

BEGINNING OF BIRTH PAINS

Chapter One - Apostasy

Apostasy means “falling away.” This describes the unfortunate condition of the majority of so-called Christians at this point in history. It was predicted in the message to the Church of Laodicea (Revelation 3:14-21). This decline in the effectiveness of the Church is due partly to wrong (unbiblical) teaching, and partly to worldliness. These problems affect many who call themselves Christians but may not be true believers.

There are serious mistakes being made by different kinds of churches today. On the other hand, it acknowledges that there are still many faithful believers in the Church. They are called “overcomers,” and they prove that Jesus’ promise was true that He will build His Church, and that the gates of hades will not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18)!

Lukewarm Church – The Laodicean Church

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The first “sign of the times” Jesus mentioned in His Olivet Discourse was false teaching and false messiahs:

⁴ *And Jesus answered and said to them: “Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying,*
⁵ *‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many. – Matthew 24:5*

There have been false teachers throughout church history, but this prophecy indicates a major departure from the faith. Here is Jesus’ warning to the Church at Laodicea—a prediction of this last church period:

¹⁴ *“And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, ‘These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: ¹⁵ “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. ¹⁶ So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. ¹⁷ Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. – Revelation 3:14-17*

In our book, *The Church in Prophecy and History*ⁱ, we trace the progress of the Church from its beginnings in apostolic times (Ephesus), through the period of martyrdom (Smyrna), the great compromises after Constantine legalized the church (Pergamum), the Middle Ages (Thyatira), the Reformation (Sardis), the missionary era (Philadelphia), and finally, our own times of disappointing worldliness and apostasy (Laodicea). The following description of the Laodicean Church is taken from the book.ⁱⁱ

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This Laodicean phase of church history stretches from the mid-Twentieth Century to the beginning of the Tribulation Period. We, of course, are eye-witnesses to the events of this time span. During these years we have seen a gradual erosion of biblical values and the increase of immorality. More and more, our culture is ignoring God's revealed will, and the Church is allowing it to happen by not taking a strong enough stand against this trend. This is a spiritual struggle that has raged from the First Century until now. But it is getting worse in our generation for a number of reasons.

Before we list some of these reasons, let us explain why we call this seventh period the "Worldly Church." Bible teachers often refer to this as the era of the "Apostate Church."

The normal use of the word "apostasy" today refers to those who have defected from their belief system. It implies a serious, permanent decision to leave the faith, and a harsh judgment against them by those who still believe. However, the members of the Church at Laodicea had not formally given up on their Christian orientation; they had just gradually drifted away from a firm belief in what the Bible teaches about Jesus, salvation, and a godly lifestyle. That is why Jesus said, "I could wish you were cold or hot." Had they been cold they would not even have pretended to be Christians. If they had been hot, they would have been committed, "on fire" believers. But, for the most part they were in the middle--just lukewarm---and were not pleasing at all to the Lord. Jesus considered that kind of person "worldly."

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the

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world. 17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. - 1 John 2:14-17

The Bible sometimes refers to "the world "as the Earth and the created universe, but at other times it means the corrupted "cosmos" world system that is temporarily dominated by Satan (Matthew 4:8-10; John 12:31; John 14:30; Ephesians 2:2; 1 John 15:9).

The Apostle Paul also warned against being conformed to this evil world system.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. -Romans 12:1-2

Paul had a different way of describing the "lukewarm" Christian. In his letter to the Corinthians he explains a similar division of mankind according to one's spiritual condition. Where our current passage in Revelation describes the three possibilities as "cold, lukewarm, or hot," Paul speaks of people being "natural, carnal, or spiritual." He starts with the two extremes: natural and spiritual, and then describes the unfortunate middle position as carnal.

But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. 15 But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged

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by no one. 16 For "who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Christ. And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. 2 I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; 3 for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? - 1 Corinthians 2:14-3:3

These three states correspond to the three-fold nature of humanity.

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. - 1 Thessalonians 5:23

All living creatures on Earth, including plants, have a body. A living body normally does certain physical things, like eating, growing, and reproduction. It may do other things, like responding to its environment.

