

# Becoming Apostate

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2/15/2026



**For Discussion: Why Are So Many Tossing Away Biblical Faith?** (harbingersdaily.com; Dec 3, 2025)  
<https://harbingersdaily.com/why-are-so-many-tossing-away-biblical-faith/>

**Also: Most self-identified Christians think doing 'good things' is enough to get to Heaven**  
(christianpost.com; Dec 6, 2025)  
<https://www.christianpost.com/news/most-christians-say-doing-good-things-is-enough-to-go-to-heaven.html>

## What is the trend for people identifying as being Christian in the United States?

Recent studies of the Pew Research Center (2023-24) show that 62% of U.S. adults identify as being Christian which is down from 78% in 2007.

- This shift away from biblical faith has become so common that the term “exvangelicals” is now used to describe these defectors from evangelicalism.

## What portion of those claiming to be Christians really don't believe the gospel?

The Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University examining Americans' views on the afterlife conducted in March, 2025 found:

- 53% of self-identified Christians agree that “A person who is generally good, or does enough good things for others, will earn a place in Heaven.”

This further breaks down as follows:

- Catholics (73%)
- Evangelicals, Mainline Protestants, born-again Christians, Protestants, Pentecostals (41-43%)
- Christians who attend independent and non-denominational churches (35%)

## What portion of those claiming to be Christians believe there are many paths to eternal salvation?

self-identified Christians (41%)

- Catholics (54%)
- Evangelicals (37%)
- Mainline Protestants & Pentecostals (34-35%)
- Christians who go to independent and non-denominational churches (31%)
- born-again Christians (27%)

## What portion of those claiming to be Christians believe repentance is just admitting you've sinned?

40% self-identified Christians; broken down...

- 48% Evangelicals and Pentecostals
- 44% Catholics
- 39% Protestants
- 38% born-again Christians
- 37% independent, non-denominational Christians
- 36% Mainline Protestants

## What is biblical repentance?

True repentance is necessary for salvation, and repentance demands a change in behavior.

- Repentance is not merely sorrow over misdeeds but must include a determined effort to change both mind and actions to avoid committing the same sins in the future.

## How common is falling away from the faith?

Apostasy often shows up in the Old Testament. Every time Israel fell into idolatry, it was an example of apostasy (see Judges 2:11–13). In the New Testament, onetime followers of Jesus turned their backs on Him (John 6:66). Demas, “because he loved this world,” deserted Paul (2 Timothy 4:10). Judas who betrayed Jesus is a classic example.

- Every New Testament book except Philemon contains warnings about false teaching.

## What is apostasy?

Apostasy, from the Greek word apostasia, means “a total desertion of, or departure from, one's faith; it is a total abandonment of the Christian faith.

- It is a turning away from God, a rejection of core doctrine, and a separation from the people of God.

## How do we recognize apostasy?

Apostasy comes in two forms...

- One is a falling away from key biblical doctrines into heretical teachings that claim to be the “real” Christian doctrine.
- The second is a complete renunciation of the Christian faith, which results in a full abandonment of Christ.

### **Which is the more severe form of apostasy?**

The second form of apostasy often begins with the first.

- A heretical belief takes root and grows until it pollutes all aspects of a person's faith, and that can lead to a complete abandonment of Christianity.

### **How do we recognize apostates?**

Jude, the half-brother of Jesus and early church leader highlights the reason we must contend for the faith:

Jude 1:4 – *For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.* (ESV)

In this verse, Jude reveals 3 traits of apostate teachers:

#### **Apostates are subtle in their approach.**

- They have “*secretly slipped in*” to infiltrate the church.
- 2 Corinthians 11:13–15 describes false apostles as “*deceitful*” men who “*masquerade as servants of righteousness.*”

It is rare that apostasy begins in an overt and easily detectable manner; instead, it starts as a small, seemingly insignificant alteration of the truth.

#### **Apostates are ungodly in their actions.**

- They commit immorality and justify it by claiming to be under the grace of God.
- This is a perversion of grace; no Christian has a license to sin.

In addition to their immorality, the apostates are guilty of rebellion (verse 8), grumbling and faultfinding (verse 16), selfishness, arrogance, and flattery (verse 16), and divisiveness and worldliness (verse 19).

#### **Apostates are heretical in their theology.**

Either in what they say or what they do, the apostates deny Jesus Christ our is only Sovereign and Lord.

- They might deny His deity, His humanity, or His eternal sonship.
- They might oppose the teaching that Jesus is the Messiah or the only Savior.
- They might downplay the effectiveness of Jesus' sacrifice or deny the need for it.

### **When will apostates be found out?**

Better sooner than later. Apostates are adept at covering up the truth and showing a false front, but they cannot maintain the ruse forever.

1 John 2:19 – *They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.*

### **How do people become apostate?**

They fall away because they are deceived:

1 Timothy 4:1–2 – *Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron*

They believe the deceiving spirits that seek to turn people away from God.

- False teachers seek personal gain, regardless of the spiritual harm they cause.

And this trend will only increase as the Church Age wears on...

2 Timothy 3:13 – *But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.*

### **How does disillusionment contribute to apostasy?**

In Luke 8, Jesus told a parable illustrating why people fall away from the Gospel. A farmer sowed seeds across various types of ground: pathways, rocky soil, thorny patches, and prepared soil. The seed represented the Gospel message, and each type of ground symbolized different reactions to it.

- The devil deceives some people by taking the Gospel message from their hearts before they can believe and be saved (Luke 8:12).
- There are those who receive the Gospel with joy but lack a strong foundation so during times of temptation, they fall away (Luke 8:13).
- Then there are those so caught up in the cares of this world that the Gospel gets choked out.

### **What is the prophetic significance of apostasy?**

We already looked at 1 Timothy 4:1–2 which tells us, “*that in latter times some will depart from the faith...*” Jesus also warned us about the rampant deception in the Olivet Discourse:

Matthew 24:11 – *many false prophets will rise up and deceive many*

And there is Laodicean church which characterizes Christendom at the end of the Age that is lukewarm toward Jesus and is spiritually poor (Rev 3:14-22).

### **Since periods of apostasy has been common in church history, how is it a sign of the soon return of Jesus?**

What makes it a sign is that it is intensified being described as “*perilous times*” in 2 Timothy 3.

And the end-times apostasy will be worldwide...

Luke 18:8 – *when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?*

While this is rhetorical, it does reflect that apostasy will be so bad prior to the Lord’s return that genuine faith in Him would be rare.

- It will also be fulfilled literally the moment following the rapture when all believers are gone.
- There will be a great revival during the Tribulation as people recognize the fulfillment of prophecy but most of these Christians will be martyrs.

### **How has apostasy been intensified in our day?**

- Deception is rampant fueled by Artificial Intelligence.
- There are whole denominations with an apostate view of Christ: Jehovah Witnesses, Mormons
- A major denomination teaches salvation by works (Roman Catholic Church)
- Major trends in churches are to embrace apostate corruptions of the gospel due to universalism, woke theology or prosperity doctrine.
- Doubts are sown in the inerrancy of God’s Word due to compromising with the world on evolution and embracing heresies such as replacement theology
- Most churches scoff that Jesus will return soon since they never teach Bible prophecy

### **What applications do we see from this discussion?**

- Heresies are an early warning sign of full-blown apostasy.
- Embracing deception causes apostasy; we are living in times of deception on steroids.
- We are in the times of apostasy; conditions are prime for the return of Jesus.