

God's People Have a History of Rejecting Him

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There is a trend throughout the scriptures of the Holy Bible that we need to look at today. Throughout the record of scripture the people whom God has called, starting from Adam and Eve, have always rejected Him. We're going to prove that today. We're going to go through the Bible very quickly and show that there is a trend of those whom God calls, to turn and reject Him, going into apostasy. That word, apostasy, was used a lot back when the Worldwide Church of God blew apart. The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia says this about apostasy: "a falling away, a withdrawal, a defection", obviously from God. Falling away from God, defecting from God, withdrawing from God—that's apostasy. As we go through the scriptures today, please note this consistent and very disturbing trend where the very people whom God has called reject Him and turn their back on Him.

The title of the sermon today is:

God's People Have a History of Rejecting Him

We're going to start with Adam and Eve and we're going to go to the present day, and we'll see why, as we go through, this is happening and why it is so important for us to realize it today. The first point we want to make is:

1. The angels rejected God before the very first human beings were created.

The first point is, let's look at the angels. We'll just use one scripture—let's go to Jude, right before the book of Revelation, and let's just read verse 6. Jude, being the half-brother of Jesus Christ, saw a lot of his brother growing up and his writings carry a good deal of weight.

Jude:6 *And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, [they left, they left the job God called them to do, they left the throne of God] he [referring to God Almighty] hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. (KJV)*

We see here that Satan rejected God before the first humans were created. We have record of that in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28—we won't turn there. Satan, as you recall in those accounts, wanted to replace God. Therefore he rejected God and turned the light on himself and took millions of angels with him. This trend of rejecting God started long before Adam and Eve.

2. The pre-Flood world between Adam and Eve and the time of Noah.

God spoke directly to Adam and Eve—they heard His voice. God created them, He talked to them and He instructed them. Notice what happened approximately seventeen hundred years later after the first two human beings interacted personally with God—seventeen hundred years plus or minus a few hundred years. Let's go to Genesis 6:5—look what happened seventeen hundred years after God personally spoke with the first two human beings that He created.

Genesis 6:5 *And God [YHVH, Jehovah] saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. (KJV)*

Kind of sounds like today—it was worse then but it's getting to that point today. By definition evil is something that is ungodly. If you choose to live an evil life then you choose to reject God and live an ungodly life. We see here, with very few exceptions, in seventeen hundred years man turned from hearing the Word of God to what we just read, to being totally ungodly—rejecting God. We know, of course, that Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were faithful, and as a result of that God gave them very special, very great promises. Notice what happened, though, when the nation of Israel formed.

3. Ancient Israel.

We talk about that at the time of the spring holy days. Immediately after coming out of Egypt, after witnessing all the miracles—you look at the ten miracles and it just boggles the mind. The parting of the Red Sea and the destroying of Pharaoh and his army and all of that, witnessing all of God's miracles—Ancient Israel then, over and over and over again, rejected God repeatedly. They went into apostasy—over and over.

The first time Moses was on the mountain he delayed his coming—we read about that during the days of Unleavened Bread. What did Ancient Israel immediately do? They demanded an idol! They put pressure on Aaron to make a molten calf and then they said this: The thing that was just made with human hands, this is the god that brought you out of Egypt. How ludicrous could that be, but that is exactly what happened. Exodus 32, we won't turn there but we can read the account. God took them and wasted the people who wanted to destroy them on the way to the Promised Land. They went over to spy out the Promised Land in Numbers 13 (we won't turn there), but the spies brought an evil report. They said there are giants there, they're too powerful, they're going to kill us and they did not trust in God. Thereby they rejected God and God had them wander in the wilderness until that whole generation died out.

You would think that after all of this and forty years of wandering in the wilderness, they might learn but they didn't. After coming into the Promised Land, Joshua warned Israel of the following—let's go Joshua 23:6. Joshua is getting old as Moses was old before Israel went into the Promised Land. Remember, God took Moses' life and would not let

him into the Promised Land. Moses issued a number of warnings to Israel—we don't have time to go over those—and Joshua, toward the end of his life here in chapter 23, is doing the same thing. Joshua is speaking to Israel.

Joshua 23:6 *Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, [notice these next five words] that ye turn not aside [don't turn away from God, don't reject God, don't turn your back on God] there from to the right hand or to the left;*

7) That ye come not among these nations, these that remain among you; neither make mention of the name of their gods, [don't even mention the name of their gods] nor cause to swear by them, neither serve them, nor bow yourselves unto them: (KJV)

Don't do it, God says. Joshua is giving God's instructions.