Animal life has another aspect: "personality," which includes the invisible characteristics of intellect, emotion, and will. As you know, plants do not have these (though some plant-lovers may think they do), but animals do have them. Your pets can be smart, loving, and obedient.

Human beings have an additional essence: a spirit. This is the part of man that was created "in the image of God" (Genesis 1:26-28). Jesus said, "God is spirit..." (John 4:24). However, because of sin, humans are spiritually dead (separated) from God

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until they are born again (made alive spiritually). They are then "spiritual" beings, able to communicate with God (John 3:3 ff.).

And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, 2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, 3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.
- Ephesians 2:1-6

Returning to Paul's explanation: a "natural" person (Greek *psuchikos*--"having a soul") can be intelligent, talented, and even "good" by human standards, but he or she does not know Christ or have the gift of, eternal life (John 1:12; 3:16). Such a person is controlled by his or her soul. In the context of our passage in Revelation, Jesus would call such a person spiritually "cold."

On the other hand, a "spiritual" person (Greek *pneumatikos*), is a "new creation in Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:17), and is controlled by his or her spirit, which, in turn, is directed by the Holy Spirit, as long as he or she submits to His control (Ephesians 5:18; Galatians 5:16). Jesus would call this person spiritually "hot."

Paul complained that he could not talk with the Corinthian believers as spiritual people. They were not walking in the Spirit.

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Therefore, they were "carnal" (Greek *sarkikos*--"fleshly") or controlled by the appetites of the body. These are the ones Jesus would call "lukewarm."ⁱⁱⁱ

That is also the condition of the Laodicean period of the church. It is "worldly" or lukewarm.

Before going any further, we must stress once again that all the news is not bad by any means. We have every reason to expect revival--as we will consider in Chapter Five. The Bible teaches plainly that when the Lord Jesus returns to Earth He will set up His righteous kingdom, and eventually create a "New Heaven and a New Earth." We Win! (See Chapter Seven.)

[See the Topic: ["Revival"](#) in Prophecy Central]

There are several different ways that the church of our generation has become worldly. We will now consider some of them.

Theological Liberalism

The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. 2 Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. - 1 Timothy 4:1-2

Before we look at some of the recent alarming headlines, we should consider how Christianity was affected by the thinking of the Enlightenment, starting in the 1600's. This "Age of Reason" elevated science and philosophy, and cast doubt on existing traditions and religious beliefs.

European skeptics from the Enlightenment began a new

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field of study called “Biblical Criticism.” Its proponents suggested that biblical texts had human rather than supernatural origins.^{iv}

This approach to Scripture undermined belief in miracles, the Creation account, the story of the Flood in Noah’s days, and even the supernatural aspects of Jesus’ life, such as His virgin birth, the signs and wonders He performed, and His resurrection. Colleges like Harvard, and Yale, originally begun to train ministers of the Gospel, were gradually staffed by professors who were infected with belief in this Biblical Criticism. They began to turn out pastors who no longer believed that the Bible was inspired by God. Their new approach to Christianity ignored the basic teaching about sin and redemption, and gave rise to theological liberalism. Most of the old mainline denominations were gradually infiltrated with this false teaching. Princeton was founded in the 1700’ to combat this trend.

In the 1800’s another spiritual attack, led by proponents of the new theory of evolution, pushed these modernist theologians even further away from biblical truth. But Jesus had promised that He would build His Church, and that the gates of Hades would not prevail against it. In the early 1900’s two major movements began to stand against this apostasy. They were Fundamentalism and Pentecostalism. Powerful new revivals grew out of these groups, which then became the evangelical movement of today: Bible-believing, born-again followers of Christ.

Some church analysts are calling the division between theological liberals and evangelicals “The Third Great Schism.” The first schism was the break between the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church in 1054 AD. The second schism was the Reformation in 1517 AD.

