What is Apostasy?

Within Christianity today, despite the general move into ecumenical thinking, we still hear some mention made of apostasy, particularly among those who are more conservative in their worldview. However, if you give the matter some investigation, it is also soon apparent that there is confusion about this subject, even among those who are considered the shining lights of the conservative arm of Christianity.

The first step is to define the term correctly. One modern dictionary defines it as, “a total desertion of or departure from one’s religion ...,”1 another says, “renunciation of a religious faith” or “abandonment of a previous loyalty.”2 An older dictionary states, “an abandonment of what one has professed; a total desertion, or departure from one’s faith or religion.”3 A theological dictionary says, “Apostasy is the falling away from the Christian faith. It is a revolt against the truth of God’s word by a believer.”4 There may be some small variations in the definition of what apostasy is, but there seems to be general agreement across the board, that it would include such things as departure, renunciation, abandonment, desertion, and falling away.

Now we must look to the Scriptures to see what God has to say on this subject. If we pause to consider the history of the nation of Israel, we will recognize that they, as a nation, lived in rebellion against the Lord much of the time. On this subject of the finality of apostasy, the question has come to me, “What about Jeremiah 3:1?” It reads, “They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man’s, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the LORD.” The reason this verse was brought up within this context, was the phrase yet return again to me, which makes it sound like God is prepared to take back a people who were apostate. The concern is that this appears to contradict many other Scriptures. I have been told that in the Hebrew, this particular phrase does not include anything to indicate whether it is a question, a command or an expression of incredulity (unlike the phrases just prior to it).5 The general consensus from reviewing several sources is that this phrase should be taken as a question primarily because of the context – in essence, will you return to me again?

The passage which clarifies the questions in Jeremiah 3:1, is Deuteronomy 24:1-4 – “When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man’s wife. And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, whic h took her to be his wife; Her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before the LORD: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.” The law here is that if a man divorces his wife, he cannot take her again if she was married to another and

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1 http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/apostasy
2 http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/apostasy
3 Noah Webster, An American Dictionary of the English Language (1828), “apostasy.”
4 http://carm.org/dictionary-apostasy
5 Personal correspondence with Vern Steiner, http://miqra.net/
subsequently divorced or widowed. Are Jeremiah 3 and Deuteronomy 24 speaking about the same thing?

The latter passage is very clear as it applies to an individual’s situation, and, because it is brought into Jeremiah 3, it would seem safe to assume that it must have a bearing on what Jeremiah is writing. However, there is also a significant difference. As is so often the case in the Old Testament, Israel and Judah (as nations) are spoken of, and addressed, as individuals, even though, clearly, there are phenomenal differences between an individual and a nation. Jeremiah begins with they say, and, although he does not quote the Law of Moses on this matter, he very clearly lays out the principles established in Deuteronomy 24:1-4. Then, as a matter of contrast, the Lord says of Judah, “but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers.” It would seem that God draws the contrast in order to make the point that Judah has thoroughly polluted or defiled the land by her harlotry, which takes the matter well beyond what is described in Deuteronomy 24. The violence which Israel and Judah have done to the spiritual marriage relationship with God surpasses what God declared would defile the land. God had given apostate Israel a bill of divorcement and sent her into exile to provide Judah with a reason to mend her ways (Jeremiah 3:8); yet Judah’s actions, after Israel was taken captive, made Israel appear to be righteous by comparison (Jeremiah 3:11). As nations, Judah and Israel were both apostate; however, within those nations would be individuals who were truly apostate (they had turned their backs on God and His ways), those who were simply pagan (they had never claimed to have faith in God), and there would still be those who were faithful to the Lord (a remnant, when compared to the rest of the population).

This exposure of the sins of Judah (and Israel before her) is followed by a glimpse into the compassion of God: “Turn, O backsliding [literally, apostate] children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion ...” (Jeremiah 3:14). This is addressed to the “north” (v.12), to where apostate Israel used to dwell before they were taken into captivity for their apostasy. Even though God had put Israel away, He still considered the “marriage” to be in place; Israel had failed to keep the covenant with God, but God did not fail to remember His commitment to Israel. However, even though God was still committed to the relationship with Israel, notice that He will choose one here and two there, and will bring them to Zion – a sign of a restored relationship, but not for apostate Israel as a nation. It would be those individuals who placed their faith in God who would be chosen to enter this relationship with Him – the one here, and two there. “Jesus said, “For many are called, but few are chosen” (Matthew 22:14); “Enter ye in at the strait gate ... Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matthew 7:13-14). God will not lower His standard to admit apostasy into His fold of redeemed saints; He is not an ecumenical thinker; He will not turn a blind eye to error.