8) But cleave unto the LORD your God, as ye have done unto this day. (KJV)

Jumping to verse 15.

15) Therefore it shall come to pass, that as all good things are come upon you, which the LORD your God promised you; so shall the LORD bring upon you all evil things, until he have destroyed you from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you.

16) When ye have transgressed the covenant of the LORD your God, which he commanded you, and have gone and served other gods, and bowed yourselves to them; then shall the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and ye shall perish quickly from off the good land which he hath given unto you. (KJV)

Joshua is giving Israel this warning from God because God knew the tendency of Israel, and the tendency, as we're going to see, was to reject God. When things got good, they would drift away from God, they would start inquiring about how the other nations worshipped their gods and they would follow in that pursuit. Then times would get bad, God would withdraw His blessings, and now all of a sudden, when they were oppressed or taken captive, they would repent and start the cycle all over again. God would bless them once they repented and then they would drift away, over and over as we're going to see.

Let's look at what Israel did after Joshua's death during the time of the Judges. Let's go to Judges 2:11. We could spend hours going through all of the scriptures; we're just going to hit the highlights. This is the time of the Judges. Joshua is dead, Joshua gave them warning—did they heed the warning?

Judges 2:11 *And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim: (KJV)*

Just what God told them not to do.

12) And they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the LORD to anger. (KJV)

Verse 13 is the key to the trend.

13) And they forsook the LORD [YHVH, Jehovah], and served Baal and Ashtaroth. (KJV)

They forsook God, rejected God. Now jump to chapter 10, verse 6. This is not an isolated incident, this happened throughout the book of Judges. They repeated it over and over and over again.

Judges 10:6 *And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim, and Ashtaroth, and the gods of Syria, and the gods of Zidon, and the gods of Moab, and the gods of the children of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines, and forsook the LORD, and served not him. (KJV)*

Can you imagine? They would go worship all of these gods of other nations and they would turn their back on God Almighty who brought them into the Promised Land and that shows you the tendency of those whom God deals with. After all of His blessings and His instruction and the prophets He sends and the leaders He sends, they just turn their back. Later, Israel rejected God again but this time they did so by wanting a king and not wanting God to rule them—they wanted a human being to rule them. Let's go to 1 Samuel 8:4. Samuel was a prophet and no, Samuel wasn't perfect, neither were his sons perfect, but Israel used that as an excuse to reject God.

1 Samuel 8:4 *Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah,*

5) And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. (KJV)

We just want to be like all these other people.

6) But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD.

7) And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, (KJV)

Samuel took it personally and God said, no, they're not rejecting you, it's Me they're rejecting.

7 continued) ... that I should not reign over them.

8) According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee. (KJV)

Here in 1 Samuel 8, God is saying to Samuel, since the day I brought them out of Egypt look at what they've done. They don't stay loyal to Me, they don't stay focused on Me. They've got wandering eyes and they're looking at all the other nations and their gods, and how can we worship those gods, and wouldn't it be fun to bow down to this one or that one and maybe they'll bless us—and the list goes on and on. As we know, Israel made Saul king and that came to a very bad end. Thankfully, David and later Solomon became kings, but after Solomon's death Israel split in two. Rehoboam was Solomon's son and he became king of Judah, the Southern Kingdom, and Jeroboam became king of the northern Ten Tribes, the Northern Kingdom. After that split was there any change? Did anybody turn to God? Did anybody reject the gods around them and walk the righteous path? Let's see—let's go to 1 Kings 14:21. This refers to Rehoboam, son of Solomon, king of Judah.

***1 Kings 14:21** And Rehoboam the son of Solomon reigned in Judah. Rehoboam was forty and one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the LORD did choose out of all the tribes of Israel, to put his name there. And his mother's name was Naamah an Ammonitess. (KJV)*

God chose Jerusalem, Rehoboam reigned in Jerusalem, the Temple was in Jerusalem, but guess what happened, verse 22.

22) And Judah did evil in the sight of the LORD, and they provoked him to jealousy with their sins which they had committed, above all that their fathers had done.

23) For they also built them high places, and images, and groves, on every high hill, and under every green tree.

24) And there were also sodomites in the land: [the Hebrew for sodomite means a male prostitute] and they did according to all the abominations of the nations which the LORD cast out before the children of Israel. (KJV)

This is just mind-blowing because Judah refused to worship the very God who brought them into the Promised Land and was responsible for defeating all these nations. Judah goes and worships the gods of the defeated nations. What kind of sense does that make? God Almighty destroyed all these nations and destroyed their gods and yet Judah just wouldn't let it go—they go and they worship the gods of the nations whom God Almighty defeated. Makes no sense whatsoever.

