

The Osteen Bible and other Apostasy Milestones

Contributed by Rev Michael Bresciani
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What is all the talk about an "apostasy" or a "falling away" really about? Hundreds of examples have occurred in 2007 and this year holds the promise of more to come. Let's examine just a few examples from the very first week of 2008.

The word apostasy is derived from the Greek word apostasis which literally means "desertion." In the last few years of time as we know it the Bible clearly promises there will be a falling away or apostasy in the church and in long held theological principles.

If you need to ask if an apostasy or a desertion is occurring today you probably don't own a radio or a television set. Long held beliefs are being questioned, set aside and abandoned altogether with alarming frequency. Here are some prime examples.

On January 5, 2008 a CBN newswomen Kristi Watts interviewing mega pastor Joel Osteen posed the question "What about the s-word, the d-word and the h-word." Osteen acknowledged that he understood that the interviewer was referring to the words sin, devil and hell.

He quickly admitted that those were words he did not use in his messages because they tended to promote a negative approach to things. With more than 1300 clear references to the devil, sin and hell throughout the bible Osteen raised more questions than he answered.

The first question might be "who commissioned him to re-write the bible." A second more important question might be "what did Christ die for?" Up to now we thought he died for the sins of the world. The third question is derived from the bible's own answer to the second question and is inevitable. What's the point of the rest of the bible if that's not true, or important?

Recent interviews with Larry King, Glenn Beck and others have proven that Osteen is a charming uplifting communicator who is hard not to like. His messages are always positive and are not unlike those of any motivational speaker or self esteem guru but he is working under the title of "pastor" and that's where the doubt is raised.

Osteen is far from the first person to remove the parts of the bible he didn't like. Thomas Jefferson used a jackknife to cut out all references to hell and eternal punishment from the bible. Jefferson was a "deist" and that is a common belief among all deists. One major difference between Jefferson and Osteen is that Jefferson never called himself a pastor.

The biggest question is about timing. As churches slide away from biblical tenants and secularism creeps into the church all over the world isn't the very timing of this new "happy feel good ultra positive gospel" just part and parcel to the promised apostasy? Millions think it is!

Many of the sermons Osteen preaches are on how to deal with critics. It seems that 44,000 weekly participants in his church services and 7 million viewers of the weekly televised broadcasts are getting some flak along with him. In a success worshipping, big is better society in this country not even that kind of success can curb the doubt of many people who have only to read their bibles to see that Osteen is leaving out a big part of the story; many would say the very heart of the story.

In Canada ministers of both Catholic and protestant churches are being prosecuted, imprisoned, fined and censured for quoting verses of the bible that condemn the gay lifestyle. A movement in Canada has begun in the legislature to begin taxing church properties like Sunday school rooms, kitchens, parking lots and anything not directly used as a sanctuary for worship. Severe limitations are being considered on the building of new church buildings.

Leaders like Tristan Emmanuel an ordained Presbyterian pastor, speaker and activist who prepares Christians for leadership and service in the public square warn that America is on the same slippery slope as Canada. It may not be long before American ministers will have to answer for saying what the bible says about gays, same gender marriages, pre-marital relations and other currently not politically correct long held beliefs derived from the bible.

Europe has demonstrated that it is far ahead of either Canada or the United States in secular progressive ideas and actual legislation.

In Spain during the last week of December 2007 almost two million Spaniards took to the streets of Madrid and filled up Madrid's famous Colon Plaza in a powerful show of unity. The Spanish were calling for an end to Spain's socialist governments attack on the institution of marriage. The Catholics were joined by representatives of the Episcopal and other protestant churches but were all snubbed by Spain's ruling socialist party.

Cardinal Archbishop Antonio Canizares of Toledo lambasted the socialist government and said that "Spain's family is threatened by unjust and evil laws." The ruling socialist party of Spain snuffed its nose at the Pope, Cardinal Canizares and the demonstrators with a statement that read "we won't take a single step back" The new more tolerant government of Spain will not tolerate over a thousand years of traditional and biblically derived beliefs about marriage and the family.

The ruling party touting a more tolerant society wasn't the least bit tolerant with the Catholic and protestant believers of Spain and concluded their response with "We will continue working to ensure that Spanish citizens are freer and have more rights, and so that, at the same time, that our society is increasingly more respectful and tolerant," referring to its "gay marriage" policy.

Apostasy is inevitable and it is the byproduct of a world that is being turned upside down and where previously held values are scoffed at sometimes just because a minority might be slightly offended. Many of the charges brought against Canadian ministers were lodged not because someone was physically accosted, libeled or maligned but only because they were "hurt." Many are left

wondering who may be "hurt" next. Perhaps convicted murders, rapists, pedophiles and burglars are hurt because we have put them in jail.

The twisted view of political correctness will continue to pervert the most established traditions and beliefs known to man until the world will be changed for good; but no good will come of it. The topsy turvy effect of the tolerance and multicultural movement is gaining exponentially in spite of warnings and bible teachings to the contrary.

Writer Ray C. Stedman said in his book "Gods Loving Word" "As a society, we have our values upside down. Our government creates entire bureaucracies to monitor minute amounts of suspected carcinogens in our food, air, and water---yet it also pays subsidies to farmers for producing one of the worst, most highly cancer-causing substances around: tobacco. We are told we must save the whales, yet we allow unborn babies to be slaughtered at a rate of 3,000 abortions per day. School teachers are allowed to teach witchcraft and New Age philosophy in our public schools, yet the Bible, prayer, and the Ten Commandments are banned. We sentence peaceful pro-life activists to prison and we turn convicted repeat killers and rapists loose on society."

Where does it end? That's easy to answer; it ends with the physical and imminent return of the Lord Jesus Christ to the earth to remove forever the reins of government from the hands of men. In the mean time believers can only continue with what they know to be right according to the bible...the whole bible; with the s-word, d-word and h-word included.

Believers who know what Christ has commanded can say what Peter said after being released from prison where he was sent for preaching the gospel. When the rulers asked Peter why he kept on preaching the gospel after they had commanded him to stop he replied with "We ought to obey God rather than men." Acts 5:29

As for anyone changing, de-emphasizing or deleting any part of the word of God they should keep this in mind. When judgment begins to unfold a group of people who have already departed from earth are seen under the care and protection of Christ himself. It is said that their deaths were for their faithfulness to the "word of God." (Revelation 6:9) If some people have allowed their blood to be shed to proclaim every word of God where does that put someone who throws parts of it out to please a crowd? That answer is yours to decide.

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