Here are some of this year’s developments:

[See the Topics: [“Apostasy”](#) and [“Religions”](#) in Prophecy Central]

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[Is Gospel Amnesia Creating a Third Great Schism?](#)

In the book *Deep Church Rising: The Third Schism and the Recovery of Christian Orthodoxy*, Andrew Walker and Robin Parry explore this third great split in the Christian church. Many people are not aware of the controversy because it is not a division along denominational lines, but between those in any denomination who view the essence of Christianity in different ways.

On one side stand those who affirm a broadly supernaturalist Christian orthodoxy embodied in the Nicene and Chalcedonian Creeds. And on the other, you find those who can at best recite the creeds with their fingers crossed.^v

Those who adhere to the ancient creeds see them as careful, time-honored distillations of what the Bible teaches about the Trinity and the supernatural nature of Christ. The other side is influenced by modernism and postmodern thinking, and is skeptical of supernatural claims. They doubt the idea of objective truth. To them Jesus is the greatest teacher and example, but not a miracle-worker.

The authors of the book are concerned about a widespread loss of the Gospel within the Christian community. They liken the situation to the early-20th-century's debate over liberalism. J. Gresham Machen made the case that the choice between orthodox Christianity and Liberalism wasn't between different branches of Christianity, but rather between two wholly different religions.-(Christianity Today)

[Do Bible Skeptics Now Equal Bible Lovers? American Bible Society Thinks So](#)

A New survey, conducted by the Barna Group for the

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American Bible Society, indicates that, while the majority of Americans still believe that the Bible is the Word of God (53%), the number of people who are skeptical about it (19%) has risen to the same level as the people who are "Bible lovers" ^{vi} (Christianity Today)

Former archbishop of Canterbury: Britain is a post-Christian nation

The situation is even worse in Europe. Lord Williams of Oystermouth, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, said that Britain is no longer a Christian nation. He added, "Research suggests that the majority of Anglicans and Roman Catholics now feel afraid to express their beliefs." ^{vii} (Telegraph-UK)

Feel-Good Christianity

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers. - 2 Timothy 4:3

The next examples of worldly churches are those that proclaim an attractive positive thinking, self-improvement message. These churches are some of the most popular in our generation because they focus on the encouraging portions of the Bible mixed with pop-psychology and practical advice about how to succeed in life. Most of them are careful not to teach anything that is controversial. Sin and salvation are ignored or moved to a secondary place in the church's priorities. Cultural immorality is not addressed, the Christian foundations of our culture are forgotten, and politics are not an issue.

Some of these churches have a history of good theology

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and evangelistic fervor, but they have changed their message to appeal to a more secular audience.

Churches that continue to move in this direction will find that their congregations will not be able to discern between true Christianity and philosophies like the New Age movement.

[See the Topics: [“Apostasy”](#) and [“Religions”](#) in Prophecy Central]

[Five Reasons Why Most Southern Baptist Churches Baptize Almost No Millennials](#)

May 29, 2014 - The number of baptisms in the Southern Baptist church has been dropping for seven years, especially among teens and young adults.

While the loss of nearly 4,600 baptisms was not as steep as last year's drop. . . LifeWay Christian Resources president [said] "I am grieved we are clearly losing our evangelistic effectiveness."^{viii}

The first of five reasons given for the trend is that many pastors and churches are “not effectively engaged in sharing the gospel and yet continue business as usual.” (Christianity Today)

[Is hit book 'Jesus Calling' pushing New Age?](#)

Jun. 6, 2014 - Sarah Young's wildly popular book, “Jesus Calling,” first published in 2004 by Thomas Nelson, has now sold more than 10 million copies. But, as researcher and writer, Warren Smith says in his book, “Another Jesus Calling,” the book has considerable New Age influence.^{ix} (WND)

[Rick Warren's Call for Christians to Unite With Catholics, 'Holy Father' Raising Concerns](#)

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Dec. 16, 2014 - In a new video, megachurch leader and author Rick Warren calls for "an ecumenical vision for Catholics and Protestants to work together to defend the sanctity of life, sex and marriage."

Apologetist Matt Slick from Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry (CARM) warns that there are major differences between Protestants and Catholics.