Now let's look at the northern Ten Tribes. After the split occurred, Jeroboam changed the dates of the holy days, and we're going to see why in just a minute. He also

established a false temple in the Northern Kingdom so that the people wouldn't travel down to Jerusalem and then he would lose control—he wanted to keep them in the north and he wanted to control the religion. Let's go to 1 Kings 12:26. Notice Jeroboam's motive—it wasn't to serve to God, it was to serve himself.

1 Kings 12:26 *And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David: (KJV)*

They'll go back to Rehoboam, he's saying.

27) If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah. (KJV)

If I let them go down there to keep the holy days.

28) Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, [does this sound familiar?] and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. (KJV)

They created two calves and said these calves that didn't exist prior to this point brought you out of the land of Egypt—nothing new under the sun.

29) And he set the one in Bethel, [that's in the south] and the other put he in Dan [which is up north].

30) And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan.

31) And he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi. (KJV)

Violating God's instructions.

32) And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, [not in the proper month] on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah, and he offered upon the altar. So did he in Bethel, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: [create your own gods then sacrifice to your gods] and he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made.

33) So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Bethel the fifteenth day of the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart; (KJV)

He came up with the idea of having the feast in the eighth month contrary to what we should do.

33 continued) ... and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel: (KJV)

Now notice this, it's not a feast unto God, it's a feast unto the children of Israel—it's party time for the children of Israel, not a feast to worship God.

33 continued) ... and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense. (KJV)

Now the kingdoms are split. What we're going to do is track the kings who followed Rehoboam in Judah, and Jeroboam in Israel—let's go to 1 Kings 16:30. We're going to talk about King Ahab who was king of the northern Ten Tribes. Was there a turn around now that Rehoboam and Jeroboam were dead—did they follow God?

1 Kings 16:30 *And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD above all that were before him. (KJV)*

More so than everyone before him.

31) And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, [he took a pagan wife, not a good sign] and went and served Baal, and worshipped him.

32) And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. (KJV)

In the Northern Kingdom he totally rejects God, builds a temple for Baal and worships Baal. Let's go to 1 Kings 22 and look at his son, verse 51—Ahaziah. The son walks in his father's footsteps.

1 Kings 22:15 *Ahaziah the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned two years over Israel. (KJV)*

Notice what he did in verse 52.

52) And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of his father, and in the way of his mother [Jezebel], and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin:

53) For he served Baal, and worshipped him, and provoked to anger the LORD God of Israel, according to all that his father had done. (KJV)

Wow—it just goes on and on and on. Now let's go to 2 Chronicles 21 and see what the following kings of Judah did—the Southern Kingdom. We'll begin in verse 5, talking about Jehoram the king of Judah. It gets worse as we're going to see.

2 Chronicles 21:5 *Jehoram was thirty and two years old when he began to*

reign, and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem.

6) And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, [just as bad as them] like as did the house of Ahab: for he had the daughter of Ahab to wife: [bad decision] and he wrought that which was evil in the eyes of the LORD.

11) Moreover he made high places in the mountains of Judah, and caused the inhabitants of Jerusalem to commit fornication, and compelled Judah thereto. (KJV)

Horrible example. Judah is now as a nation just sinning mightily, turning their back on God, rejecting God. Let's go to 2 Chronicles 25 and see another king of Judah, this is Amaziah. Notice what he did, and as I said as we go through these, it's getting worse and worse and worse.

2 Chronicles 25:1 *Amaziah was twenty and five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem.*

14) Now it came to pass, after that Amaziah was come from the slaughter of the Edomites, [notice what he did] that he brought the gods of the children of Seir, and set them up to be his gods, and bowed down himself before them, and burned incense unto them. (KJV)

He takes the gods of the nations he defeated and worships those gods. If those gods were so great, why were they defeated? It's just ludicrous. Shows you the power of Satan and shows you the tendency of the human mind. Now let's go to chapter 28:1, King Ahaz of Judah.

2 Chronicles 28:1 *Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem: but he did not that which was right in the sight of the LORD, like David his father:*

2) For he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and made also molten images for Baalim.

3) Moreover he burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burnt his children in the fire, (KJV)

Can you imagine? Burning your children alive in a fire as a sacrifice. I can't prove this but I think one of the reasons this is done (I'm not saying it is in this case) was if a king has sons who could ultimately, as they mature and grow older, turn against him and kill him, and they ascend to the throne, and one way to prevent that is to eliminate your sons. What better way to do it than offer your sons as a burnt offering to some pagan god. Not saying that happened in this case but it certainly happened before.

