

The Assembly of Eloah

This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and the one you have sent -- Jesus Christ. Jn. 17:3

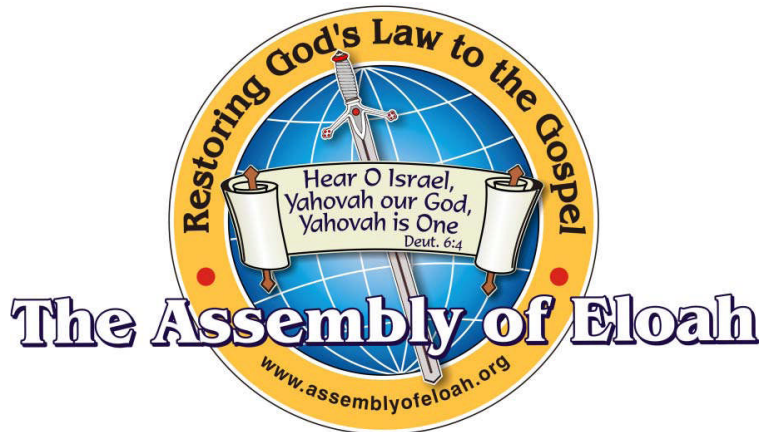
Apostasy

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There is a lot of talk in the “Christian” churches today about apostasy. The purpose of this study is to determine exactly what apostasy is and from where it arises.



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Apostasy

We're going to talk today about the subject of apostasy. What is it and where does it come from?

Webster's dictionary defines apostasy as:

- 1: renunciation of a religious faith
 - 2: abandonment of a previous loyalty
- defection**

Apostasy is simply abandonment of true religion. The word Apostasy only appears twice in the English Standard Version of The Bible. Depending on the translation you use you may not find it at all. It is translated from SHD04878, **mesh-oo-baw'** and it is derived from SHD07725; to turn away. It is defined as *apostasy*: - backsliding, turning away.

In the KJV **meshoobaw'** is translated adulteries. In the eyes of God apostasy is nothing more than adultery. That is, spiritual adultery.

In fact, the word adultery is SHD05003, **na'aph**, and it means: to commit adultery; figuratively to apostatize: - adulterer (-ess), commit (-ing) adultery, woman that breaketh wedlock.

Israel committed adultery when they became apostate.

Jer 5:7 "How can I pardon you? Your children have forsaken me and have sworn by those who are no gods. When I fed them to the full, they committed adultery and trooped to the houses of whores.

Apostasy and idolatry are close family relatives. They basically amount to the same thing. One who commits idolatry or

idol worship has committed adultery as well.

There are strong warnings against adultery. Only adultery is a sin against one's own body.

Pro 6:32-33 He who commits adultery lacks sense; he who does it destroys himself. (33) He will get wounds and dishonor, and his disgrace will not be wiped away.

1Cor 6:18 Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.

As we will see further in this study it had great ramifications for the Christian church.

Obedience

God requires obedience of His people. The adherents of Christianity are required to know what it is they are to obey.

Solomon said:

Ecc 12:11-14 The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings; they are given by one Shepherd. (12) My son, beware of anything beyond these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh. (13) The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. (14) For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil. (English Standard Version throughout except where noted)

We are duty-bound to obey the One True God. This is the purpose of humanity. We are to build godly character and this happens only through our obedience to Him and His word.

The One True God delivered Israel from bondage in Egypt. They had suffered for 430 years until the Father heard their cries and delivered them.

Exo 3:8 and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

The Passover/Unleavened Bread was instituted as a reminder of that deliverance.

Exo 13:3-10 Then Moses said to the people, "Remember this day in which you came out from Egypt, out of the house of slavery, for by a strong hand the LORD brought you out from this place. No leavened bread shall be eaten. (4) Today, in the month of Abib, you are going out. (5) And when the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which he swore to your fathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, you shall keep this service in this month. (6) Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a feast to the LORD. (7) Unleavened bread shall be eaten for seven days; no leavened bread shall be seen with you, and no leaven shall be seen with you in all your territory. (8) You shall tell your son on that day, 'It is because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt.' (9) And it shall be to you as a sign on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the law of the LORD may be in your mouth. For with a strong hand the LORD has brought you out of Egypt. (10) You shall therefore keep this statute at its appointed time from year to year.

