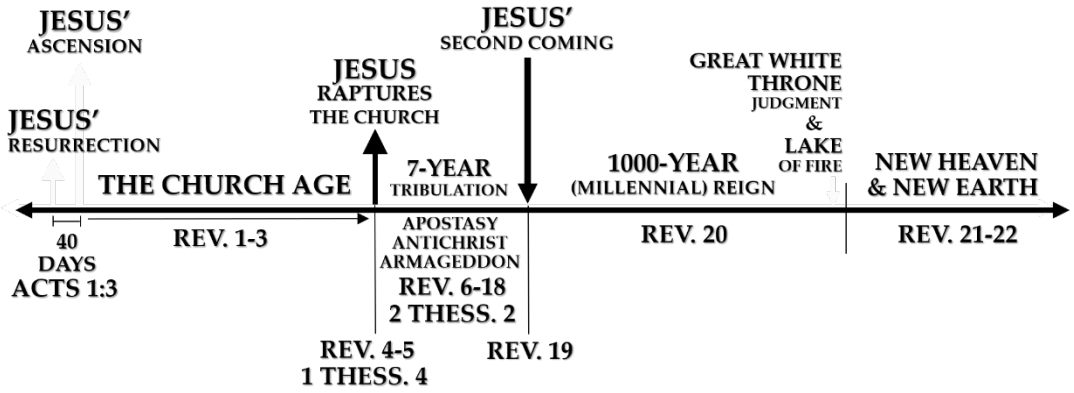
November 15, 2026
"The Apostasy & the Antichrist" (pt.1)
2 Thessalonians 2:1–12
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The Bible predicts that there will be a "falling away" from the faith in the end times as we get closer to the return of Christ. People will abandon the faith and leave the church to follow doctrines of demons and cultural myths. Some are identifying today as "exvangelicals"—those who have left the faith and no longer see themselves as evangelical Christians. There is also this trend of "deconstructing" one's faith, which often leads to a complete rejection of the authority of Scripture, and a denial of the Christian faith altogether. We will learn more about the last days in this study on the apostasy and the Antichrist.

1. Context
    a. A fear corrected
        i. Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians to assure Believers that they had not missed the rapture.
    b. A timeline of the last days:
        i. 

        ii. The church age
            1. The church age began when Jesus ascended to heaven 40 days after His resurrection.
            2. We will remain in the church age until the rapture.
        iii. The second coming of Jesus has two phases:
            1. Phase one, Jesus comes in the clouds—this is the rapture of the church.
            2. Phase two, Jesus touches down on earth to establish His millennial reign.
        iv. The rapture
            1. The rapture will happen between the church age and the seven-year tribulation period.
            2. The Thessalonians were experiencing great persecution and assumed that meant they'd missed the rapture.
            3. The tribulation period is reserved for nonbelievers.
            4. While the tribulation period does follow the rapture, we must still face *"various trials"* before the coming of Christ (**James 1:2**).

2. **2 Thessalonians 2:1–12** – *"[1] Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, [2] 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. [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, [4] who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.*

   [5] Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? [6] And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. [7] For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. [8] 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. [9] The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, [10] and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. [11] And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, [12] that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

3. The rapture
   a. Rapture language
      i. The phrases *"the coming of our Lord"* and *"our gathering to Him"* indicate that Paul is speaking of the rapture (verse 1).
   b. Two things must happen before Jesus comes for His church:
      i. People *"falling away"* from the faith (verse 3).
      ii. The *"man of sin"* revealed (verse 3).
   c. The purpose of apocalyptic Scripture
      i. Verses on the end times should not scare Believers but remind them to be prepared for the coming of the Lord.
         1. **DISCUSS**: What does it mean to be ready for the coming of our Lord? How are you preparing yourself?
      ii. Verses on the end times should scare nonbelievers and bring them to repentance.

4. The falling away
   a. The Bible uses many terms to refer to the great apostasy.
      i. The phrase *"falling away"* comes from the Greek **apostasia**, which carries the idea of defection or departure from true faith.
         1. Some Bible versions use the word *"rebellion"* instead.
         2. This apostasy will be so widespread and obvious that Paul uses it as a sign that Jesus is coming soon.

ii. **Matthew 24:10** – Jesus said, *"At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other."* (1984 NIV)
    1. The Greek word for the phrase *"turn away"* is **skandalizō**, our root word for "scandalized."
    2. **Skandalizō** has the same meaning as **apostasia**: both refer to people revolting against the truth.
iii. **1 Timothy 4:1** – Paul said, *"The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons."* (1984 NIV)
    1. The word *"abandon"* comes from the Greek **aphistēmi**, which means *"to abandon, depart, fall away, lose standing."*
    2. In latter days, people in the church will not only become indifferent to the things of God, but will also fall away.
iv. **2 Timothy 4:3–4** – *"[3] For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; [4] and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables."*
    1. Christians debate whether those who turn from the faith were truly saved or not.
    2. However, there had to be some faith there for a person to be turning from it.
    3. Anyone can fall. "There but for the grace of God go I."
    4. It is important that we stay in God's Word so that we do not fall for demonic doctrines wrapped up in the language of cultural enlightenment.
    5. Peter said he would never deny Jesus, but he was the first to do so. We cannot pretend to be above falling.