3 continued) ... after the abominations of the heathen whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel. (KJV)

It's just amazing that God cast these nations out and so what Israel does is say, hey, they burned their children in the fire, let's go do the same thing. Look what good it did

both Israel and Judah and all these pagan nations.

4) He sacrificed also and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree. (KJV)

Let's go to chapter 33; we're going to talk about another king of Judah, Manasseh.

2 Chronicles 33:1 *Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem: [he had a long reign]*

2) But did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, like unto the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel.

3) For he built again the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down, and he reared up altars for Baalim, and made groves, and worshipped all the host of heaven, [astrology, all of that] and served them.

4) Also he built altars in the house of the LORD, whereof the LORD had said, In Jerusalem shall my name be for ever. (KJV)

He built altars to pagan gods inside God's Temple.

5) And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD. (KJV)

Inside the Temple and outside the Temple.

6) And he caused his children to pass through the fire [human sacrifice] in the valley of the son of Hinnom: also he observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards: he wrought much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.

7) And he set a carved image, the idol which he had made, in the house of God ... (KJV)

He carves up an image, puts it in God's Temple and says this is what you ought to worship—if you can imagine that.

9) So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen, whom the LORD had destroyed before the children of Israel. (KJV)

Let's look at one more king in Jerusalem, verse 21; his name is Amon.

2 Chronicles 33:21 *Amon was two and twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned two years in Jerusalem.*

22) But he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, as did Manasseh his

father: for Amon sacrificed unto all the carved images which Manasseh his father had made, and served them; (KJV)

We could go on and on and on but this is enough—it turns your stomach. After everything God did for Ancient Israel to pull them together, fulfill the promises he made to Abraham, get them out of Egypt, miracle after miracle through the Red Sea, into the Promised Land—look at their track record. It just makes you sick.

Let's notice three scriptures where God condemns those who reject Him. We've been in the Old Testament so these three will be in the Old Testament. Let's go to Deuteronomy 6:14. Moses is warning Israel before they went into the Promised Land shortly before his death—notice what he said because Moses knew the tendency of Israel. I'm sure Moses was very pleased to just lay down his life and go to sleep after all he'd been through with Israel.

Deuteronomy 6:14 *Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you; (KJV)*

Did they [heed] that? Obviously not.

15) (For the LORD thy God is a jealous God among you) lest the anger of the LORD thy God be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth. (KJV)

You go worship other gods and you're going to die. That was the warning when they went into the Promised Land and we've just seen what they did. How bad does it get? Now let's go to the prophet Isaiah, chapter 30. Isaiah gets to the heart of the matter because he gets to the core of the beliefs of the people and their tendencies. Isaiah 30:9; this sums it up and this applies to today also. As we read this, keep in mind what's going on today.

Isaiah 30:9 *That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children [these are God's children] that will not hear the law of the LORD:*

10) Which say to the seers, See not [we don't want you to have any visions]; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things [we don't want to hear the truth], speak unto us smooth things [easy to digest, that are pleasant, that are comfortable, we don't want to get out of our comfort zone], prophecy deceits: (KJV)

We would rather you tell us lies that sound good than tell us the truth.

11) Get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path ... (KJV)

That means the righteous path of God—get off the road, don't follow in the Father's footsteps, don't follow in Christ's footsteps, get out of the way.

11 continued) ... cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us. (KJV)

We don't want to hear about God, we don't want to talk about God and remember when God was speaking out of Mount Sinai. After that happened once, then Israel came to Moses and said, we don't want to hear God anymore, we can't stand it. You go up and talk to God and tell us what He says. This is their attitude—cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us.

12) Wherefore thus saith the Holy One of Israel, Because ye despise this word ...

You despise Me and you despise what I have to say, and then He goes on to condemn them. This is the mentality of those whom God has called and this is what they do in thankfulness for God's calling.

A third scripture, Zechariah 1:4, second-to-last book of the Old Testament—another warning. At the end of this verse is the truth, the reality. God is speaking through Zechariah.

Zechariah 1:4 *Be ye not as your fathers, unto whom the former prophets have cried, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; [we know the LORD of Hosts is God Almighty who dwells between the cherubim] Turn ye now from your evil ways, and from your evil doings: [here's what they did] but they did not hear, nor hearken unto me, saith the LORD. (KJV)*

They didn't hear, they didn't listen and that's the record of Ancient Israel.