The law of God was meant to be prominent in the lives of the children of Israel.

Deut 11:18-28 "You shall therefore lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and you shall bind them as a sign on

your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. (19) You shall teach them to your children, talking of them when you are sitting in your house, and when you are walking by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. (20) You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, (21) that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers to give them, as long as the heavens are above the earth. (22) For if you will be careful to do all this commandment that I command you to do, loving the LORD your God, walking in all his ways, and holding fast to him, (23) then the LORD will drive out all these nations before you, and you will dispossess nations greater and mightier than yourselves. (24) Every place on which the sole of your foot treads shall be yours. Your territory shall be from the wilderness to the Lebanon and from the River, the river Euphrates, to the western sea. (25) No one shall be able to stand against you. The LORD your God will lay the fear of you and the dread of you on all the land that you shall tread, as he promised you. (26) "See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: (27) the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you today, (28) and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside from the way that I am commanding you today, to go after other gods that you have not known.

It was required for a king of Israel to write the entire law of God in his own handwriting.

Deut 17:14-20 "When you come to the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and you possess it and dwell in it and then say, 'I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are around me,' (15) you may indeed set a king over you whom the LORD your God will choose. One from among your brothers you shall set as king over you. You may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother. (16) Only he must not acquire many horses for himself or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to acquire many horses, since

the LORD has said to you, 'You shall never return that way again.' (17) And he shall not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away, nor shall he acquire for himself excessive silver and gold. (18) "And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law, approved by the Levitical priests. (19) And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them, (20) that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left, so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children, in Israel.

It seems obvious even to the most casual observer that God intended for Israel to keep His law. Why did He require kings to write the law in their own hands? This wasn't required of anyone else. It is because apostasy starts in the leadership!

Israel did not obey God even after all the miracles He performed through Moses. God likened Israel's apostasy to whoredom.

Jer 2:19-22 Your evil will chastise you, and your apostasy will reprove you. Know and see that it is evil and bitter for you to forsake the LORD your God; the fear of me is not in you, declares the Lord GOD of hosts. (20) "For long ago I broke your yoke and burst your bonds; but you said, 'I will not serve.' Yes, on every high hill and under every green tree you bowed down like a whore. (21) Yet I planted you a choice vine, wholly of pure seed. How then have you turned degenerate and become a wild vine? (22) Though you wash yourself with lye and use much soap, the stain of your guilt is still before me, declares the Lord GOD.

As we saw above there is a definite link between apostasy, adultery and idolatry.

There are severe consequences for the apostate as well. Let's look at a few examples.

King Saul

The first example we'll look at is King Saul. Here was a man that was chosen by God to be the king that Israel so desperately wanted.

1Sa 9:2 And he had a son whose name was Saul, a handsome young man. There was not a man among the people of Israel more handsome than he. From his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people.

By all rights Saul had a reason to be proud and full of himself. Yet he was humble.

1Sa 9:21 KJV And Saul answered and said, Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? wherefore then speakest thou so to me?

Saul hid himself when Samuel was looking for the man who would be king over Israel.

1Sa 10:21-24 KJV When he had caused the tribe of Benjamin to come near by their families, the family of Matri was taken, and Saul the son of Kish was taken: and when they sought him, he could not be found. (22) Therefore they enquired of the LORD further, if the man should yet come thither. And the LORD answered, Behold, he hath hid himself among the stuff. (23) And they ran and fetched him thence: and when he stood among the people, he was higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward. (24) And Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom the LORD hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people? And all the people shouted, and said, God save the king.

Saul started out humble and obedient to God. However, it wasn't long before he

forgot where his power originated. He disregarded the will of God and did as he willed.

