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## **2026 Brave New Year: Deception and the Last Days, Part 4: Lies about Wealth, Sin and Worship**

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<b>Introduction</b>
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1) Good morning, Church!

So, we’re continuing our little New Years’ mini-series called, *2023 Brave New Year: Deception and the Last Days*.

Last time we saw that the great prerequisite for the emergence of the Antichrist – one prophetic event the Church will actually see – is *THE apostasy* [ἡ ἀποστασία] or *THE great falling away* of the Church.

I believe this predicted prerequisite is taking place right now, right before our very eyes.

This is vital for us to understand: before the *great deceiver* appears, the Church (as Paul promised in **2 Thessalonians 2:3**) will be lured away in large measure from true devotion to Jesus.

And so, Paul expressed his concern for the Church, writing, “I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ” (**2 Corinthians 11:3**).

Can a blood-bought, born-again follower of Jesus be “deceived” and “led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ”? You bet your boots he can! And not only CAN that happen, it WILL happen *en masse* in the Last Days.

2) We also saw that *the coming of the Antichrist was a topic of great concern for believers in the early Church.*

In Paul's day (51-52 A.D.), some thought he'd *already appeared*. He hadn't.

So, to set the record straight, Paul wrote a letter to the saints at Thessaloniki to straighten them out about this.

Paul wrote that “the day of the Lord ... will not come, unless the rebellion [ἡ ἀποστασία] comes first” (**2 Thessalonians 2:3**).

Paul went on to warn them: “Let no one deceive you in any way” (**2:3**).

Why? Because the threats were many, the stakes were high, and the potential for being misled was great!

This was in the 1<sup>st</sup> century! We're now in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and closer than ever to the end of all things.

In another place, Paul warned of *teachers* who will lead people astray.

✠ They pose as Christians, but “do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites [*desires, cravings*], and by smooth talk and flattery ... [they] deceive the hearts of the naïve” (**Romans 16:18**).

He warned us of teachers who would downplay God's fury over sin.

This despite the fact that **Romans 1:18-19** says, “the wrath of God [ὀργὴ θεοῦ] is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.”

And so, Paul warned about teachers who would be soft on sin. Why because *sin must be properly defined if it's to be repented of!*

Therefore, he warned the believers at Ephesus:

“Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience” (**Ephesians 5:6**).  
To deny this is not an act of love.

3) So, warning God’s flock against false teaching was a primary concern of the Apostles.

The Apostle John chimed in too!

✠ **1 John 2:26:** “I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you.”

✠ **1 John 3:7:** “Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he [Jesus] is righteous.”

Notice the emphasis here is on the *outward manifestation of faith* – on one’s *behavior*, not merely what they confess with their mouths!

Those who *practice righteousness* – who *regularly do what’s right* – demonstrate that they have truly come to know the Lord *by their behavior*.

To teach otherwise is pure deception.

Therefore, “Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever *practices righteousness is righteous*, as he is righteous” (**1 John 3:7**).

## Lies About Wealth

1) Now, we know the Apostasy is promised, but *why* would teachers claiming to speak for Christ lead others into such obvious error?

I’d suggest two reasons:

First, whether they know it or not, they’re the devil’s chumps doing the devil’s own work.

Second, can I just be honest and say it? They’re driven *by greed*. And, sadly, greed-motivated ministry by unsaved people *is nothing new*, friends.

- ✠ Jesus said to His opponents, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence” (**Matthew 23:25**).
- ✠ Paul was quick to remind the Thessalonians that he “never came” to them “with words of flattery ... nor with [any] pretext for greed” — and he called God as his witness (**1 Thessalonians 2:5**).
- ✠ Peter warned the Church about those who, “in their greed ... will exploit you with false words [πλαστοῖς λόγοις].”

But he’s also quick to remind us that “their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep” (**2 Peter 2:3**).

In another place he warns that, while these false teachers have a patina of holiness, they are actually “blots and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, while they feast with you. <sup>14</sup> They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls ...” (**2 Peter 2:13b-14a**).

What a loaded passage!

- These deceivers actually ‘revel’ in their deceptions.

The word translated “reveling” (the *present* active participle of ἐντροφᾶω) means ‘to luxuriate in’<sup>1</sup> or to ‘amuse oneself with’<sup>2</sup> These deceivers actually *luxuriate in their deceptions*; they *amuse themselves with how they’ve deceived you!* The verb refers to *complete wantonness*.<sup>3</sup>

Lenski writes that these deceivers are not just merely reveling in eating, drinking, and having a good time, but they’re reveling in duping genuine Christians with their false, licentious teaching!<sup>4 5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Strachan, R.H., “The Second Epistle General of Peter,” in *The Expositor’s Greek Testament: Commentary* (New York: George H. Doran Company), v, 138.

<sup>2</sup> As in the *New Jerusalem Bible* (Doubleday, 1989), which follows the Aramaic and Greek texts for the New Testament and the Masoretic Text (established in the 8-9th centuries AD by Jewish scholars) for the Old Testament.

<sup>3</sup> Johnson, Edna, *A Semantic Structure of 2 Peter* (Dallas: The Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1988).