That leads us to the fourth point.

4. Time of Christ.

The Jews rejected Christ because they would rather hold to their tradition. They rejected the truth, they rejected the prophecies of the Old Testament about the Messiah because it didn't fit with their comfort zone. It didn't fit with their beliefs. Let's go to Mark 7:1. I'm going to read this out of the New Living Translation because it puts it so neat, it just gets to the core of the meaning of the scriptures plus it's in modern English.

Mark 7:1 *One day some of the Pharisees and teachers of religious law arrived from Jerusalem to confront Jesus. (NLT)*

They weren't coming to get along, they weren't coming to reach some common ground—they wanted to confront Jesus.

2) They noticed that some of Jesus' disciples failed to follow the usual Jewish ritual of hand washing before eating. (NLT)

Verses 3 and 4 are parenthetical.

- 3) *(The Jews, especially the Pharisees, do not eat until they have poured water over their cupped hands, as required by their ancient traditions.*
- 4) *Similarly, they eat nothing bought from the market unless they have immersed their hands in water. This is but one of many traditions they have clung to—such as their ceremonial washing of cups, pitchers, and kettles.)*
- 5) *So the Pharisees and teachers of religious law asked him [Christ], “Why don’t your disciples follow our age-old customs? For they eat without first performing the hand-washing ceremony.”*
- 6) *Jesus replied, [notice He wasn’t too subtle] “You hypocrites! Isaiah was prophesying about you when he said, ‘These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far away.*
- 7) *Their worship is a farce, for they replace God’s commandments with their own man-made teachings.*
- 8) *For you ignore God’s specific laws and substitute your own traditions.” (NLT)*

You ignore God’s laws and you just obey your traditions. Don’t really care what God says, that’s a form of rejecting God.

- 9) *Then he said [Christ is saying], “You reject God’s laws in order to hold on to your own traditions.*
- 10) *For instance, Moses gave you this law from God: ‘Honor your father and mother,’ and ‘Anyone who speaks evil of father or mother must be put to death.’*
- 11) *But you say it is all right for people to say to their parents, ‘Sorry, I can’t help you. For I have vowed to give to God what I would have given to you.’ (NLT)*

Meaning I vowed to give it to the Temple and the greedy priests wanted the money and they couldn’t care less whether this man’s parents starved to death, and Christ is condemning that.

- 12) *You let them disregard their needy parents.*
- 13) *As such you break the law of God in order to protect your own tradition. (NLT)*

That is happening today, it happened back then: you break the law of God in order to protect your own tradition.

13 continued) And this is only one example, there are many, many others.” (NLT)

So what we see here is Christ condemning them—that they replace God’s law with their own traditions and they hold to their traditions more than they hold to what God says. They would rather obey what some rabbi wrote in some days past than what God wrote out of God’s own mouth, and what a condemnation that is. We’ll conclude with this, but the lesson is, we can’t do that—we can’t follow in those footsteps.

We've seen the Jews at Christ's time so let's go to the fifth point as we march through the Bible.

5. The first century Church.

Did anything change with people whom God called rejecting Him? There were some who left while Christ was still preaching and teaching them. Let's go to John 6:64. We see that there were people who rejected Christ—turned their back on Him—while He was teaching the truth about Himself and about His Father.

John 6:64 *But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.*

65) *And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. (KJV)*

We know God does the calling and turns those He's called over to Jesus Christ, and He [confirms] that God, the God whom the Jews worshipped, is His Father.

66) [Guess what their reaction was] *From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.*

67) *Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?*

Are you going to do the same, are you going to turn your back on Me?

68) *Then Simon Peter answered him, [this profound couple of verses] Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.*

69) *And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God. (KJV)*

The Living God is God the Father, Christ is His Son, but we see here in verse 66 that some left because Christ said God was His Father. They couldn't accept it and they just turned their back; they rejected Christ and they rejected God.

If you go through the New Testament, the apostles had to expel some for apostasy. We won't turn there but in 1 Timothy 1:19, Paul disfellowshipped Hymenaeus and Alexander because of apostasy. Then some disciples left and went back into the world. In 2 Timothy 4:10 (we won't turn there), Paul says, Demas has forsaken me having loved this present world. I love this world more than I love you, God, or I love this world more than I love God's Word or Jesus Christ, and I'm just going to do my own thing. Then some rejected the true God and His Son. We were in Jude earlier, let's go back to verse 4 of Jude—right before the book of Revelation. Notice what Jude says—this was happening as Jude was writing.