Among the fallen, God has always had His chosen few, those who exercise faith in His promises. At the time of the flood, God found eight who were prepared to place their faith in what He said. Elijah was sure he was the only one left in Israel who was faithful to Jehovah, but God assured him that there were still 7,000 who had not bowed to Baal (1 Kings 19:18). Isaiah proclaimed, “For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of them shall return ...” (Isaiah 10:22). All through the ages when the Roman Catholic Church reigned with force and imposed their desecrated form of Christianity upon all under their control, there still
remained a remnant who were faithful to the Gospel of God; hidden in the deep valleys of the Italian Alps were small groups of people, like the Waldenses, who kept the Word of God free from the taint of Rome.

For the purposes of this study, I will not focus on the national application of the concept of apostasy, but on the individual, since, even in the midst of national apostasy, a remnant of the faithful may still remain. It must be our primary concern that we strive to remain faithful even as our world crumbles into apostasy – after all, we are individually accountable to God for what we do in this life (Hebrews 9:27).

Paul wrote to Timothy: “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” (1 Timothy 4:1). The phrase depart from comes from the Greek word aphistemi (af-is 'tay-mee), which means, to withdraw one's self from, to fall away, 6 to apostatize, 7 to go away, withdraw. 8 The warning given is that, due to deceiving spirits and the teachings of devils, there will be some who will fall away from faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It would seem to be crystal-clear, from this passage, that apostasy will be a reality in our day (most will agree we are living in the latter times).

Jesus warned, “For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible [ei dunatos, ei δυνατὸν], they shall deceive [to lead away from the truth] the very elect” (Matthew 24:24). 9 We are commonly led to believe that this means the elect, those who are in Christ (Ephesians 1:4), cannot be deceived so as to fall away from Him. However, if we look at this exact phrase (both in English and in the Greek) used in Acts 20:16 – “For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus ... for he hasted, if it were possible [ei dunatos, ei δυνατὸν] for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost.” It is obvious from this that Paul indeed intended to be in Jerusalem by Pentecost, it was entirely possible, even if he had to hurry. Therefore, we must accept that it is possible for the elect to be deceived (in keeping with other passages that speak of this very thing); we must not use a text, which might be somewhat obscure, to overturn many passages of Scripture which leave no doubt as to what they mean.

“Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first ...” (2 Thessalonians 2:3). This was written to the ekklesia at Thessalonica, who are described as being “in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thessalonians 1:1). The words falling away come from the Greek word apostasia, which means a defection or apostasy. 12 The statement that apostasy is coming is preceded by the warning that they were not to permit anyone to deceive them completely, 13 the word deceive is an intensive word in the Greek and means to beguile completely or to deceive wholly. 14 The word deceive is in the subjunctive mood.

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6 Strong’s Online.
7 Vine’s “depart.”
8 Friberg Lexicon.
9 Scrivener’s NT, 1894.
10 Strong’s Online.
11 Scrivener’s NT, 1894.
12 Strong’s Online.
13 Friberg Lexicon.
14 Vine’s “deceive.”
which means, “The action described may or may not occur, depending upon circumstances.”\footnote{15} Again, the only reality that can be extracted from this is that those who are numbered among the faithful in Jesus Christ may be deceived and become apostate.

If we are willing to accept the fact that those who are truly born-again can apostatize, suddenly other warnings in the Word of God take on new significance and meaning. “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12). We are forewarned to continually exercise discernment lest our heart (the seat of our will), which is deceitful above all and desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9), should desert or withdraw from \textit{(aphistemi\footnote{16})} God. Isaiah declared, “And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners \textit{shall be} together, and they that forsake [abandon or apostatize] the LORD shall be consumed [destroyed]\textsuperscript{17}” (Isaiah 1:28). Therefore, this is not a new concept for us to accept and live by.

A favored word within Evangelical vocabulary is \textit{backslide}, or variations thereof, a term which means, “to fall back into wrongdoing or a bad habit after an attempt to act in a better way.”\footnote{18} It is used with little or no embarrassment, and is commonly viewed as part of a normal pattern for the modern Christian; it is considered to be something from which recovery is possible at any time, no matter how long the condition has prevailed. We do not find the English word, \textit{backslide}, in our New Testament Scriptures, but we do find it used several times in the Old Testament prophetic books. For example, “Thine own wickedness shall correct [chastise] thee, and thy backslidings [apostasies] shall reprove [judge] thee: know therefore and see that \textit{it is} an evil \textit{thing} and bitter, that thou hast forsaken [abandoned] the LORD thy God, and that my fear [awe or dread] \textit{is} not in thee, saith the Lord GOD of hosts” (Jeremiah 2:19).\footnote{19} Jehovah is addressing the nation of Israel as an individual (hence the singular pronouns), even though Israel is now a great many people. Israel, generally speaking, had forsaken the Lord, yet the individuals within the nation would include those who continued to exercise faith in God (the faithful), the apostate (those who had fallen from faith) and the pagan (those who had never believed). Israel had been redeemed out of Egypt by the Lord God, yet, as a nation, they had fallen from following the Lord – hence the word translated as \textit{backslidings} is applied to Israel. In the same way, Canada and the USA were often referred to as “Christian” nations, but they are rapidly becoming pagan; yet within these nations, there will be those of the three possible categories: the faithful, the fallen, and the pagan.