1Sam 13:5-14 And the Philistines mustered to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots and six thousand horsemen and troops like the sand on the seashore in multitude. They came up and encamped in Michmash, to the east of Beth-aven. (6) When the men of Israel saw that they were in trouble (for the people were hard pressed), the people hid themselves in caves and in holes and in rocks and in tombs and in cisterns, (7) and some Hebrews crossed the fords of the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. Saul was still at Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling. (8) He waited seven days, the time appointed by Samuel. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and the people were scattering from him. (9) So Saul said, "Bring the burnt offering here to me, and the peace offerings." And he offered the burnt offering. (10) As soon as he had finished offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came. And Saul went out to meet him and greet him. (11) Samuel said, "What have you done?" And Saul said, "When I saw that the people were scattering from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines had mustered at Michmash, (12) I said, 'Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the favor of the LORD.' So I forced myself, and offered the burnt offering." (13) And Samuel said to Saul, "You have done foolishly. You have not kept the command of the LORD your God, with which he commanded you. For then the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. (14) But now your kingdom shall not continue. The LORD has sought out a man after his own heart, and the LORD has commanded him to be prince over his people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you."

It wasn't lawful for Saul to give a burnt offering to God. That was reserved for the priesthood. Samuel had told Saul to wait seven days. Saul lacked faith and as

a result broke the commandment of the Living God.

It may seem a small thing but the end result was the loss of the kingdom for Saul. In the end he and his son Jonathan lost their lives. God will not tolerate the breaking of His commands forever.

King David

King David, the son of Jesse was a man after God's own heart.

1Sam 13:14 But now [Saul] your kingdom shall not continue. The LORD has sought out a man after his own heart, and the LORD has commanded him to be prince over his people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you."

David committed much sin in spite of the fact that he loved God and His commandments. He was a violent man and had much blood on his hands. We are all familiar with the story of Uriah the Hittite. He was the husband of Bathsheba. The story goes:

2Sa 11:2-27 It happened, late one afternoon, when David arose from his couch and was walking on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful. (3) And David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, "Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" (4) So David sent messengers and took her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she had been purifying herself from her uncleanness.) Then she returned to her house. (5) And the woman conceived, and she sent and told David, "I am pregnant." (6) So David sent word to Joab, "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent Uriah to David. (7) When Uriah came to him, David asked how Joab was doing and how the people were doing and how the war was going. (8) Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house and wash your feet." And

Uriah went out of the king's house, and there followed him a present from the king. (9) But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house. (10) When they told David, "Uriah did not go down to his house," David said to Uriah, "Have you not come from a journey? Why did you not go down to your house?" (11) Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah dwell in booths, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field. Shall I then go to my house, to eat and to drink and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing." (12) Then David said to Uriah, "Remain here today also, and tomorrow I will send you back." So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. (13) And David invited him, and he ate in his presence and drank, so that he made him drunk. And in the evening he went out to lie on his couch with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house. (14) In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by the hand of Uriah. (15) In the letter he wrote, "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, that he may be struck down, and die." (16) And as Joab was besieging the city, he assigned Uriah to the place where he knew there were valiant men. (17) And the men of the city came out and fought with Joab, and some of the servants of David among the people fell. Uriah the Hittite also died. (18) Then Joab sent and told David all the news about the fighting. (19) And he instructed the messenger, "When you have finished telling all the news about the fighting to the king, (20) then, if the king's anger rises, and if he says to you, 'Why did you go so near the city to fight? Did you not know that they would shoot from the wall? (21) Who killed Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth? Did not a woman cast an upper millstone on him from the wall, so that he died at Thebez? Why did you go so near the wall?' then you shall say, 'Your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.'" (22) So the messenger went and came and told David all that Joab had sent him to tell. (23) The messenger said to David, "The men gained an advantage over us and came out against us in the field, but we drove them

back to the entrance of the gate. (24) Then the archers shot at your servants from the wall. Some of the king's servants are dead, and your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also." (25) David said to the messenger, "Thus shall you say to Joab, 'Do not let this matter trouble you, for the sword devours now one and now another. Strengthen your attack against the city and overthrow it.' And encourage him." (26) When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she lamented over her husband. (27) And when the mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD.