Jude:4 *For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, [notice this] and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. (KJV)*

When you deny God and Christ, what do you do? You reject Them, you turn your back on Them, you don't follow Them, you don't obey Them, you don't love Them, you don't worship Them. Jude is saying it happened back in his day.

Then after the death of the last apostle, the Apostle John—over the next two hundred years everything changed completely. During that two hundred years the Sabbath was changed to Sunday, Passover was changed to Easter, and the trinity replaced the true knowledge of God and Jesus Christ. Then people, “Christians”, were taught to bow down before statues, bow down before icons, kiss statues—sounds like what we just read in the Old Testament where they worshipped all these idols.

Nothing new under the sun—came right back into the “Christian” church—bowing down toward idols, bowing down toward icons and then worshipping the queen of heaven, Mary. That happened back in the times of the Old Testament, it happened before the Flood: worshipping the queen of heaven. Today in the Catholic church, the Eastern Orthodox church, people bow down before the statues of Mary, they kiss the toes of the statues of Mary, they have pictures of Mary and they worship and pray before Mary. Is there a trend here or not? We've seen it since right after Adam and Eve and it is carried through from before the Flood, then Ancient Israel, the kings of Israel down to the time of Christ, and then the early New Testament Church—nothing's changed. Going after idols, false gods, rejecting God and Christ, turning their back on Them.

Now let's come to the modern day:

6. The Worldwide Church of God.

I came into the Worldwide Church of God in the mid '60s and much was restored by God through Mr. Armstrong. Learned about the Sabbath, learned about the holy days, learned about God, learned about God's Law—learned a lot of things through Mr. Armstrong. But over time look what happened. Over time instead of the focus being to God and Christ, which it should have been all along and was in the early days, some began to worship a man. Some actually began to worship Mr. Armstrong, believing every word he said was God breathed. That every word he wrote, every word he spoke was on the level of scripture and people believed that, still do to this day.

Guess what crept in over time as we worshipped the institution of the Worldwide Church of God? The hierarchy, the campus, the college, the headquarters—that was the focus. As a young elder, I was ordained in 1974, and as a young elder I was told to look to headquarters—look to the folks at headquarters. In other words, focus on an institution, focus on a campus, focus on a place on this earth, focus on human beings. I was waiting to hear maybe we should focus on God and Christ rather than all this other stuff. We began worshipping an institution, worshipping a headquarters.

When Mr. Armstrong died and the symbol of all of that was gone—a human being—guess what happened? The same thing that happened in the early New Testament

Church after the first century AD (during the '100s, '200s, 300's AD). The same thing happened: Sabbath was changed to Sunday, Passover was changed to Easter, the trinity homogenized God—just mushed it all together, God, Christ, the Holy Spirit—so there was no identity of any of the three. Then, the last straw was, they removed God's name from the church. Now the Worldwide Church of God doesn't even have God's name in the church.

We see that during the Worldwide years there are many things we should be thankful for, that God revealed through Mr. Armstrong, but over time and then after his death, the same thing happened to Worldwide as happened to the early New Testament church.

Now the seventh point and the last point.

7. The present day.

Today, some in spiritual Israel are turning their backs on God and rejecting God just like after Adam and Eve died, just like during the time of the Flood, just like during the time of the kings of Israel, just like in the early New Testament Church or during the time of Christ—today some in spiritual Israel are rejecting God. I'm not saying that everybody does this—I don't mean that at all. But there are a number of people who continue to reject God by worshipping a man.

There are certain groups that worship the head of their group. We know people who don't read the Bible but they read what the head of the group says about the Bible. That is rejecting God, that is putting a man before God or a man between God and the individual. If you can't go to the Bible and read what the Bible says, something is wrong. The fact is, some groups say that their leader speaks for God. Just like with Mr. Armstrong—every word that comes out of my leader's mouth is God breathed. Here is the fact, here is the truth—only the Bible speaks for God. We need to remember that—only the Bible speaks for God because the Bible is the Word of God.

We try our best as ministers to accurately teach what the Bible says but any minister is a human being and is prone to mistakes. It is the job of all of us to do as the Bereans did—they received the word of Paul with great eagerness but they went back to the scriptures, unfolded the scrolls and proved whether it was true or not. They didn't accept Paul because he was an apostle. They said Paul sounds interesting, let's go check it out; they checked it out, found it was true in the Bible and then they believed it. Only the Bible speaks for God.