"Though it's technically correct to say that Catholics believe in salvation through Jesus Christ, they reject justification by faith in Christ alone. Instead, [they teach] that good works of various kinds are necessary for salvation."

He also points to serious non-biblical teaching about Mary and "offering of money for the sins of the dead." (Christian News)

Prosperity Gospel - Word of Faith

Christianity is the most positive message in world. And the Bible is full of amazing promises for those who believe. However, Scripture teaches and illustrates the fact that the godly are often allowed to experience trials, persecution, and personal loss. These things do serve good purposes in the Christian's life, refining his or her faith, proving the validity of Christian faith, or serving as a "thorn in the flesh" so that the believer will trust in God's power instead of his own.

The "prosperity gospel," also known as "Word of Faith," was an unfortunate variation of the Pentecostal movement of the early Twentieth Century. It was espoused by popular preachers like the late Oral Roberts. It teaches that financial wealth and physical health are part of the "total salvation" brought by Jesus. It comes if you believe, and particularly if you donate one-tenth of your income to aligned Christian ministries.

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Theologian Albert Mohler says that the message taught by Joel and Victoria Osteen is the latest and slickest version of the prosperity gospel, appealing to the middle class. He wrote,

“Whereas the early devotees of Prosperity Theology prayed for a roof over their heads that did not leak, the devotees of prosperity theology in the Age of Osteen pray for ever bigger houses.”^x

According to Scott L. Thumma of the Hartford Institute for Religion Research, some 20 percent of U.S. churches hold to some form of the prosperity gospel.

A Gospel that only promises health and wealth, but ignores the other aspects of Christian growth is misleading and divisive. Jesus and His Apostles were rich in spiritual things but not in material wealth. Paul wrote:

⁶ Now godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷ For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. ⁸ And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. ⁹ But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. – 1 Timothy 6:6-10

This prosperity gospel has now spread to many parts of the world.

[See the Topics: [“Prosperity Gospel”](#) in Apologetics Central and

[Here's What Protestants in 18 Latin American Countries Believe and Practice](#)

A recent extensive survey by the Pew Foundation revealed that Protestantism is flourishing in Latin America. About one out of three Protestants shares his or her faith with others weekly. About half of them pray daily and attend church weekly. Protestant attendance at church is growing at the expense of the Catholic Church.

The report also found that:

"Prosperity gospel" theology is widespread in Latin America, but not always the dominant view among Protestants.

The prosperity gospel affirms that "God will grant wealth and good health to believers who have enough faith."^{xi}

The prosperity gospel is also popular in Africa. In the second half of the Twentieth Century many Africans left Catholicism, Protestantism, and evangelical churches to launch so-called revivalist churches. These churches promote the prosperity gospel. The people respond to this teaching because so many of them suffer from poverty and need the relief that these preachers promise.^{xii}

Anti-Prophecy Theology

Due to the powerful evangelical ministries of the past generation, and the popular message of books like Hal Lindsey's "The Late Great Planet Earth, and the "Left Behind" novels of Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins, a large percentage of the American

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public believes that we are headed for the Apocalypse, and Jesus might return to catch away His disciples at any time. This is known as the “Premillennial, Pre-Tribulation Rapture” position. Nevertheless, there is a noticeable decline of messages from the pulpits today about this “Blessed Hope” (Titus 2:13).

There are several varieties of Christian thought that are basically opposed to any emphasis on End Times prophecy. Like Israel in the Old Testament, some of them do not want to hear negative news or warnings about judgment. Jesus cried out:

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing! – Luke 13:34

Shortly after the crucifixion of Jesus, Steven became the first martyr of the new faith. He also rebuked the hypocritical religious leaders of his day:

⁵¹ “You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. ⁵² Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers. - Acts 7:51-52

Before we list some of the varieties of Christian belief that do not take prophecy literally, we need to mention that many teachers in these church groups do offer sound evangelical teaching about other vital aspects of theology. We do not

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consider differences in eschatology to be a test of faith or fellowship. But a Christian's understanding of Bible prophecy does have a profound effect on his or her overall understanding of God's Word. After all, more than a fourth of the Bible is prophecy, and much of it has yet to be fulfilled.