Continuing on in chapter 12:

2Sa 12:1-18 ESV And the LORD sent Nathan to David. He came to him and said to him, "There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. (2) The rich man had very many flocks and herds, (3) but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. And he brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children. It used to eat of his morsel and drink from his cup and lie in his arms, and it was like a daughter to him. (4) Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was unwilling to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the guest who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him." (5) Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man, and he said to Nathan, "As the LORD lives, the man who has done this deserves to die, (6) and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity." (7) Nathan said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul. (8) And I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your arms and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah. And if this were too little, I would add to you as much more. (9) Why have you despised the word of the LORD, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and

have taken his wife to be your wife and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. (10) Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.' (11) Thus says the LORD, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house. And I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. (12) For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun.'" (13) David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." And Nathan said to David, "The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die. (14) Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the LORD, the child who is born to you shall die." (15) Then Nathan went to his house. And the LORD afflicted the child that Uriah's wife bore to David, and he became sick. (16) David therefore sought God on behalf of the child. And David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground. (17) And the elders of his house stood beside him, to raise him from the ground, but he would not, nor did he eat food with them. (18) On the seventh day the child died. And the servants of David were afraid to tell him that the child was dead, for they said, "Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spoke to him, and he did not listen to us. How then can we say to him the child is dead? He may do himself some harm."

Obviously this was very painful for David. God had forgiven him but he still paid a heavy penalty for his sins. His child died as a result. In the end, because of David's violence, he was not allowed to build the temple of God.

1Ch 28:2-9 Then King David rose to his feet and said: "Hear me, my brothers and my people. I had it in my heart to build a house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the LORD and for the footstool of our God, and I made preparations for building. (3) But God said to me, 'You may not build a house for my name, for you are a man of war and have shed blood.' (4) Yet the LORD God of

Israel chose me from all my father's house to be king over Israel forever. For he chose Judah as leader, and in the house of Judah my father's house, and among my father's sons he took pleasure in me to make me king over all Israel. (5) And of all my sons (for the LORD has given me many sons) he has chosen Solomon my son to sit on the throne of the kingdom of the LORD over Israel. (6) He said to me, 'It is Solomon your son who shall build my house and my courts, for I have chosen him to be my son, and I will be his father. (7) I will establish his kingdom forever if he continues strong in keeping my commandments and my rules, as he is today.' (8) Now therefore in the sight of all Israel, the assembly of the LORD, and in the hearing of our God, observe and seek out all the commandments of the LORD your God, that you may possess this good land and leave it for an inheritance to your children after you forever. (9) "And you, Solomon my son, know the God of your father and serve him with a whole heart and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches all hearts and understands every plan and thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will cast you off forever.

King David, a man after God's own heart, received many blessings from God. He was promised that one of his descendents would always sit on the throne of Israel. The Messiah would descend from his bloodline. Yet he was a sinful man and paid for those sins. Apostasy is not left unpunished.

King Jeroboam

Jeroboam was appointed by Solomon to rule over the forced labor of the house of Joseph. Solomon had not been loyal to God and judgment had been passed upon him for his apostasy.

1Ki 11:28-33 The man Jeroboam was very able, and when Solomon saw that the young man was industrious he gave him charge over all the forced labor of the house of Joseph.

(29) And at that time, when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite found him on the road. Now Ahijah had dressed himself in a new garment, and the two of them were alone in the open country. (30) Then Ahijah laid hold of the new garment that was on him, and tore it into twelve pieces. (31) And he said to Jeroboam, "Take for yourself ten pieces, for thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Behold, I am about to tear the kingdom from the hand of Solomon and will give you ten tribes (32) (but he shall have one tribe, for the sake of my servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city that I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel), (33) because they have forsaken me and worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of Moab, and Milcom the god of the Ammonites, and they have not walked in my ways, doing what is right in my sight and keeping my statutes and my rules, as David his father did.