Some today reject God by worshipping an institution. There are some groups that have re-created the Worldwide Church of God—a college, a campus, an auditorium and the focus is all of that—physical things, plus the hierarchy, the leadership and all of that. They reject God by looking to headquarters, they reject God by worshipping an institution. What about looking to God and Christ? Shouldn't we be looking to God and

Christ more than a building or a hierarchy or a human being? Of course we should! We should all be focusing on God and Christ, and on God's Word, and on exercising the Holy Spirit.

Today, people can reject God by diminishing God. Sad to say that is happening more often than it should. One group is moving to become more Christ-centered, meaning pushing God aside, and the focus is on Jesus Christ. The Protestants do that already—might as well be a Protestant if you're going to do that. They refer to (and this is in writing, in print in their literature) Christ's commandments, Christ's holy days—that's not what the Bible says. There is an effort by Satan to get the focus off God Almighty. Yes, we should honor Jesus Christ, yes, he died for our sins, but He is the Son of the Living God, and shame on us if we diminish God and just push Him aside. There are some people I've talked to directly who believe God had no involvement in the Old Testament, no involvement in the New Testament and everything was done by Jesus Christ; when God speaks in the Old Testament that's Jesus Christ—that is not true, it is unscriptural and actually it is blasphemous, because They were both present in the Old Testament and the New Testament.

The other thing that is really sad is some people today just don't want to hear about God. I've come under a lot of criticism recently because of speaking about God. I've had people say, *how dare you speak about God, how dare you talk about the Almighty, how dare you talk about the Most High God*—those are exact quotes. I thought, now wait a minute, this is the Church of God, isn't it? We're marching toward the Kingdom of God, aren't we? These are God's holy days and God's commandments and you're saying shame on us that we can't talk about God? What's going on here? We know what's going on here—Satan is alive and well and he wants to pervert the truth and turn us away from God Almighty. Let's go to 1 John 2:22, just the latter part of the verse. Remember this verse and remember that our minds should be on God Almighty—Christ sits at His right hand, Christ is His Son, Christ is the Mediator, Christ is the High Priest, Christ is the Redemption, all honor and glory go to Jesus Christ. We can't forget that Christ sits at the right hand of His Father and said, the Father is greater than I, the Father is greater than all.

1 John 2:22 ... *He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.* (KJV)

We don't want to be antichrist. What this tells us is we have to honor both, and it's not an either/or thing, and those who say the Father had nothing to do with the Old Testament are denying the Father. Christ died for our sins and He is the redemption, and we need to honor both of those but we can't kick God the Father to the curb, figuratively speaking, because some would do that today just as Ancient Israel rejected God totally. They'd rather bow down before something that was created by human hands than worship the God who performed all of the miracles. One of the characteristics of the era that we live in, the Laodicean era (described in Revelation 3), is I have need of nothing—I'm just fine. What that tells us is people are in a comfort zone: I don't want to be disturbed, I don't want to be challenged—I'm just fine. I'm just

going to keep believing what I've already believed, I'm not going to grow in grace and knowledge, I'm not going to try and get to know God and Christ better. Just leave me alone, I'm very fine, thank you, and I'm just treading water until Christ returns. That is the mentality of the Laodicean era. As I've said before, a good ministerial friend of mine, who is in another group, says his greatest fear is that we're putting the brethren to sleep—talking about the group that he belongs to. We're putting brethren to sleep.

My point here, ending this seventh point, is that today people who have been called by God (spiritual Israel) are rejecting God because they don't want to hear about God, or their focus isn't on God, or they're in a comfort zone and they just don't want to be challenged. They don't want to learn anything new—not to say that everything new is necessarily truth, but if you find it in the Bible we had better, better believe it. We need to look to God and Christ, not to human beings and headquarters and buildings.

Let's conclude by summarizing and let's get to the ultimate lesson for us today. The Bible is there for us. The Bible is there as an example for us so we won't make the same mistakes and commit the same sins of those who have gone before us.

Do we now clearly see the record of scripture, from Adam to the present day, of the people whom God called rejecting Him, turning their backs on Him? It is seen over and over and over in God's Word, and with relatively few exceptions, God's people have rejected Him and they have gone into apostasy over and over and over. Old Testament, New Testament, Ancient Israel to today, it's there. Forsaking YHVH was the characteristic and the recurring sin of God's chosen people. I'll say it again—forsaking YHVH, God Almighty, Lord of Hosts, Most High God, was the characteristic and often recurring sin of God's chosen people. Because of this historical tendency that we've seen, that we've read about, God issues the following warnings for the latter days for us. Let's go to Matthew 24—very famous chapter. Those who focus on prophecy go to Matthew 24 very, very many times. We're going to begin in verse 3. Notice what Christ warned for the end days.