Here is a short list of viewpoints of people who do not expect a literal future Rapture, Tribulation, or Millennium (Thousand-year reign of Christ) before the creation of a New Heaven and New Earth.

Preterism

One view of prophecy, known as Preterism (from the Latin word *praeteritus*, meaning "past"), teaches that many prophecies, especially those in the Book of Revelation, were fulfilled during the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 and/or the persecutions of the Roman Empire. Most adherents to this belief are "partial" Preterists because they still expect the literal return of Christ and judgment of the dead. "Full" Preterists believe that all of Revelation has already been fulfilled. They think the return of Christ and the rest of the book are allegorical.

This view was originated by the Jesuits to counter the view by many Reformers that the Pope was the Antichrist. The theory was later adopted by some Protestants. It is incompatible with a literal approach to Bible study. Their explanations about how the prophecies of Revelation were fulfilled are not at all convincing the way the Old Testament prophecies were about the life of Christ. For example, they teach that Nero was the antichrist, the destruction of Jerusalem was the Great Tribulation, and we are now in "the Kingdom of Christ."^{xiii}

Replacement Theology/ Amillennialists

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This is the belief that there will be no literal 1000 year reign of Christ. Thus Revelation 20 is taken symbolically, not literally, by adherents of this view. Amillennialists generally believe that Israel has been permanently set aside for all time and that God's current plan of salvation involves only the Church. They don't believe that the rebirth of Israel in 1948 was the fulfillment of the prophecies of Ezekiel chapters 36 and 37.

Kingdom Now / Postmillennialists

These folks agree that Christ will return at the end of the present age to take over the earth. In the meanwhile, they assume that He is already reigning on earth through the Church. This is the mistake that the Roman Catholic Church made at the peak of their influence over world empires. Today this concept is reflected in the unscriptural hope that Christian influence and assistance will finally solve the world's problems and bring about global peace.

There is much confusion in our generation about the status of the Kingdom of Heaven, also called the Kingdom of God, or just, "The Kingdom." Here is a short explanation of the biblical teaching on the subject from *The Church in Prophecy and History*.

Kingdom Work

During this trying time Jesus is incredibly active, using us to win converts to His Kingdom until He returns as King over all (Revelation 11:15-17; 19:11-16).

Jesus had told his disciples that the kingdom was "at hand." (Matthew 4:17). He knew his offer to be King at His triumphal entry would be rejected. Nevertheless, He will come in the future (Luke 21:25-31; 22:18, 30). In Acts

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1:6 they asked Him, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" He told them they couldn't know the time, but when the Holy Spirit would come, He would enable them to be witnesses to the whole Earth.

Evidently the Kingdom would not yet be [fully] established at that time. He would not yet reign on Earth, and the disciples would not yet reign with Him, but they would spread the message of the Kingdom, even as He had been doing.

That is why Jesus taught us to pray "Your kingdom come. Your will be done on Earth as [it is] in heaven." (Matthew 6:10). We still pray that way because even though His Kingdom does already exist in Heaven, and He is our King already, it still has not yet been established here on Earth.

Jesus told Pilate,

"My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here" - John 18:36-37.

Born-again Christians are citizens of the Kingdom of God:

*For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,--
Philippians 3:20*

We are also citizens of our earthly nations:

Tell us, therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful

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to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?"

But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, "Why do you test Me, you hypocrites? Show Me the tax money."

So they brought Him a denarius.

And He said to them, "Whose image and inscription is this?"

They said to Him, "Caesar's."

And He said to them, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." When they had heard these words, they marveled, and left Him and went their way. – Matthew 22:17-22

While we are here we are ambassadors, representing Christ and His Kingdom.

Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. – 2 Corinthians 5:20

During this time, we establish outposts of the Kingdom in our homes, churches, missions, and other Christian enterprises. We seek constantly to gain new members of the Kingdom by following His example of ministering to their needs and giving them the Gospel.

