

## The Great Apostasy

### 2 Thessalonians 2:1–12

“Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, <sup>2</sup>not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. <sup>3</sup>Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day will not come* unless the falling away comes first, and the man of <sup>[b]</sup>sin is revealed, the son of perdition, <sup>4</sup>who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits <sup>[c]</sup>as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. <sup>5</sup>Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? <sup>6</sup>And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. <sup>7</sup>For the <sup>[d]</sup>mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only <sup>[e]</sup>He who now restrains *will do so* until He is taken out of the way. <sup>8</sup>And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. <sup>9</sup>The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, <sup>10</sup>and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. <sup>11</sup>And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, <sup>12</sup>that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

**God in His marvelous grace always forewarns man of impending judgment and doom!** Before God destroyed the world the first time with a flood of water, He raised of Noah, a man of righteousness, and allowed him to prophecy and forewarn the people of his day for 120 years. Before Sodom and Gomorrah was destroyed with fire and brimstone from heaven, God allowed Abraham to intercede for the people there. **He also placed Lot inside the city, and if Lot had been faithful, he no doubt, would have been able to save some of those people from that judgment of fire.** God used His prophets to forewarn the children of Israel that, if they did not change their ways, they would be led away captive by the Babylonians for a period of 70 years.

**Likewise, when Jesus was here on this earth, He forewarned the Jews of His day, that Jerusalem was going to be destroyed, and that their temple in which they worshiped was going to be completely destroyed that not one stone would be left on top of the other.** And so God, in His mercy, and God in His grace, never leaves Himself without a witness in this world, regardless of how godless the people might seem to become. God always forewarns mankind of impending judgment and doom!

**Now, it is no less true concerning the Second Coming of Christ, for God has forewarned us through prophecies and signs that point us to the nearness of His soon Return.** But unfortunately, we too are guilty of ignoring God's great desire to let us know that we need to prepare ourselves spiritually for His Return.

In our previous studies of Paul's letters to the Thessalonians, we saw they were having some problems with the doctrine of the Return of Christ. They were eager concerning the Rapture of the Church, and looked for the Coming of Christ in their life-time. They had no idea that this age of the Church was going to span some 2,000 years. Therefore, Paul begs them to be cautious, because false teachers were going around preaching that they were already involved in the Tribulation period.

The Church in Thessalonica was therefore in danger of falling victim of deception and error. So Paul gives this warning in verse 3, "Let no man deceive you by any means; for that day shall not come, except there come the great falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition." Paul says the "day of the Lord" has not come, and will not come until two things happen: (1) "for that day shall not come, except there come the falling away first..." The Greek word that has been translated "falling away" is the word for "Apostasy." And (2) "that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition."

Tonight, we are only going to discuss the first of these sins, and that is concerning the "apostasy." Our study of the "man of sin... the son of perdition" is going to take an entire message, and will require a deep study of the Word of God.

The word "apostasy" carries with it three ideas. **First of all, the word "apostasy" means "opposition towards God."** It is used in the Scriptures as being opposed to God, and is the same as the Hebrew word used in Jeremiah 29:32, "Therefore thus says the Lord: Behold, I will punish Shemaiah the Nehelamite and his family: he shall not have anyone to dwell among this people, nor shall he see the good that I will do for My people, says the Lord, because he has taught rebellion against the Lord."

**Secondly, the word "apostasy" means "a falling away, or departing from former loyalties and alliances."** This is the same language used by Peter when he warns against apostate teachers who deny redemption by the blood, as seen in 2 Peter 2:1-3, "But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber."

**Thirdly, the word "apostasy" means "rebellion against constituted authority."** And this meaning is in direct opposition to the message of Paul, as recorded in Romans 13:1-3, "Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good

works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same.”

**Already in our world there is a great apostasy.** Already in our world there is opposition and hostility towards God. Already in our world there is a rebellion against constituted authority.

But the "apostasy" that we are going to study in this message is the "apostasy" that is involved within the ranks of organized religion.

**There is a great and growing "apostasy" among "professing Christians" today.** You will notice that I said "professing Christians," for the truly born again child of God, will not, and cannot become an "apostate." Let me remind you that Zechariah 13:6 prophecies this very truth, "And one will say to him, What are these wounds between your arms? Then he will answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends." Just as surely as there were those among the Jews that were in violent opposition to Jesus, there will be those among the ranks of organized religion that are violently opposed to His teachings.

**Today, as never before in the history of the Church, Jesus Christ is being attacked by church leaders.** He is being stripped of His deity and of His virgin birth; He is being lowered to the level of great religious leaders and the founders of various cults. And the world is simply saying that He was lying about His Second Coming!

Therefore, look with me as we study the kind of apostasy that is going on right now, that is preparing the way for the Coming of the Lord.

**First of all, there is an apostasy of belief.** 1 John 2:18-20 give us this warning, “Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us. But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things (It is impossible for the born again believer to be deceived about the truth of Jesus Christ, because we have the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of Truth). I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth. Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son.”

Just as Jesus had His forerunner in the person of John the Baptist, and his disciples, to provide a congregation for Jesus when He came forth preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, Satan has his forerunners that when the antichrist comes on the scene he will already have his congregation of hearers.

**Now, before the people are ready to receive the antichrist, the real Christ must be displaced in their minds, and in their hearts!** And the way Satan does this is to send out false teachers to deceive them into believing "another

**gospel." This truth is seen in 2 Corinthians 11:3-4 & 13-15, "But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted - you may well put up with it...For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works."**

**Every false religion, every cult, and every denomination, that departs from the Word of God is a forerunner of the antichrist. Every preacher, and every teacher, that takes away from the lonely Lordship of Jesus Christ, and says that Jesus Christ is not the only way to God, is a forerunner of the antichrist.**

**Do you know where the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormons, and all of the other cults, get most of their members? They get them from the membership of Baptist and Methodist who have never been saved, so they believe a lie!**

**There is an "apostasy" of belief going on in the churches today, and Paul says they are "enemies of the cross."**

**Not only is there an "apostasy" of belief, there is also an**

**"apostasy" of behavior going on in our churches today.** Let me remind you that *false teaching* and *false living* always go together! This truth is seen in 2 Peter 3:3 where we have been told, "Knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts." The person that denies the truths of Jesus Christ and the Word of God, always goes hand-in-hand with the person that is a slave to his own unholy desires and selfish lusts.

**"Apostasy" has sabotaged the Bible; it, has humanized God; it has deified man; it has minimized sin; it has glamorized sex; and it has destroyed righteousness through the Atonement of the Cross.** And if you go into the average church today, you will not hear any preaching on the inerrancy of the Bible, the Lordship of Christ, and the literal Second Coming of Christ, and there is very little difference between their church members and those that are members of the local service clubs in town!

**What, then, is the answer?** It is simply not enough to come and join the church, and to follow with baptism, and become involved in some program. My friend, it is absolutely necessary to allow Jesus Christ to come into your heart and change your life!