

## Scripture Study

1 Nephi 13  
2 Nephi 26:20–21  
2 Nephi 28  
D&C 86:1–3  
Matthew 24:9–11  
Mark 12:1–9  
Acts 3:19–21  
Acts 20:28–30  
Galatians 1:6–9  
2 Thessalonians 2:1–12 (JST verses 2, 3, 7–9)  
1 Timothy 4:1–3  
2 Timothy 4:3–4  
2 Peter 2:1–2  
Amos 8:11–12  
Topical Guide, “Apostasy of the Early Christian Church”  
*True to the Faith*, “Apostasy,” pages 13–14  
*Our Search for Happiness*, pages 23–32  
*Jesus the Christ*, chapter 40, “The Long Night of Apostasy”

## The Great Apostasy

5- Investigators must understand that a universal apostasy occurred following the death of Jesus Christ and His Apostles. If there had been no apostasy, there would have been no need of a Restoration. As a diamond displayed on black velvet appears more brilliant, so the Restoration stands in striking contrast to the dark background of the Great Apostasy. As guided by the Spirit, teach investigators about the Great Apostasy at a level of detail appropriate to their needs and circumstances. Your purpose is to help them understand the need for the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

## Key Points

6- The Church of Jesus Christ is built on the foundation of apostles and prophets (see Ephesians 2:19–20; 4:11–14). These leaders have divine priesthood authority. Through revelation they direct the affairs of the Church. They maintain doctrinal purity, authorize the administration of ordinances, and call and confer upon others the priesthood authority.

7- People rejected and killed Jesus Christ and the Apostles (see Matthew 24:9; 1 Nephi 11:32–34; 2 Nephi 27:5). With the death of the Apostles, the presiding priesthood authority was absent from the Church. Consequently, there was no longer authority to confer the Holy Ghost or perform other saving ordinances. Revelation ceased, and doctrine became corrupted.

8- Even before the death of the Apostles, many conflicts concerning doctrine arose. The Roman Empire, which at first had persecuted the Christians, later adopted Christianity. Important religious questions were settled by councils. The simple doctrines and ordinances taught by the Savior were debated and changed to conform to worldly philosophies (see Isaiah 24:5). They physically changed the scriptures, removing plain and precious doctrines from them (1 Nephi 13:26–40). They created creeds, or statements of belief, based on false and changed doctrine (see Joseph Smith—History 1:19). Because of pride, some aspired to positions of influence (see 3 John 1:9–10). People accepted these false ideas and gave honor to false teachers who taught pleasing doctrines rather than divine truth (see 2 Timothy 4:3–4).

9- Throughout history, many people have sincerely believed false creeds and doctrines. They have worshiped according to the light they possessed and have received answers to their prayers. Yet they are “kept from the truth because they know not where to find it” (D&C 123:12).

10- Therefore, a restoration, not a reformation, was required. Priesthood authority did not continue in an unbroken line of succession from the Apostle Peter. To reform is to change what already exists; to restore is to bring back something in its original form. Thus, restoration of priesthood authority through divine messengers was the only

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*PREACH MY GOSPEL (2004), 35-38*

1- After the death of Jesus Christ, wicked people persecuted the Apostles and Church members and killed many of them. With the death of the Apostles, priesthood keys and the presiding priesthood authority were taken from the earth. The Apostles had kept the doctrines of the gospel pure and maintained the order and standard of worthiness for Church members. Without the Apostles, over time the doctrines were corrupted, and unauthorized changes were made in Church organization and priesthood ordinances, such as baptism and conferring the gift of the Holy Ghost.

2- Without revelation and priesthood authority, people relied on human wisdom to interpret the scriptures and the principles and ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ. False ideas were taught as truth. Much of the knowledge of the true character and nature of God the Father, His Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost was lost. The doctrines of faith in Jesus Christ, repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost became distorted or forgotten. The priesthood authority given to Christ's Apostles was no longer present on the earth. This apostasy eventually led to the emergence of many churches.

3- After centuries of spiritual darkness, truth-seeking men and women protested against current religious practices. They recognized that many of the doctrines and ordinances of the gospel had been changed or lost. They sought for greater spiritual light, and many spoke of the need for a restoration of truth. They did not claim, however, that God had called them to be a prophet. Instead, they tried to reform teachings and practices that they believed had been changed or corrupted. Their efforts led to the organization of many Protestant churches. This Reformation resulted in an increased emphasis on religious freedom, which opened the way for the final Restoration.

4- The Savior's Apostles foretold this universal apostasy. They also foretold that the gospel of Jesus Christ and His Church would be restored once more upon the earth.