Many "New Evangelicals" in their emphasis on meeting the needs of the poor and needy have steered away from concern about prophecy. They correctly notice that some who are expecting the Lord's imminent return

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have such a pessimistic view that things will just get “worse and worse,” that they neglect the other biblical instruction about environmental responsibility and humanitarian assistance.

However, the conflict between good works and prophecy is not an “either/or” question, but it requires a “both/and” solution. We should be aware that these are the end-times, but because of that we should be occupied with Kingdom work now. He taught this directly in the parable about using what has been given to us while we are waiting for the Kingdom to be established. He said, “Do business [KJV- “occupy”] till I come.” (Luke 19:13, Luke 19:8-26) As always, [Christian action] requires the balanced approach that involves teaching the “whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27).^{xiv}

[See the Topics: [“Apostasy”](#) and [“Religions”](#) in Prophecy Central]

Non-controversial/ Non-judgmental

This kind of church is often described as “Seeker-sensitive.” It is the result of a ministry approach that caters to post-modern thought.

As its name implies, this world view rejects the outlook of the Modernists. Modernism, which had developed since the Enlightenment, taught that through science, logic, and reason, it was possible to identify, or establish absolute truth. The post-modern mindset was based on the newer philosophy of existentialism and its emphasis on the importance of one’s unique personal experience. Postmodernists say there is no universal truth: only relative truth, depending on its cultural context.^{xv}

Therefore “my truth” is not necessarily the same as “your

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truth,” and one is not necessarily better than the other.

This led to a new definition of “tolerance,” which used to mean the willingness to treat another person well in spite of that person’s beliefs or conditions. Because of relativism, tolerance now means the willingness to accept other people’s ideas and beliefs as equal to our own ideas and beliefs. This is a logical absurdity, and would not work in the real world for any business person, doctor, scientist or engineer. But many people like the concept because it allows them to do what they want without guilt. They often quote what has become one of the best-known verses in the Bible:

Judge not, that you be not judged. – Matthew 7:1

When people use this verse flippantly, they might not realize that God Himself will judge them (Psalm 1:1-6; John 3:18; Romans 2:1-5; Romans 14:12; 2 Peter 2:9; Revelation 20:11-15), and He even expects godly Christians to judge, in the sense of discerning what is right and wrong.^{xvi}

But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. For “who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?” But we have the mind of Christ. – 1 Corinthians 2:15-16

Some evangelical churches have adopted the postmodern philosophy. They still believe in salvation through the atonement of Christ, but they are cautious not to offend “seekers” in the process, some of them avoid direct biblical teaching about sexual immorality, abortion, euthanasia, and other sins.

Because they offer a popular message, some of these

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congregations have become megachurches.

Some of these non-confrontational churches cater to the “consumer mentality” of this generation. Those who attend such churches make their choice on the basis of the question, “What’s in it for me and my family?”

A few of these churches are characterized as “emergent” because of their many departures from the traditional churches. Some of their teaching is considered heretical—such as denying belief in a literal heaven and hell, and emphasizing instead, the “here and now.”

Because so many churches are complacent about ungodly behavior, our culture has continued its immoral decline.

[See the Topics: [“Apostasy”](#) and [“Religions”](#) in Prophecy Central]

[Clergy and Congress Poll Numbers Down, Darwin’s Up: Who’s to Blame?](#)

Jan 1, 2014 -While Pope Francis was named Time Magazine’s Person of the Year,[2013] a Gallup poll revealed that 53 percent of Americans have lost trust in the clergy. These are the worst ratings in 40 years. This article claims that the moral decline of the nation is the fault of the voices in the pulpit.

Former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich recently said, “The only hope for America is for her clergy to start preaching the Cross of Christ again.”

Charles Finney--the famous evangelist of the Second Great Awakening--faced a similar situation in 1873. In his message, "The Decay of Conscience" he said,

If immorality prevails in the land, the fault is ours in a great degree. If there is a decay of conscience, the pulpit is responsible for it. ...If Satan rules in our halls of legislation, the pulpit is responsible for it. (Dan Cummins – Charisma News)

[Are Christians to blame for a Godless entertainment industry?](#)

Jan. 29, 2014 - This year's Grammy Awards featured same-sex weddings, profanity, sexual immorality, insults to Christianity, and a shocking tribute to Satanism. The show does still have awards in the Best Gospel/Contemporary Christian Music category, but some Christian artists are wondering if they should even pursue awards from such a godless organization. Natalie Grant was obviously disturbed and left the event early.

