

The Man of Lawlessness

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1 Now we beseech you, brethren, by
the coming of our Master Yahshua
Messiah, and by our gathering
together unto him,

2 That ye be not soon shaken in mind,
or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor
by word, nor by letter as from us, as
that the day of Messiah is at hand.

3 Let no man deceive you by any means:
for that day shall not come, except there
come a falling away first, and that man
of sin be revealed the son of perdition;

4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself
above all that is called Elohim, or that is
worshipped; so that he as Elohim sitteth
in the temple of Elohim, shewing himself
that he is Elohim.

5 Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?

6 And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.

7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.

8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Master shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:

9 Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,

10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

11 And for this cause Elohim shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:

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The Apostasy

In verse 3 we read that apostasy will come before the Day of the Lord comes, and the man of lawlessness will be revealed.

3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed the son of perdition;

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Apostasy means a falling away (from Elohim). Paul was once accused of teaching apostasy from Moses (Acts 21:21). Obviously, the apostasy had not taken place then, but has it taken place now? Let's look at what's happened since then.

From the first century to the time of the reformation the church went progressively into ever deeper darkness. I am no expert on church history and only want to give a bare outline. Persecution kept the church fairly pure until the time of Constantine.

After he became Roman emperor in the year 312 he made Christianity the official religion of the empire.

Everything then began to change. What should have been a blessing became a curse. Heathen temples were turned into churches and heathen festivals were christianised. Images and idols were worshipped. Ritual prayer replaced prayer from the heart. Bishops and church leaders began to be powerful and wealthy people.

Time passed and the church became more and more one with the world. Political and military power replaced spiritual. Armies set out in the name of Christ to recapture the Holy Land, slaughtering large numbers of Jews and Muslims and others wherever they went. Worse was yet to come. For several hundred years the inquisition terrorised Europe.

This was the systematic torture and killing of all who disagreed with or stood against the teachings of the church. Millions of faithful followers of Jesus besides Jews and many others were put to death in the name of Christ and religion. Bibles were only available in Latin and only a few educated people could read them.

If the apostles had been given a preview of church history they would have torn out their hair in utter disbelief. If they could have foreseen the idolatry, the power struggles, the corruption and the bloodshed all done in the name of Christ, they would have sat down for 7 days like the prophet Ezekiel by the river Chebar astonished and dumbfounded.

If words have any meaning then
the word *apostasy* describes the
state of the church in the middle
ages.

In the past century the western world as a whole has largely fallen away from any practical belief in Elohim. In Islamic, Hindu and Buddhist countries religion is a visible part of daily life.

However in those countries that have in the past been called Christian, public life continues with almost no reference to Elohim. Anyone who speaks of his creator in public is now considered by most people to be fanatical or eccentric.

General apostasy from the Christian faith, in fulfilment of this verse, can now therefore be considered as an accomplished fact. The falling away of which Paul spoke has taken place.

We can easily see apostasy in history, but there is another apostasy of a more serious nature. It is the root of all apostasy and Yahshua himself speaks of it in his message to the first church: “I have this against you, that you have apostasised from your first love” (Rev 2:4).

We do better to examine our own hearts to find apostasy there, than to analyse its outward expression elsewhere. It is because we have fallen from our first love that others fall from their belief in Elohim.

It is better that we repent of our own sins than the sins of history. Revival and restoration of our own first love for Yahshua will cause the world to turn from its unbelief and continued blasphemy of the name of Elohim.

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We must now consider the various statements Paul makes about the man of lawlessness. He is lawless; he is the son of destruction (v3);

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he exalts himself; he takes his seat in the temple of God (v4); his coming and presence will be accompanied by all power and miracles and false wonders (v9). The Apostle John writes in similar terms of the antichrist.

3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed the son of perdition;

4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself
above all that is called Elohim, or that
is worshipped; so that he as Elohim
sitteth in the temple of Elohim,
shewing himself that he is Elohim.

Lawlessness is an established feature of modern society. You only need to read the morning paper or listen to the news to know this. Crime statistics are soaring in most countries. Less and less places all over the world are safe to walk around at night. Travel in many parts of the world is increasingly dangerous. More and more we need to ask for the Yahweh's protection in our daily lives.

It is easy, but not very helpful, to dwell on the outward manifestations of lawlessness. Everybody knows about it. It is of far more value to look at its spiritual roots. Who were the lawless people in the New Testament? The Greeks? The Romans? The Sadducees? The Zealots? We find the surprising answer in Matthew 23:28. Jesus says to the Pharisees, “Inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and *lawlessness*”.

The Pharisees didn't go around mugging people. They were the Bible students of their day. They spent much of their time studying and teaching the law. How could they be lawless?

They made two great mistakes. Firstly the law that they taught was largely not the law of Elohim, but their additions to it. Secondly it was not a law written on their hearts and an inward part of their lives and experience. It was simply retained by much study in their heads.

When a preacher in a pulpit holds forth the views of his denomination, without ever searching to see if he has the mind of Elohim, he is safe from the law of the land, but will give account on the day of judgement.

When a Bible teacher who claims to know Yahweh and to have heard the voice of the Holy Spirit rejects the word of Elohim to proclaim the opinions of man, I believe he is the most guilty. James wisely says, “Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that we shall receive a greater judgement”.

If we see lawlessness in the world, we must search our hearts and root out the lawlessness from there. Judgement must begin at the house of Elohim.

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Who is in the midst?

We read in verse 4 that the man of lawlessness takes his seat in the temple of God.

Is it possible that antichrist can take the place of honour in a gathering of true believers? We find the answer in verse 7. Literally translated this reads, “He who restrains (will do so) until he becomes *out of the midst*”. Yahshua said, “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in their midst” (Mat 18:20). If Yahshua is in the midst, there is no room for the man of lawlessness.

If Yahshua becomes *out of the midst* there is then a vacuum waiting to be filled. Note the passive of the word gathered. Yahweh does the gathering, not we ourselves. The people of Yahweh come together in different ways. Some are truly drawn together by His Spirit and genuinely meet in the name of Yahshua.

Yahshua is then in the midst according to his promise. Others meet of their own or someone else's will, or through habit, or because they think they should. Yahshua has given no guarantee that he will be *in their midst*.

Church history illustrates and clarifies this for us. The early believers met together often against opposition and in personal danger, but they continued to meet, as they were powerfully drawn by the Holy Spirit and by love for one another.