachers in the world! I can hardly contain my joy — because God is about to bring down, and shake apart, all that is of the world and the flesh! *Saints — rejoice with me!*

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