Al Menconi, author of *The Christian Music Challenge*, thinks the moral decline of the music industry is partly because Christian music has mostly withdrawn from the secular stage and formed its own organizations. He said,

"The Hollywood industry is run by Hell because we chose to leave--and it's the same with DVDs... we've got to get back in there and have a presence there." (OneNewsNow)

[Fate of Christianity in UK not too far from U.S., warns evangelist](#)

July 8, 2014 - If Christians are not revived soon, the church in America will continue to decline, just as it has done in the United Kingdom. British evangelist Nate Steuer of Jeremiah Cry Ministries laments the fact that church buildings in England have now become museums, stores and even nightclubs. Evangelism there is stifled by a strong belief in evolution and the homosexual-rights movement. He says the same condition is beginning to affect the American church:

"And if Christians do not wake up, and they do not go from the seats into the streets, make their voices be heard, it's going to be just like the UK."^{xvii} (OneNewsNow)

Bible Prophecy and World Events

[Good news, bad news: Barna shares state of church, family](#)

Sept. 27, 2014 - Pollster George Barna told the Values Voter Summit that the United States is not the same country it was 20 years ago. The three foundations of our past strength--family, church, and government--are all "cracked if not broken." He also said,

- Four percent of adults have a biblical worldview
- The number of couples who choose to cohabitate has doubled since 1990 while marriage has declined from 72 percent in 1960 to 51 percent in 2012
- Only 33 percent of Americans say they follow politics closely

On the positive side, Barna said, "Do not give up hope." There are still enough Christians in the country to turn the tide if they can be mobilized. (OneNewsNow)

['Hip' church gives biblical Christians new label: 'Hater'](#)

Dec. 18, 2014 - Writer Jim Fletcher points out that a growing number of young millennial pastors are challenging traditional evangelicals "to basically get out of the way, because their time is past."

Witness Mr. Jonathan Merritt. I consider Merritt--son of former president of the Southern Baptist Convention Dr. James Merritt--to be a leading change agent within evangelicalism, in the broader attempt to move evangelicals to center-left perspectives.

One example is Merritt's approval of Rob Bell, who lost his standing with mainstream Christianity when he questioned whether or not hell was real. He then moved into the orb of the

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Oprah Winfrey Network. Commenting on the affair, Merritt said that Bell did well, “by quietly bidding his haters adieu, leaving his church and attaining even more success.” (WND)

False Christs/ False Prophets

Jesus indicated that the time frame for things to come—from “The beginning of birth pains,” through the Tribulation, Armageddon, and up to Our Lord’s Glorious Return, would be approximately one generation.

³² *“Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. ³³ So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors!*

³⁴ *Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. ³⁵ Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. – Matthew 24:32-35*

This passage is explained in our book, *Connecting the Dots: A Handbook of Bible Prophecy*:

The word for "generation" (Gr. *genea*), can have several meanings. Some think it means the Jewish people will not become extinct before these prophecies are fulfilled.

However, the most obvious meaning is the generation of people who are living when these events begin to come to pass in startling succession. The first and most amazing fulfillment is the rebirth of the nation of

Bible Prophecy and World Events

Israel. The fig tree is one of the symbols of Israel.

Since Israel became a nation in 1948, we have every right to consider ourselves the last generation of this age. But how long is a generation? Thirty-five years? Forty years? There are various biblical possibilities. It has now been more than 60 years since this great event. But notice that Jesus said this generation will not *pass away* until all these things have happened! If the rebirth of Israel is the starting point, this generation will not have passed away until the last person living at that time has died. That gives another 60 years or so! But we can seriously expect His return any day. Some of us have believed this for many years now, but in any case, his return is nearer now than it ever was before!^{xviii}

Jesus warned that there would be false messiahs. History has been punctuated by a steady flow of such usurpers. But in our own generation there have been many notable false saviors—some claiming to be Jesus--and amazing numbers of others that were “here today and gone tomorrow.” In this one generation we have heard of Father Divine, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Lord Maitreya, Sun Myung Moon, Jim Jones, David Koresh, Jose de Luis de Jesus Miranda, and others.