b. The great delusion is here.
    i. There is a rising trend of people leaving the church and sharing that on social media.
    ii. These "exvangelicals" are people who have left Christianity behind.
    iii. The top three reasons they gave for leaving Christianity were:
        1. 80 percent left because they no longer believe in the religious teachings.
        2. 58 percent disagreed with the church's treatment of gay and lesbian people.
        3. 51 percent said religion was harmful to their mental health.

c. Many leave Christianity due to deconstruction.
    i. Deconstructing can be positive if it is about digging into Scripture and asking questions to deepen our relationship with Jesus and make the faith our own.
        1. We should all go back to the basics and be sure our beliefs are Biblical instead of simply traditions of man handed down to us.

ii. But in our culture, deconstruction is about destruction and denial rather than a search for understanding.
    1. This form of deconstruction ends with a denial of God or belief in a god built in one's own image.
iii. Deconstruction typically involves:
    1. Rejecting the authority of Scripture.
    2. Redefining what it means to be a Christian.
        a. They decide what being a real Christian means to them.
        b. This comes from the entrenched lie that there is such a thing as "my truth" and "your truth."
    3. Questioning not to learn but to doubt and be skeptical.
        a. Satan asked Eve, *"Did God really say?"* not to learn but to cast doubt (**Genesis 3:1**, NLT).
        b. **DISCUSS**: How does a person's response help you tell whether a person is asking a disingenuous question or is honestly seeking truth? How do you examine the motives of your own heart when you're asking questions?
    4. Many famous personalities have deconstructed their Christian faith and fallen away, including:
        a. Joshua Harris, former pastor and author of *I Kissed Dating Goodbye*.
        b. Kevin Max, former member of the Christian rock band DC Talk.
        c. Hawk Nelson, former leader of a Christian rock band.
        d. Rhett McLaughlin and Link Neal, former Campus Crusade for Christ missionaries.
        e. Marty Sampson, former Hillsong songwriter and worship leader.
        f. Derek Webb, former singer and songwriter for Caedmon's Call.
        g. Abraham Piper, content creator and son of Pastor John Piper.
        h. Tiffany Arbuckle Lee, known as Plumb, who doubts the reliability of Scripture and aspects of her faith.

5. Living for Christ in a time of apostasy
    a. Pray for revival.
        i. Revival and apostasy can happen simultaneously.
            1. **DISCUSS**: Do you pray for revival? How are you trying to reach the lost?
        ii. Revelation records that in the last days, the church will diverge into two streams:
            1. The church at Philadelphia represents the true, evangelistic church full of genuine Believers.

2. The church at Laodicea represents the apostate church full of pseudo-Christians—if they have not left the faith entirely.

iii. The diverging churches will meet diverging ends.
1. The faithful church will be raptured.
2. The apostate church claims a Christianity it disobeys in practice or orthodoxy, so it will be left behind during the rapture.

iv. How did we get here?
1. Around the turn of the 20th century, theologians began to consider God "antiquated" and tried to bring Him in step with the "enlightened" mainstream culture.
2. This led to the church drifting from Biblical teachings and the denial of the inerrancy of God's Word.
3. The church's decentralizing of the Bible in moral thinking allowed the culture and the times to reinterpret the Scriptures and reshape the church.
    a. **DISCUSS**: How can you view the world through the eyes of the Bible rather than viewing Scripture through the eyes of the world?
4. Liberal German theologians Albrecht Ritschl and Adolf Von Harnack began preaching that the Bible is not true in its totality.
5. In 1922, New York City Pastor Harry Emerson Fosdick gave a sermon before the Northern Baptist Convention where he claimed that Christianity did not need "the intolerance of fundamentalists but the tolerance of diverse belief practiced by enlightened modernists."
    a. **DISCUSS**: Rather than asking whether a view is tolerant or not, what should we ask when evaluating a belief/statement?
6. The denial of absolute truth led to people:
    a. Denying the inerrancy, inspiration, and relevancy of Scripture.
    b. Tolerating and celebrating sin under the banner of love rather than addressing sin under the banner of truth to encourage repentance and forgiveness.
    c. Ordaining homosexuals.
    d. Performing same-sex marriages.
    e. Abdicating the pro-life position.
    f. Failing to be salt and light in our world, culture, and politics.
    g. Advocating for social justice causes above the Gospel.
    h. Holding a universalist view that all people will eventually be saved and that hell only exists on earth.

b. Be discerning.

i. Satan has entered our institutions of higher learning to affect secular culture.

1. Colleges like Harvard and Yale which were founded as Christian institutions fell to enlightenment thinkers like Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, and Descartes, and philosophers like Hobbes, Locke, Berkeley, and Kant.
2. In *The Sacred and the Secular University,* authors Jon H. Roberts and James Turner discuss the way colleges have shifted from a Christian to a naturalist worldview.
    a. The book is not written by Christians.
    b. The book notes that, across the board, universities first fell into naturalist thought in the area of science.

ii. We do not lack for information, but for the wisdom and discernment to sift through it.
1. A statement attributed to Donald Whitney claimed that an average daily edition of *The New York Times* contains more information than a 17th century person would have encountered in their entire lives.
2. He said that 35 years ago, before the digital age.
3. In our devices, we get information 24/7.
4. **Ephesians 4:14** – *"We should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting."*
5. **2 Thessalonians 2:15–17** – *"[15] Brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle. [16] Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, [17] comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work."*
6. **DISCUSS**: How does holding fast to God's Word keep you from falling for the lies of this world? How are you checking the beliefs you've accepted against Scripture?

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James (NKJV)