<sup>4</sup> Lenski, R. C. H., *The Interpretation of the Epistles of St. Peter, St. John and St. Jude* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1966), p. 322.

<sup>5</sup> Hermes, an early second century Christian writer, frequently correlates the nouns τροφή (luxury) and ἀπάτη (deception), and the verbs τροφᾶν (self-indulgently) and ἀπατᾶν (deceive), using them as almost interchangeable

The point Peter wants to make is that these false teachers not only deceive, but they actually *luxuriate in their deception* of God's people. They find it amusing.

- The word translated “deceptions” (ἀπάτη) also carries the meaning of “pleasures”.

For instance, the NIV translates it, “reveling in their pleasures while they feast with you.” Ἀπάτη is used to refer to any sinful pleasure which takes people in by a *false promise of enjoyment*.<sup>6</sup>

- And furthermore, they do these things “while they feast with you.”

They seem like brothers, but they are *false brothers*. The luxuries they consume upon themselves are actually a mockery of the true Christian love feasts which were celebrated by the early Church.<sup>7</sup>

The idea is, ‘*even while they are sharing your table, they are deceiving you.*’<sup>8</sup> And they’re tickled about it!

- And, finally here, notice *whom they target*: ψυχὰς ἀστηρίκτους = ‘*weak souls.*’

Ἀστηρίκτος means *weak* or *unstable* person; ψυχὰς ἀστηρίκτους are, literally, ‘*weak souls.*’ In this context, they are weak because of immaturity and the lack of disciplined study and spiritual formation.

## 2) Aside: Spiritual Formation.

*Spiritual formation* is a hip, trendy new name for good old-fashioned discipleship. It refers to *the lifelong process* of being transformed into the likeness of Jesus.

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words, according to Richard J. Bauckham (*2 Peter, Jude*, Word Biblical Commentary, Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1983), I, p.264.

<sup>6</sup> Bauckham, Richard J., *2 Peter, Jude*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1983), *ad loc.*

<sup>7</sup> Kelly, J. N. D. *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and Jude*. Harper's New Testament Commentaries. New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1969), *ad loc.*

<sup>8</sup> *The Translator's New Testament* (London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1973).

It's the process of growing into a deep, authentic spiritual life – moving from self-centeredness to Christ-centeredness by means of the regular practice of Christian spiritual disciplines, like

- ✓ Prayer, and
- ✓ Meditation, and
- ✓ The study of Scripture, and
- ✓ Gathering together with other believers to worship and to serve the Lord, and
- ✓ Sharing our faith in Jesus with others.

The Christian who doesn't pray is a *weak soul*.

The Christian who doesn't regularly encounter Jesus through His Word is a *weak soul*.

A Christian who does not share his or her faith in Jesus with others has never grown to spiritual maturity.

Christians who do not see the need to gather regularly with other believers are not only ψυχὰς ἀστηρίκτους, they don't understand the first thing about why God left them here after they were saved.

They live in perpetual disobedience against the One who warned not to forsake “the assembling of ourselves together, as *is* the manner of some, but exhorting *one another*, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching” (**Hebrews 10:25**, NKJV).

Such believers are *easy fruit for the enemy to pluck*.

And so, these deceivers specifically seek to “entice unsteady [immature, weak, undisciplined] souls ...” (**2 Peter 2:14b**).

3) Now these people may be *weak*, but they do have *something* to offer these false teachers: \$\$\$.

And so, Peter concludes, that these deceivers “have hearts *trained in greed*. Accursed [unsaved] children!” (**2 Peter 2:14b**).

Well, this has been true since the Church’s earliest days.

And since deception will be exacerbated in the Last Days, we shouldn’t be surprised that people like this are among the most influential leaders in the Church today.

Let me give you a few examples. Now, when we receive an offering, we understand that it is an opportunity to contribute to the work of the Lord and to the needs of the saints.

But this is how Kenneth Copeland, the Church’s own charlatan-in-chief, receives an offering ... [VIDEO MONTAGE].

Let me take a moment to address Copeland and Osteen’s deceptive teaching here: **Galatians 3:29** is not promising material wealth!

“If you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise” (**Galatians 3:29**).

The “promise” is that through Abraham’s seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed.

Through Abraham’s seed, that is Jesus (**Galatians 3:16, 19**), *anyone* of *any* nation who comes to Him will receive the salvation that can only be attained by faith.

This has *nothing* to do with material wealth!

How do we know? Paul, THE ONE WHO WROTE IT, was poor and depended upon the generosity of the saints to fund his missionary work!

Paul’s economic status was interesting to say the least.

While he came from a family with enough resources to afford him an education under the esteemed Rabbi Gamaliel, his economy seems to have crashed *after He met Jesus!*

After coming to Jesus, he worked as a tentmaker to support himself (not necessarily out of need alone, but out of principle: he refused to burden the churches he planted).

Very interestingly, though, he wrote that, although he was “poor,” he and his fellow missionaries “making many rich” and while “having nothing,” they possessed *everything*” (2 Corinthians 6:10).

Paul described relentless “afflictions, hardships ... labors, sleepless nights, hunger [an odd thing for a rich person to experience] ... [and] *the power of God*” (2 Corinthians 6:4-5, 7).