Here are some additions from this year:

[See the Topics: [“False Christs/False Prophets”](#) in Prophecy Central]

Lord Rayel tweets about Adam Muema

March 1, 2014 - San Diego State running back Adam Muema claimed that he believes in Lord Rayel, a person on the Internet who claims to be the second coming of Jesus.^{xix}

An article in the Christian News documented some other examples of “false Christs” around the world today:^{xx}

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- Alan John Miller and Mary Luck. Miller - Queensland, Australia - claim to be reincarnations of Jesus and Mary Magdalene.

- Sergey Anatolyevitch Torop, the “Jesus of Siberia,” has more than 5000 followers.

- Brazil: Alvarro Theiss, also known as Inri Cristo, maintains a compound that houses his followers, who are mostly women.

Another interesting fulfillment of this prophecy is the psychological condition known as the “Jerusalem Syndrome.” This is a baffling delusion that affects about 100 visitors to the Holy Land each year. Many of these tourists suddenly believe that they are Jesus.^{xxi}(UT-San Diego)

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- ⁱ Ron Graff, *The Church in Prophecy and History: Revelation Commentary Chapters 1 through 3*, <http://www.bible-prophecy.com/revelation/v1/>
- ⁱⁱ Revelation Commentary <http://www.bible-prophecy.com/revelation/rev003015-1.htm>
- ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.bible-prophecy.com/revelation/rev003015-1.htm>)
- ^{iv} Ron Graff, *The Church in Prophecy and History*, p. 270,
- ^v Christianity Today, [Is Gospel Amnesia Creating a Third Great Schism?](#)
- ^{vi} Christianity Today, [Do Bible Skeptics Now Equal Bible Lovers? American Bible Society Thinks So](#)
- ^{vii} The Telegraph – UK, [Former archbishop of Canterbury: Britain is a post-Christian nation](#)
- ^{viii} Christianity Today, [Five Reasons Why Most Southern Baptist Churches Baptize Almost No Millennials](#)
- ^{ix} WND, [Is hit book 'Jesus Calling' pushing New Age?](#)
- ^x Albert Mohler, The Osteen Predicament — Mere Happiness Cannot Bear the Weight of the Gospel, <http://www.albertmohler.com/2014/09/03/the-osteen-predicament-mere-happiness-cannot-bear-the-weight-of-the-gospel/>
- ^{xi} Here's What Protestants in 18 Latin American Countries Believe and Practice, Christianity Today, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/gleanings/2014/november/heres-what-protestants-latin-america-countries-believe-pew.html>
- ^{xii} World Magazine, The prosperity gospel in Africa, <http://www.worldmag.com/2014/11/the-prosperity-gospel-in-africa>
- ^{xiii} Challenging Preterism, <http://www.therefinersfire.org/preterism.htm>

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- ^{xiv} Ron Graff, *2012: The Year the World Didn't End*, pp. 75 ff. Free download of the entire hypertext book [pdf format] at <http://Bible-prophecy.com/books/year2012/year2012.pdf>
- ^{xv} Ron Graff, *The Church in Prophecy and History*, p. 278.
- ^{xvi} Ibid. p. 269.
- ^{xvii} OneNewsNow, [Fate of Christianity in UK not too far from U.S., warns evangelist](#)
- ^{xviii} Ron Graff and Lambert Dolphin, *Connecting the Dots: A Handbook of Bible Prophecy*, pp. 26-27
- ^{xix} U-T San Diego, [Lord Rayel tweets about Adam Muema](#)
- ^{xx} Christian News, [False Christs Arising Worldwide Claiming to Be Second Coming of Jesus](#)
- ^{xxi} Wikipedia, Jerusalem Syndrome, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jerusalem_syndrome