The meaning of the Hebrew word translated as \textit{backsliding} is “turning away, turning back, apostasy.”\footnote{20} The Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures (the Septuagint) uses the word \textit{apostasia} for what our English translation shows as \textit{backslidings} (Jeremiah 2:19). What is immediately evident is that this is the same Greek word translated as \textit{falling away} in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, and we have already noted that this speaks of apostasy. Drawing these together, there can be little doubt as to the significance of this word; it is referring to more than a lapse in spiritual judgment or a stumble along the pathway of life. This is not accidental, but

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\item[15] Strong’s Online.
\item[16] Ibid.
\item[17] Ibid.
\item[18] Encarta Dictionary, “backslide.”
\item[19] Strong’s Online.
\item[20] Ibid.
\end{thebibliography}
deliberate; remember, one definition of *apostasy* is, “the *renunciation* of a religious belief”\(^{21}\); you cannot accidently renounce something, it must be an act of the will. Our English word *backsliding* really does not do justice to what Jeremiah is saying, it makes it sound like there has been a general movement toward God, but through uncontrollable circumstances there is suddenly a slide backward; even while you may still be trying to move toward God, you are sliding away from Him. That is how the Evangelical mind would like to think of it – no matter how long you have been unfaithful to the Lord, you are only sliding backward. Jeremiah says, “NO!” Your apostasy will judge you! You are no longer endeavoring to walk in faithfulness to God; you are not even facing God anymore – you have turned around and are walking (not sliding) in the opposite direction!

If we bear in mind that the people of Israel knew what the Lord required of them, we would have to adjure that there were probably few pagans in Israel, few faithful, but a host of apostate – those who knew the way, but refused to walk in it. Within the Law of Moses, the Lord had made provision for Israel to deal with those who turned from Him, but it is very evident that they did not practice this commandment:

And if any soul sin through ignorance, then he shall bring a she goat of the first year for a sin offering. And the priest shall make an atonement for the soul that sinneth ignorantly, when he sinneth by ignorance before the LORD, to make an atonement for him; and it shall be forgiven him. ... But the soul that doeth *ought* presumptuously [with a high hand], *whether he be* born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproacheth [blasphemes] the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off [to destroy\(^{22}\)] from among his people. Because he hath despised the word of the LORD, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity shall be upon him (Numbers 15:27-31).\(^{23}\)

This passage makes it very clear that for the faltering faithful, God had made provision for a restored relationship, but equally evident is that for the sin carried out in pride there was no prescribed sacrifice. “And the man that will do presumptuously [in arrogance], and will not hearken unto the priest that standeth to minister there before the LORD thy God, or unto the judge, even that man shall die: and thou shalt put away the evil from Israel” (Deuteronomy 17:12).\(^{24}\) There were very clear instructions in place to preserve the purity of God’s chosen people, yet it is very evident that there was no will to obey God’s commandment in this regard. Even though Israel failed to practice this commandment of the Lord in order to keep their walk before Him holy, it cannot be construed that God did not apply this principle to His people. To those who sinned willfully (with a high hand), God says, “... his iniquity *shall be* upon him” (Numbers 15:31); in other words, he will bear his sin – it will not be forgiven. “When the righteous turneth [apostasy\(^{25}\)] from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby” (Ezekiel 33:18).

Lest we think this is an Old Testament teaching and one which has been done away with, consider the words that Peter penned by the Spirit of God: “For if after they have escaped the pollutions [defilement] of the world through the knowledge [a precise and correct knowledge] of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end

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\(^{21}\) Encarta Dictionary, “apostasy.”

\(^{22}\) ESword.

\(^{23}\) Strong’s Online.

\(^{24}\) Ibid.

\(^{25}\) Ibid.
is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known [to be thoroughly acquainted with] the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them” (2 Peter 2:20-21).

