

A GREAT (APOSTASY) HISTORY LESSON

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AN ANCIENT FALLING AWAY CAN HELP YOU KNOW HOW TO STAND STRONG TODAY.

With all the persecution that Christians suffered after the Savior's Resurrection and Ascension, the Thessalonian Saints figured the Second Coming would be happening soon. But Paul taught them that before Christ's Second Coming there would be a "falling away first" (2 Thessalonians 2:3). That falling away did occur. We refer to it as the Great Apostasy.

After people rejected and killed the Savior and His Apostles, the Lord's priesthood authority and His Church were lost from the earth. This continued until Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ appeared to Joseph Smith in 1820 to begin the Restoration of the fulness of the gospel. Even though the fulness of the gospel wasn't on the earth during that time, we can gain a lot from studying this period.

LET'S LOOK AT SOME LESSONS FROM THE GREAT APOSTASY WE CAN APPLY TO OUR LIVES TODAY:

HISTORICAL POINT: As apostasy spread, many people began to think that God wasn't going to speak to His people anymore except through the scriptures that already existed. This false belief that the heavens were "sealed" caused many people to stop asking questions and seeking revelation. As a result, "[those] that [said], 'We have enough, from them [was] taken away even that which they [had]'" (2 Nephi 28:30).

LESSON #1: REVELATION IS KEY

PERSONAL APPLICATION: God will give us truth and knowledge when we ask. But we need to believe in Him and believe He answers prayers. We can show God that receiving personal revelation is important to us by asking questions and acting on the answers we receive. As we seek answers, He gives us knowledge and guidance.



HISTORICAL POINT: When Christ came to the earth, He ordained 12 Apostles and gave them the priesthood, with keys and authority to act in His name. But as wickedness spread and people rejected truth, these priesthood keys were taken from the earth.

LESSON #2: PRIESTHOOD KEYS ARE NECESSARY FOR SALVATION

PERSONAL APPLICATION: The priesthood and its keys are essential, because without them there is no way to receive saving ordinances and make eternal covenants. The authority and keys of the priesthood were restored through Joseph Smith so that these essential ordinances could once again be administered to members of Christ's Church (see Joseph Smith History 1:66-75).

LESSON #3:

FOLLOW LIVING PROPHETS AND APOSTLES

HISTORICAL POINT: Throughout history, the Lord has guided His people through living prophets and apostles. But during the Great Apostasy, when there was no one on earth with apostolic authority, there was no one to act as God's spokesman on the earth.



PERSONAL APPLICATION: Joseph Smith was the first prophet in this dispensation, and we have been blessed with living prophets and apostles ever since. Today, President Russell M. Nelson, his Counselors, and the Twelve Apostles have the keys and authority to direct the Church, and God guides them on how to best help Church members. As we sustain our leaders and follow their counsel, we can know that we are following God's direction.

LESSON #4:

HOW TO GUARD YOURSELF AGAINST APOSTASY

HISTORICAL POINT: The Great Apostasy had been prophesied in Old Testament times (see Isaiah 60:2; Amos 8:11–12). The prophecy was fulfilled as false teachings divided the people of the ancient Church. The doctrines that Christ taught became corrupted and many people didn't know how to find truth.



PERSONAL APPLICATION: After the Restoration brought an end to the Great Apostasy, God promised that there would never be a general apostasy from the truth again (see Doctrine and Covenants 65:2). But we still have to be careful and guard ourselves against personal apostasy.

Here are some things you can do to strengthen your faith in Jesus Christ, remain strong in His Church, and progress along the covenant path:

- Learn how the Holy Ghost speaks to you and strive to always follow the promptings you receive from Him.
- Study and ponder each covenant you've made (or one day hope to make).
- Strive to obey the commandments and keep your standards high.
- Write down and act on counsel from Church leaders at general conference.
- Ponder the Savior's love for you as you partake of the sacrament.
- Seek to constantly strengthen your testimony through daily scripture study, prayer, and service.

See *True to the Faith* (2004), 13–14. **NE**

HIS AUTHORITY

"Priesthood is the means whereby the Lord acts through men to save souls. One of the defining features of the Church of Jesus Christ, both anciently and today, is His authority. There can be no true Church without divine authority."



Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Apr. 2012 general conference (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2012, 48).

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