As a result of the prophecy Jeroboam became ruler over the northern ten tribes of Israel. But as so many kings before him he didn't remain loyal to God.

1Ki 12:21-33 When Rehoboam came to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin, 180,000 chosen warriors, to fight against the house of Israel, to restore the kingdom to Rehoboam the son of Solomon. (22) But the word of God came to Shemaiah the man of God: (23) "Say to Rehoboam the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and to all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and to the rest of the people, (24) 'Thus says the LORD, You shall not go up or fight against your relatives the people of Israel. Every man return to his home, for this thing is from me.'" So they listened to the word of the LORD and went home again, according to the word of the LORD. (25) Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim and lived there. And he went out from there and built Penuel. (26) And Jeroboam said in his heart, "Now the kingdom will turn back to the house of David. (27) If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the temple of the LORD at Jerusalem, then

the heart of this people will turn again to their lord, to Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will kill me and return to Rehoboam king of Judah." (28) So the king took counsel and made two calves of gold. And he said to the people, "You have gone up to Jerusalem long enough. Behold your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt." (29) And he set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. (30) Then this thing became a sin, for the people went as far as Dan to be before one. (31) He also made temples on high places and appointed priests from among all the people, who were not of the Levites. (32) And Jeroboam appointed a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month like the feast that was in Judah, and he offered sacrifices on the altar. So he did in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves that he made. And he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places that he had made. (33) He went up to the altar that he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day in the eighth month, in the month that he had devised from his own heart. And he instituted a feast for the people of Israel and went up to the altar to make offerings.

Jeroboam took it upon himself to change the feast of God, specifically the Feast of Tabernacles, from the 7th month to the 8th month because he was afraid the people would turn to Rehoboam. This was met with the wrath of God.

1Ki 14:1-17 ESV At that time Abijah the son of Jeroboam fell sick. (2) And Jeroboam said to his wife, "Arise, and disguise yourself, that it not be known that you are the wife of Jeroboam, and go to Shiloh. Behold, Ahijah the prophet is there, who said of me that I should be king over this people. (3) Take with you ten loaves, some cakes, and a jar of honey, and go to him. He will tell you what shall happen to the child." (4) Jeroboam's wife did so. She arose and went to Shiloh and came to the house of Ahijah. Now Ahijah could not see, for his eyes were dim because of his age. (5) And the LORD said to Ahijah, "Behold, the wife of Jeroboam is coming to inquire of you concerning her son, for he is

sick. Thus and thus shall you say to her." When she came, she pretended to be another woman. (6) But when Ahijah heard the sound of her feet, as she came in at the door, he said, "Come in, wife of Jeroboam. Why do you pretend to be another? For I am charged with unbearable news for you. (7) Go, tell Jeroboam, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: "Because I exalted you from among the people and made you leader over my people Israel (8) and tore the kingdom away from the house of David and gave it to you, and yet you have not been like my servant David, who kept my commandments and followed me with all his heart, doing only that which was right in my eyes, (9) but you have done evil above all who were before you and have gone and made for yourself other gods and metal images, provoking me to anger, and have cast me behind your back, (10) therefore behold, I will bring harm upon the house of Jeroboam and will cut off from Jeroboam every male, both bond and free in Israel, and will burn up the house of Jeroboam, as a man burns up dung until it is all gone. (11) Anyone belonging to Jeroboam who dies in the city the dogs shall eat, and anyone who dies in the open country the birds of the heavens shall eat, for the LORD has spoken it.'" (12) Arise therefore, go to your house. When your feet enter the city, the child shall die. (13) And all Israel shall mourn for him and bury him, for he only of Jeroboam shall come to the grave, because in him there is found something pleasing to the LORD, the God of Israel, in the house of Jeroboam. (14) Moreover, the LORD will raise up for himself a king over Israel who shall cut off the house of Jeroboam today. And henceforth, (15) the LORD will strike Israel as a reed is shaken in the water, and root up Israel out of this good land that he gave to their fathers and scatter them beyond the Euphrates, because they have made their Asherim, provoking the LORD to anger. (16) And he will give Israel up because of the sins of Jeroboam, which he sinned and made Israel to sin." (17) Then Jeroboam's wife arose and departed and came to Tirzah. And as she came to the threshold of the house, the child died.