This speaks of those who have been influenced by false teachers, those against whom Peter is warning. “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction” (2 Peter 1:21-2:1). Just as there were false prophets among the people of Israel, so there are false teachers among the people of God today. These have “forsaken the right way” (2 Peter 2:15) and “speak great swelling words of vanity” so as to draw in those who have departed from sin, those who have “clean [truly] escaped from them who live in error” (2:18).

Evangelicals today have bought the deadly combination of “pray this prayer and you are saved” and God will then keep you no matter how you live (I deal with this more thoroughly in “Easy Believism & Eternal Security”). The theologians and teachers within Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism are selective in their application of the Scriptures and will typically avoid or gloss over those passages that might call their theologies into question. Their blind followers either no longer believe that they are responsible to check all things according to the Word of God (1 John 4:1), or they are too apathetic to care, and so the majority of Evangelicals (and a growing number of Fundamentalists) are duped into believing lies and half-truths (a more deadly form of lie) which will lead to their spiritual demise. Paul warned the Galatians that if they accepted the doctrine of the Judaizers (who were mixing faith in Christ with keeping the Law of Moses) they are fallen from [the] grace (Galatians 5:4). This is not backsliding (as the margin of my Bible erroneously says), but apostasy; they were not sliding away from the truth; rather, they were willfully turning their backs on it. What we must not miss is that there is a persuasion that takes place; apostasy demands a personal decision – you cannot stumble into apostasy, you go there through a conscious choice.

The false prophets will make their fair-sounding, false speeches even while professing to be of the fold of God – they will do their best to appear as sheep, and try their utmost to speak a sheepish dialect. Many of their words may well sound familiar to the child of God, but they will always bear a wolfish accent; they will speak lies in hypocrisy (1 Timothy 4:2) – their lies will come forth under the guise of truth. Paul goes on to describe these hypocritical liars as having their conscience seared with a hot iron. The phrase seared with a hot iron is one word in Greek from which we get our word cauterize, and the Greek word is in the perfect tense describing an action that has taken place in the past, once for all time, never to be repeated.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{29}}\] The desensitized

\[\text{\textsuperscript{26}}\] Strong’s Online.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{27}}\] Ibid.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{28}}\] Friberg Lexicon.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{29}}\] Strong’s Online.
or deadened conscience of these apostate teachers and leaders (Paul says they have departed from the faith – 1 Timothy 4:1) is a completed reality; we must recognize that there is no hope for those who have apostatized – they cannot be restored to faith in God. “For it is impossible [unable to be done] for those who were once enlightened (imbued or saturated with saving knowledge) ... If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame” (Hebrews 6:4,6). 30 This is someone who has had their conscience cauterized, someone who has fallen away from the faith. Peter warned that there would be those among us who would seek to destroy others even as they themselves had been destroyed. “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies [sneak in destructive doctrines leading to separation (Romans 16:17)], even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction” (2 Peter 2:1). Their destruction is sealed and irrevocable even though they might still continue to physically live and teach their lies. We must take heed, for their speeches may well be alluring (Romans 16:18); we must continually test all things by the Word of God (1 John 4:1). What the Galatians failed to do was to identify these men from Jerusalem as false teachers – wolves in sheep’s clothing – and avoid them.

The book, The Truth War, which bears John MacArthur’s name, is a case in point. In defining the word apostasy, MacArthur says that it “is closely related to the Greek word for ‘divorce.’ It speaks of abandonment, a separation, a defection ....”31 This is an acceptable definition of the term, and its similarity to the word for the bill of divorce is an interesting parallel.32 However, he no sooner provides this clear definition, than he makes this statement: “Can a genuine Christian fall away from the faith and become apostate? No. ... Those who do depart from the faith ... simply demonstrate that they never had true faith to begin with.”33 His definition of apostasy and this subsequent statement do not fit together – they are obviously contradictory. Consider that a divorce can only be issued when a man and a woman are married (in Bible times this included the time of betrothal or engagement). If a couple dates (or shacks up, as in our day) and then breaks up, there is no divorce because they have not come into a marriage relationship; they simply go their separate ways. For a divorce to take place, the two people must be married. Yet when MacArthur applies this parallel principle within the Christian realm, he contradicts himself; he does so by saying that divorce takes place (apostasy) even though the two were never married; even though “they never had true faith to begin with” (i.e., they were not in a marriage relationship) he calls this apostasy! This does not fit with the term as he has defined it.