Matthew 24:3 *And as he [Christ] sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? [Pretty specific]*
10) *And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.*
11) *And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. (KJV)*

Just as the kings of Ancient Israel deceived the entire nation into worshipping the gods of the nations around them, and just as the early New Testament Church was deceived in doing away with the Sabbath and Passover and worshipping idols—you see false prophets arise and they will deceive many. Christ is talking about the end days, talking about these days. Now let's go to 1 Timothy 4:1—again talking about the latter days. Paul is writing to Timothy but he is talking about the latter days—it's a prophecy for us. Paul is referring this to God and the Holy Spirit.

1 Timothy 4:1 *Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; (KJV)*

I'm here to tell you if people say that God was not involved in the Old Testament, that is a doctrine of Satan—that is not true. It tells us very clearly that in these latter days people are going to leave the faith, leave the truth because they are going to pay attention to false prophets, seducing spirits—because if you think about it from Satan's viewpoint, what does Satan want us to do? He wants us to have a false picture of God and Christ. He wants us to worship something else, just as Ancient Israel did. He wants us to get off the path just as Ancient Israel did. Let's go to a third scripture, 2 Thessalonians 2:3. Paul is again prophesying about the last days.

2 Thessalonians 2:3 *Let no man deceive you by any means: [be on guard] for that day shall not come [referring to the coming of Christ], except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; (KJV)*

There's one Greek word that is translated "a falling away" and that is Strong's #646, and guess what it is, it's the Greek word "apostasia" and it means *a defection from truth, a falling away, a forsaking*. We get the English word "apostasy" from this word. Paul is saying there is going to be a falling away, an apostasia before Christ returns—something that we have to be aware of. Today, there are those whom God has personally called who are diminishing Him and who are rejecting Him. That is sad but it's happened since Adam and Eve—nothing new under the sun. Ancient Israel, time of Christ, early New Testament Church, Worldwide Church of God, and now today there are people who diminish and reject God—don't want to hear about God. It takes them out of their comfort zone and they don't want that to happen.

The encouraging thing—we're going to end on an encouraging note—is that there has always been a handful who do not reject God and who do not diminish God—there has always been that. We could spend another sermon or two going through the ones who did not reject God but the vast majority have done so. We won't turn there for sake of time but let's consider Elijah's example—you can study it later, it's in 1 Kings 18 and 19. You remember Elijah killed the prophets of Baal—he killed them all with his hands. When Ahab's wife Jezebel found out about it, she said, woe is me if the sun goes down tomorrow and you're not dead like one of them. He ran out into the desert—he was running for his life. While he was out in the desert he complained to God that he was the only one obeying God, he was the only one left, because from his perspective nobody else was standing up, nobody else was confronting the evil of that day. You can understand why he thought he was all alone, but he wasn't all alone. He was the only one to serve God—no, he wasn't the only one to serve God, there were others. Remember what God said; I'm going to quote 1 Kings 19:18 (we won't turn there), but Elijah was complaining, and he was whining a bit and feeling sorry for himself, and then God said:

1 Kings 19:18 *Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him. (KJV)*

Meaning the statue of Baal. So, unknown to Elijah, there were seven thousand of his countrymen who were loyal, and they were bowing to God, and worshipping God, and trusting God and not rejecting God. The lesson for us is that we can't follow in the footsteps of our forerunners—Ancient Israel, time of Noah, after Adam and Eve's death, first century Church, time of Jesus Christ and on down to the present day. We can't follow in the footsteps of those who reject God—we can't do that. As with Elijah, there are scattered brethren all over the world who want to know more about God and want to know more about Christ, so they can worship Them completely and fully, and they can understand Them fully, and they hunger for that—they are not rejecting God.

Let's make sure as we go forward knowing all the history of what's happened, knowing the warnings that God has issued for us in these last days—we have to make sure we honor and exalt the Most High God, the Almighty God, the LORD of Hosts who lives between the cherubim, the Living God. We have to exalt and honor Jesus Christ, His Son, the Redemption, our High Priest, the Mediator of the New Covenant. We have to honor both of Them and the fact is we have to be on guard—never rejecting God as supreme, never rejecting Christ as willing to die for us and dying for us. We can never reject God or fall away from the truth—we cannot. He is the Great God who personally called us and so how can we reject Him? God called Ancient Israel personally and they turned their back on Him. Christ called disciples personally and they turned their back on Him. We cannot follow in those footsteps, so let's put our trust and faith in the Great God who called us.