In the end the northern ten tribes of Israel were carried away into captivity by the Assyrians and they were "lost" from that point forward.

2Ki 17:1-23 In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah, Hoshea the son of Elah began to reign in Samaria over Israel, and he reigned nine years. (2) And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, yet not as the kings of Israel who were before him. (3) Against him came up Shalmaneser king of Assyria. And Hoshea became his vassal and paid him tribute. (4) But the king of Assyria found treachery in Hoshea, for he had sent messengers to So, king of Egypt, and offered no tribute to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year. Therefore the king of Assyria shut him up and bound him in prison. (5) Then the king of Assyria invaded all the land and came to Samaria, and for three years he besieged it. (6) In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria, and he carried the Israelites away to Assyria and placed them in Halah, and on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes. (7) And this occurred because the people of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods (8) and walked in the customs of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the people of Israel, and in the customs that the kings of Israel had practiced. (9) And the people of Israel did secretly against the LORD their God things that were not right. They built for themselves high places in all their towns, from watchtower to fortified city. (10) They set up for themselves pillars and Asherim on every high hill and under every green tree, (11) and there they made offerings on all the high places, as the nations did whom the LORD carried away before them. And they did wicked things, provoking the LORD to anger, (12) and they served idols, of which the LORD had said to them, "You shall not do this." (13) Yet the LORD warned Israel and Judah by every prophet and every seer, saying, "Turn from your evil ways and keep my commandments and my statutes, in

accordance with all the Law that I commanded your fathers, and that I sent to you by my servants the prophets." (14) But they would not listen, but were stubborn, as their fathers had been, who did not believe in the LORD their God. (15) They despised his statutes and his covenant that he made with their fathers and the warnings that he gave them. They went after false idols and became false, and they followed the nations that were around them, concerning whom the LORD had commanded them that they should not do like them. (16) And they abandoned all the commandments of the LORD their God, and made for themselves metal images of two calves; and they made an Asherah and worshiped all the host of heaven and served Baal. (17) And they burned their sons and their daughters as offerings and used divination and omens and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger. (18) Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them out of his sight. None was left but the tribe of Judah only. (19) Judah also did not keep the commandments of the LORD their God, but walked in the customs that Israel had introduced. (20) And the LORD rejected all the descendants of Israel and afflicted them and gave them into the hand of plunderers, until he had cast them out of his sight. (21) When he had torn Israel from the house of David, they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king. And Jeroboam drove Israel from following the LORD and made them commit great sin. (22) The people of Israel walked in all the sins that Jeroboam did. They did not depart from them, (23) until the LORD removed Israel out of his sight, as he had spoken by all his servants the prophets. So Israel was exiled from their own land to Assyria until this day.

Apostasy in the New Testament

As we have seen the Old Testament is full of examples of how Israel, including Judah, suffered for their apostasy. They didn't remain loyal to God and they continually suffered as a result. The

apostasy originated with the leaders of Israel.

The New Testament church is really no different. We find warning after warning in the New Testament regarding apostasy or heresy and these warnings are typically targeted at the leaders of the church. Of course the brethren also have responsibility in preventing apostasy.

Christ was very clear that the law was still binding and that he only came to magnify the law.

Mat 5:17-20 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. (18) For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. (19) Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (20) For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

The word fulfill is SGD4137, ***play-ro'-o*** It means to makereplete, that is, (literally) to cram (a net), level up (a hollow), or (figuratively) to furnish (or imbue, diffuse, influence), satisfy, execute (an office), finish (a period or task), verify (or coincide with a prediction), etc.: - accomplish, X after, (be) complete, end, expire, fill (up), fulfil, (be, make) full (come), fully preach, perfect, supply.

