

The Great Apostasy — Cheat Sheet

Their Best Arguments (Know These)

- **Matthew 16:18** — "Gates of hell shall not prevail" = church cannot fail
- **Apostolic succession** — Irenaeus and Tertullian trace unbroken bishop lists
- **2,000 years of institutional continuity** — Catholic/Orthodox churches still exist
- **Matthew 28:20** — "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world"
- **John 16:13** — Holy Ghost will "guide you into all truth"

Core Response: The Bible Itself Prophesies Apostasy

Christ Warned It Would Happen

- **Matthew 24:4-5, 11-12** — Many false prophets, many deceived, love waxing cold
- **Matthew 24:24** — False Christs so convincing they could "deceive the very elect"
- **Luke 18:8** — "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Implied answer: no)

Paul Explicitly Prophesied It

- **2 Thessalonians 2:1-4** — Second Coming cannot happen "except there come a falling away [*apostasia*] first" — the literal Greek word for apostasy
- **Acts 20:29-30** — "Grievous wolves... of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things"
- **1 Timothy 4:1-3** — "Depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils"
- **2 Timothy 4:3-4** — "Turn away their ears from the truth, turned unto fables"
- **2 Timothy 1:15** — "All they which are in Asia be turned away from me" — apostasy already happening

Other Apostles Confirmed It

- **2 Peter 2:1-2** — False teachers, "many shall follow their pernicious ways"
- **1 John 2:18-19** — "Even now are there many antichrists"
- **Jude 1:3-4** — "Certain men crept in unawares"
- **Revelation 2-3** — 5 of 7 churches rebuked by Christ himself

Old Testament Foreshadowing

- **Amos 8:11-12** — "A famine of hearing the words of the Lord"
- **Isaiah 24:5** — "Changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant"
- **Isaiah 60:2** — "Darkness shall cover the earth"

Scriptures Prophesying the Restoration

- **Acts 3:19-21** — "Times of restitution of all things" — why restitute if nothing was lost?
- **Daniel 2:44** — God shall "set up a kingdom" in the last days
- **Revelation 14:6** — Angel bringing "the everlasting gospel" — unnecessary if the gospel was never lost
- **Isaiah 29:13-14** — "A marvellous work and a wonder"
- **Malachi 4:5-6** — Elijah to come before the great day

One-Line Responses to Objections

Objection	Response
"Gates of hell shall not prevail" (Matt 16:18)	"Gates of Hades" = death. The Resurrection and the Restoration are how the promise was kept. Also: which church — Catholic or Orthodox? They split in 1054.
Apostolic succession proves continuity	Aaronic priesthood was passed down in unbroken succession too, and Israel still fell into apostasy repeatedly. Institutional lineage is not the same as divine authority.
Good Christians always existed	We agree. The apostasy was a loss of <i>priesthood authority</i> and <i>fullness of the gospel</i> , not the disappearance of all good people.
The Reformation was self-correction	The Reformers themselves said the church had fundamentally departed from truth. Roger Williams concluded no existing church had Christ's authority. They proved the problem; the Restoration provides the solution.
How was the Bible preserved if there was apostasy?	God preserved the record <i>because</i> living prophetic authority would be temporarily lost. But the Bible alone has produced 40,000+ denominations — proof that text without authority is insufficient.
"I am with you always" (Matt 28:20)	Christ can be with individuals and sustain the faithful without the institutional church retaining full authority. He was "with" Israel during the exile too.
No evidence for total apostasy	We don't claim total — we claim loss of authority and fullness. Plenty survived. But the Nicene Creed used Greek philosophical terms (<i>homoousios</i>) not found in scripture. Baptism for the dead (1 Cor 15:29) disappeared. That's evidence of change.

Historical Evidence (Quick Hits)

- **Spiritual gifts ceased** — Chrysostom (c. 390 AD) admitted the gifts Paul described "now no longer take place"
- **Greek philosophy absorbed** — Justin Martyr, Clement, Origen all merged Christianity with Platonism
- **Governance changed** — NT uses bishop/elder interchangeably (Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5-7); by Ignatius (c. 110 AD), monarchical bishops emerge
- **Ordinances lost** — Baptism for dead condemned; laying on of hands changed; pre-mortals existence taught by Origen, later condemned (553 AD)
- **Tertullian left** — The very Church Father cited for apostolic succession eventually abandoned the mainstream church for the Montanists

The Biblical Pattern

Apostasy and restoration is God's consistent pattern:

- Pre-Flood apostasy → Restoration through Noah
- Post-Babel → Restoration through Abraham
- Israel in Egypt (400 years) → Restoration through Moses
- Judges (repeated cycles) → Restoration through prophets/kings
- Divided kingdom → Exile → Return under Ezra/Nehemiah
- **Intertestamental period (~400 years of prophetic silence)**
- **Post-apostolic apostasy → Restoration through Joseph Smith**

The critic must explain why the Christian dispensation would be the *one exception* to this pattern.

Key Quotes for Debate

"This whole place is very obscure: but the obscurity is produced by our ignorance of the facts referred to and by their cessation, being such as then used to occur but now no longer take place." — John Chrysostom, on spiritual gifts (Homilies on 1 Corinthians, 29.2)

"The conspiracy of godless error took its rise through the treachery of false teachers, who... now tried without shame to preach 'knowledge falsely so called' against God." — Eusebius, Church History 3.32.7-8, describing the post-apostolic period

Resources

- [FAIR: The Great Apostasy](#)
- [Church: Apostasy](#)
- [Church: Restoration](#)