

e-concepts

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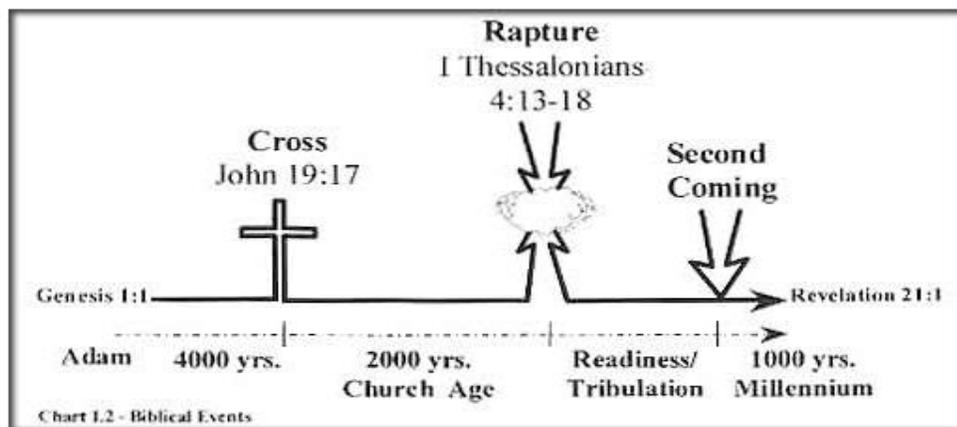
The “Christian Church”, the Final Apostasy, and the “Day of the Lord” Dr. David DeWitt (an excerpt from prophecy and World Trends material)

Apostasy Must Come First

Paul said the end of the age would *not come unless the apostasy comes first* (2 Thessalonians 2:3). Apostasy is *the abandonment or renunciation of a particular religious belief*. So apostasy in Christianity is the abandonment or renunciation of basic Christian doctrine and values by those who call themselves “Christians”.

The final apostasy seems to begin before the event generally referred to as the *Rapture* (a term used to define the event described in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Corinthians 15:50ff; and John 14:1-3). So the final apostasy in Christianity begins when the true church is still present on the earth, but near the end of the age. If the Rapture occurs before the Tribulation, the apostasy may not be complete until after the Rapture. At that time, the so-called “Christian church” will be completely apostate and join the antichrist’s global religion.

I am not here discussing the timing of the Rapture of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Corinthians 15:50ff; and John 14:1-3. But we must notice the existence of this event because it marks the end of the church age. The “church” is a collective term for the true believers all over the world, beginning in Acts 2 and ending with this event we have chosen to call “the Rapture”.



[Chart from Dr. Douglas D. Stauffer (www.biblebelievers.com). “We are close”, is his opinion.]

After the Rapture, there will still be a false “Christian church” on earth, which will go into the Tribulation and become part of the global religious network of the false prophet and the antichrist. After the true church is gone, there will be new true believers, both Jewish and Gentile, who will come to Christ before and after the world enters the 7-year Tribulation period. Many of them will be killed during that Great Tribulation (Matthew 24:9; Revelation 6:9-11; 20:4). Those who survive will enter into the Millennial Kingdom after Christ’s Second Coming (Matthew 25:34).

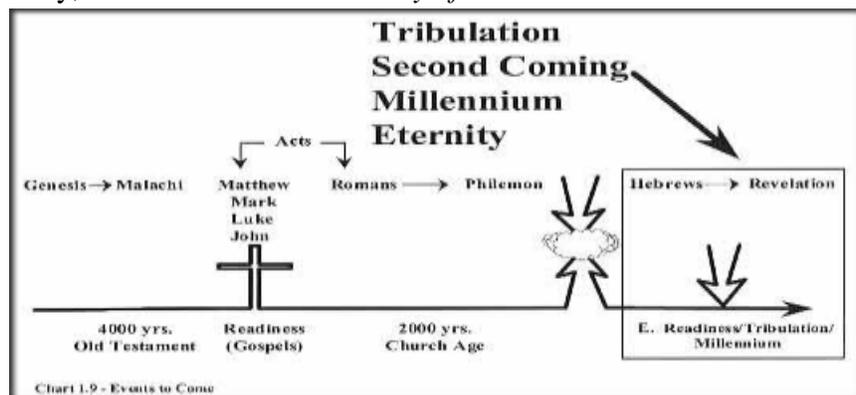
There have been many ups and downs in the spiritual quality of “Christianity” over the centuries. Apostasy does not, by itself, prove we are nearing the end times. As Paul wrote: *the mystery of lawlessness is already at work* (2 Thessalonians 2:7). But what we can say is that, as we approach the

Great Tribulation (of Revelation 6–18) and the Second Coming (of Revelation 19), it will be a time of the greatest apostasy, when “Christianity” will no longer be defined by biblical standards. Although the Christian church is approaching that condition, we are not quite there yet. And there is one other thing we can say. As of the time of this writing:

The day of the Lord has not yet come.

*Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that **the day of the Lord** has come. Let no one in any way deceive you, for it **will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God**. Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. **For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way**. Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming. (2 Thessalonians 2:1-8)*

Here, Paul gives us the most basic way to know we are not yet in the Biblical end times. That time, when God begins unfolding the specific end-times’ calendar of events, includes the Tribulation, the Second Coming of Christ, the Millennial Kingdom, and the Great White Throne Judgment. These events, collectively, are what Paul calls *the day of the Lord*.



[The Day of the Lord is pictured here by the arrow in one of Dr. Stauffer’s charts (*ibid*).]

But *the day of the Lord* has not yet come. False teachers may say it already happened historically, or that we are in it today, but Paul says that’s not so. Before the end times *day of the Lord*, several things must happen:

1. The apostasy will come first. In other words, the so-called “Christian church” will reject its biblical foundations.
2. The man of lawlessness, the antichrist, will be revealed.
3. There will be a Jewish temple, which the man of lawlessness will use to declare himself to be God.
4. The restrainer of sin will be removed.

According to Paul, the man of lawlessness ... exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4). So it may not be that he declares himself to be the only god, but a superior god. Therefore, the religious mentality of the day may be that of keeping one’s own god or object of worship while accepting the antichrist, who is not a replacement for any religion but superior to every religion.