MacArthur also appeals to the parable of the soils for support of his position, and says that the “greatest threat of all [for apostasy] comes from the shallow-soil hearers.”34 “They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away” (Luke 8:13). The word believe is in the present tense – they are believing. Consider John’s words, “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe [present tense] on his

30 Strong’s Online.
31 John MacArthur, The Truth War, p. 43.
32 Apostasy is the word apostasia, often translated falling away (2Thessalonians 2:3); the Greek word for divorced is apoluo, often translated put away (Matthew 5:32); the word for bill or writing of divorcement is apostasion, much closer to apostasy.
33 MacArthur, Truth, p.43.
34 Ibid., p. 63.
name ...” (John 1:12). The word believe is the same Greek word in both cases, yet there would be no question that John is referring to those who are truly born-again as they are called “the sons of God.” Jesus said of the “shallow-soil hearers” that for a time they believe, but, when a trial comes their way, they fall away, or withdraw, or become apostate. Using MacArthur’s definition, their falling away speaks of abandonment, separation, and defection (in each case you cannot abandon, separate or defect from something of which you have never been a part). As MacArthur tries to build his case he says, “They give the appearance of genuine life and viability.” However, an illusion is not the same as the real thing, and the two must never be confused. Two people might live together and “appear” to be married, but if they split up, there is no divorce – they simply go their separate ways. Jesus said they believe, the Word of God produced life (not an illusion of life); MacArthur chooses to contradict the Lord and say that they only appeared to have life. “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12). The Greek word translated as departing is the same word translated as fall away in Jesus’ parable of the soils – it means to become apostate.

Seeking to twist the clear teachings of Scripture does not change the reality of God’s Word – let God be true and all theologians liars (Romans 3:4). “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but ... shall [there is an additional word in Greek: certainly] turn away [apostrepho – turn back] their ears from the truth, and shall be turned [ektrepo – turn aside] unto fables” (2 Timothy 4:3-4); Paul is not referring to the godless, but to Christians who, through a lack of Biblical reproof, rebuke, and exhortation (2 Timothy 4:2) develop appetites for the smooth words of those who do not teach the truth. If there is anything lacking within Evangelical circles today, it has to be Biblical reproof, rebuke and exhortation; most often, if you find these corrective actions, they are being directed at those who desire to live godly lives, in hopes of scaring them back onto the broad road to hell.

To the angel or messenger of the ekklesia at Sardis, Jesus said, “He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels” (Revelation 3:5). The pronouns and verbs used here are all singular – God does not deal with groups for salvation, nor does He remove groups from His Book of Life. God will not wipe out the names of those who are remaining pure before Him (they have not defiled their garments – v.4); on the other hand, to those who have defiled their garments, who have failed to remain faithful (i.e., they are apostate), the reality is that their names will be removed from the Book of Life. This is very similar to the picture of the vine and the branches, which Paul uses in Romans 11: the wild branches are grafted into the Vine by faith, and they will remain there by faith. However, faithlessness will see them broken off; in like manner, we have our names entered into the Book of Life by faith in Christ – the moment we become apostate (become faithless), our names are removed from the Book. To

35 Strong’s Online.
36 Friberg Lexicon.
37 MacArthur, Truth, p. 63.
38 Friberg Lexicon; interestingly, Luke 8:13 and Hebrews 3:12 are specifically drawn together.
39 Strong’s Online.
40 Strong’s Online: “hold fast their faith even unto death against the power of their foes, and temptations and persecutions.”
41 Strong’s Online.
those whose names are not in the Book of Life (those who have never placed their faith in Christ for the redemption of their souls, and those who have turned their backs on the salvation which comes only through Christ), they will stand before God on that final judgment day and will be judged according to their works (Revelation 20:13). The outcome will be the lake of fire for all of them, for no one is justified by works (Galatians 2:16). God takes no pleasure in this; “As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?” (Ezekiel 33:11). God has created us for fellowship with Him; He has provided the way to life for all mankind through Jesus Christ, His Son, and yet man looks for another way.

What should seem very evident, but which needs to be repeated (because there is confusion in this matter), is that you cannot forsake, withdraw from, or desert something of which you have never been a part. Those who profess to be Christians, but are not (and this would include much of Evangelicalism today), when they live after the manner of this world, are not apostate – they are simply living according to the dictates of their unredeemed hearts. Apostasy is a serious matter, and the warnings in Scripture are numerous – we must take heed “lest there be in any of [us] an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12). Permit the Spirit’s words, through John, to seep into your heart: “And this is his [God’s] commandment, That we should believe [to be persuaded; subjunctive mood, indicating possibility] on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth [is keeping, present tense] his commandments dwelleth [is dwelling, present tense] in him [God], and he [God] in him. And hereby we know [are knowing, present tense] that he abideth [is abiding, present tense] in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us” (1 John 3:23-24).42

42 Strong’s Online.