

**God's Eternal Plan #15**  
**The Great Apostasy**  
2 Timothy 4:1-10

God in His marvelous grace always forewarns men of impending judgment and doom. Before God destroyed the world the first time with a flood of water, He raised up Noah, a man of righteousness, and allowed him to prophecy and forewarn the people of his day for 120 years. Before Sodom and Gomorrah were 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 seventy 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 where they worshiped was going to be so 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.

In like manner, God told this world centuries before that great event ever took place in Bethlehem, that Jesus was going to come the first time. Through His prophets, God gave mankind signs of how they might identify the true Messiah when He came to this earth. And yet, the people of that day, for the most part, ignored those signs, or misinterpreted them, and had their own notions of what the Messiah would be like, so they missed Him.

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 introduction to this section on prophecy we saw the people in Thessalonica were having 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 lifetime. They had no idea that this age of the church was going to span some 2,000 plus years. So when some of their loved ones began to die, they were concerned that they had missed the rapture.

**The church in Thessalonica was therefore in danger of falling victim to deception and error.** Therefore, Paul writes to them in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, “Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition.” In this study, we are going to discuss the first of these signs that Paul refers to, and that is the sign of “Apostasy.”

As we study the word “apostasy” we will see that it 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 it is the same 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.”

**Second, 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.”

**Third, the word *apostasy* means “rebellion against constituted authority.”** And this idea is in direct opposition to the message of Paul 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.”

In writing to the church at Corinth, Paul says this in 1 Corinthians 2:9-10, “But as it is written: Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him. But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.” **The “deep things of God” is that purpose and program that God has as it centers in Jesus Christ and the things to come.** The “deep things of God” refer to all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge that are hidden in Jesus Christ. But over against the “deep things of God,” there is another system that include the “deep things of Satan,” as seen in Revelation 2:24,

“Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden.” The word translated “depths” in Revelation 2:24 is the same Greek word translated “deep” in 1 Corinthians 2:10. When we put these two passages together, we find there are two philosophies; two purposes; and two goals in the world today. One is called the “deep things of God” and the other the “deep things of Satan.”

The “deep things of God” are centered in the Person of Jesus Christ, and the “deep things of Satan” are carried on by Satan as he seeks to overthrow and defeat the purpose that God has for Christ and the Church. And in every day, and in every age, Satan has consistently been working to undermine the truth of God, and to substitute his lie and his deception and his error, for the truth concerning Jesus Christ and the Church.

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 says, “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.” 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 when the antichrist comes on the scene he will already have his congregation of hearers.

Before the people are ready to receive the antichrist, the real Christ must be displaced in their mind, and in their hearts. And the way Satan does this is to send out false teachers to deceive people into believing “another gospel.” This very truth is shown to us in 2 Corinthians 11:3-4 and 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 mainline denominational churches that are not building a strong biblical foundation, so they believe a lie. Therefore, there is an *apostasy of belief* going on in the churches today, and Paul says they are "enemies of the cross."

**Second, there is an apostasy of behavior going on in our world today.** Peter put it this way in 2 Peter 3:3, "Knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts." Paul says this in 2 Timothy 3:1-7, "You should know this, Timothy, that in the last days there will be very difficult times. For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred. They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others and have no self-control. They will be cruel and hate what is good. They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God. They will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly. Stay away from people like that! They are the kind who work their way into people's homes and win the confidence of vulnerable women who are burdened with the guilt of sin and controlled by various desires. (Such women are forever following new teachings, but they are never able to understand the truth.)"

**According to an article on "Religion/Spirituality," recent studies show that the moral foundation of our country is swiftly deteriorating.** The article states, "Though many people believe that stricter policies regarding incarceration are the answer to the rise in crime, this solution is based upon a false assumption. The key to solving the crime crisis is moral redemption." In an article entitled "Community and Government," Francis Schaeffer predicted that, "when truth retreats the social order deteriorates, which leads to a huge increase in crime. In response, a population will accept the imposition of oppressive measures in order to feel safe. The true solution to crime is a Biblical approach which recognizes that the ultimate rehabilitation is an internal transformation, becoming a new creation Christ."

**As the U.S. prison population continues to grow, presidential candidates have largely ignored the issue of crime.** While sociologists previously laid the blame for crime on external forces, recent studies clearly indicate that poor moral decisions produce criminal behavior. Fundamentally, crime is a problem of sinful human nature. Statistics show that youth with incarcerated family

members and those who are raised without father figures are more likely to commit crimes.

***Apostasy has sabotaged the Bible; it has humanized God; it has deified man, it has minimized sin; it has glamorized sex; and it has torn away at the very fabric on which our society was founded.*** And what we are seeing today is simply another sign that we are racing towards the Return of Jesus Christ.