What Christ was doing is bringing the law to its fullness. He states his purpose in the subsequent verses.

Mat 5:21-24 "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' (22) But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire. (23) So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, (24) leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

The law was magnified by Christ. His warning in verse 19 renders judgment upon all who would claim the law is of no consequence. As a matter of fact, Christ warned of those who would do just that.

Mat 7:15-23 "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. (16) You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? (17) So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. (18) A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. (19) Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. (20) Thus you will recognize them by their fruits. (21) "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. (22) On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' (23) And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

Lawlessness could not exist apart from the law. The law must still be present in order for there to be lawlessness.

We have a responsibility to adhere to the message that has been given from the beginning. That message is the message that was given to Abraham, to Israel and to all throughout history. It's the message that was brought by Christ to Israel as the Angel of Yahovah and also in human form to the New Testament church.

Jude 1:1-25 Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, To those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ: (2) May mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you. (3) Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. (4) For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. (5) Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. (6) And the angels who did not stay within their proper position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day - (7) just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire. (8) Yet in like manner these people also, relying on their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones. (9) But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you." (10) But these people blaspheme all that they do not understand, and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively. (11) Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's

error and perished in Korah's rebellion. (12) These are hidden reefs at your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear, shepherds feeding themselves; waterless clouds, swept along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; (13) wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever. (14) It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones, (15) to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him." (16) These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires; they are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage. (17) But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. (18) They said to you, "In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions." (19) It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit. (20) But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, (21) keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. (22) And have mercy on those who doubt; (23) save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh. (24) Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, (25) to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

It is our responsibility to ensure we know what that message is. The church is the body of Christ as we know. We are admonished to keep the body from impurity. Paul stated:

1Co 5:1-13 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife. (2) And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you. (3) For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing. (4) When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, (5) you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord. (6) Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? (7) Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. (8) Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. (9) I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people-- (10) not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. (11) But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler--not even to eat with such a one. (12) For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? (13) God judges those outside. "Purge the evil person from among you."

We are warned to remain in the faith and not stray from the truth.

Heb 13:7-17 Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. (8) Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. (9) Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings, for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, which have not benefited those devoted to them.

(10) We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat. (11) For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. (12) So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. (13) Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. (14) For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. (15) Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. (16) Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God. (17) Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

The leaders of the church are given responsibility to care for the flock.

1Peter 5:1-4 So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: (2) shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; (3) not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. (4) And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

As was true for the children of Israel is true for us today. Paul admonishes the elders of the church.

Act 20:17-32 Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. (18) And when they came to him, he said to them: "You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, (19) serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; (20) how I did

not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, (21) testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. (22) And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, (23) except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. (24) But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. (25) And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. (26) Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all of you, (27) for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. (28) Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. (29) I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; (30) and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. (31) Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears. (32) And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

These wolves will come in and deceive from the pulpit. Many will be deceived in the last days and the truth will be scarce.

1Tim 4:1-3 Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, (2) through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, (3) who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.

People will no longer wish to hear the truth because the truth stings.

2Tim 4:1-4 I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: (2) preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. (3) For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, (4) and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

No one has the right to add to or take away from the word of God.

Rev 22:18-19 I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, (19) and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

The truth doesn't change and there is no private interpretation of scripture.

2Peter 1:20-21 knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. (21) For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

False religious teachers have led many astray.

Rom 1:18-32 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. (19) For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. (20) For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made.

So they are without excuse. (21) For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. (22) Claiming to be wise, they became fools, (23) and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. (24) Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, (25) because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

The leaders of the church of God are charged with the welfare of its members. We are all charged with protecting the church from false teachings and in order to do that we must be educated. We have to study to prove all things and hold fast to that which is true.

1Th 5:21 but test everything; hold fast what is good.

God doesn't change and neither has his message. Remain in the faith delivered to the saints and protect the body from pollution. This is our whole duty.