He wrote: “We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; <sup>9</sup> as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed; <sup>10</sup> as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything” (2 Cor. 6:8b-10).

Quick question: How come the guy who ACTUALLY WROTE GALATIANS didn't receive the promise of Abraham, if that promise is as Copeland claims, “great wealth”?

It turns out Paul had a very different view of wealth than Copeland and Osteen.

“But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. <sup>9</sup> But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. <sup>10</sup> For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs” (1 Timothy 6:8-10).

He told Timothy to warn those who are “rich in this present age ... not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. <sup>18</sup> They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, <sup>19</sup> thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life” (1 Timothy 6:17-19).

And that which is “truly life” is NOT material wealth!

Despite what liars like Kenneth Copeland and Joel Osteen will tell you, **Galatians 3:29** is not promising material wealth.<sup>9</sup> It is promising something so great that it can't even be compared with money: salvation for all who come to Jesus with faith alone in Him alone.

While money is fleeting, characterized by transience and uncertainty, Paul says, the promise Jesus gives us – Abraham's true promise – is exuberant life N.O.W. and forever life when we die.

Adding to their many sins, not only do these false teachers chase after wealth, they appeal to the basest part of their hearers encouraging them to also pursue wealth as the ultimate means to happiness!

And so, again, the Apostle Peter's warning: "In their greed they will exploit you with false words [πλαστοῖς λόγοις]."

## Lies About Sin

1) Now, Joyce Meyer has a huge ministry.<sup>10</sup>

Her website receives 1.75 million visits monthly from more than 650,000 unique individuals. She has YouTube channels in 91 languages. More than 1 million copies of her magazine, *Enjoying Everyday Life*, are distributed each year. Her ministry receives nearly 22,000 phone calls, emails and 8,200 pieces of printed mail each month – not to mention her interactions with her 38 million social media followers worldwide.

All this despite the fact that no woman has the biblical authority to serve as the pastor of a Church. God created the Church and God has clearly communicated how He desires it to be run and by whom. The Master makes the rules; Servants are to obey them.

Jesus asked: "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?"  
**(Luke 6:46)**

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oWnOIlVhnqw>, at 10:34 mark.

<sup>10</sup> <https://joycemeyer.org/about/what-we-do#:~:text=Joyce%20Meyer%20Ministries%20provides%20daily,38%20million%20social%20media%20followers.>

*Any woman pastoring a Church is in overt rebellion against the Lord Jesus Christ. They are not serving Jesus; they're serving themselves (1 Tim. 2:11–14). Therefore, female pastors constitute a significant part of the Great Falling Away of the Church, the rebellion, ἡ ἀποστασία (2 Thessalonians 2:3).*

Anyway, God's word says, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8). But false teacher Joyce Meyer says ["I am NOT as sinner; that's a lie from the pit of hell!"] ...

The Church is being led by deceivers who shamelessly out-right contradict the Word of God and claim that its message is from the "pit of hell"!

**2 Timothy 3:13** warns that "evil people and impostors" would "go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived." If Paul were on the earth today, I think he'd say, 'I told you so!'

## Lies About Worship

### 1) What about the Christian worship service?

Obviously, it should be conducted with reverence and dignity as is fitting in the Lord.

In the Pastoral Epistles, the Bible describes what public worship in the congregation of God's people should look like.

Paul commands young Pastor Timothy, to devote himself "to the public reading of Scripture (1 Timothy 4:13, cf. Colossians 4:16 & 1 Thessalonians 5:27).

He charged him to concern himself with "exhortation" and "teaching" (1 Timothy 4:13).

He tells him to preach the Word, regardless of how it's received: "Preach the Word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching" (2 Timothy 4:2).

He commands that "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and for all who are in high positions (1 Tim. 2:1).

In both **Ephesians 5:19** and **Colossians 3:16**, Paul instructs gathered believers to sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, thereby “singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart” (**Ephesians 5:19**) and “teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom” (**Colossians 3:16**).

He tells us to “take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them” (**Ephesians 5:11**).

### SLIDE – Ephesians 5:10

And, in all things, we must “try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord” (**Ephesians 5:10**).

2) Now, I’ve shown you a few of these before, but they merit revisiting.

This is what worship has become today.

Every clip you are about to see comes from a Sunday morning worship service somewhere in America.

We’ll start with a *Sunday morning worship* last January at Andy Stanley’s North Point megachurch – a church with a weekly attendance of 43,830 people in eight locations in the north metro Atlanta area.<sup>11 12</sup>

### Conclusion

1) Church, Paul warned, “the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths” (**2 Timothy 4:3-4**).

Can I be clear with you? *The people leading these churches are not saved people!*

<sup>11</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North\\_Point\\_Community\\_Church](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_Point_Community_Church)

<sup>12</sup> **Keith Green**: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z7oCa9BvO9g>; **ACDC**, **Usher**, **Miley Cyrus**: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aENBq0rCu\\_E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aENBq0rCu_E); **Aerosmith**: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oK-XN4c3-Eg> & [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kn8hf\\_z4fUI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kn8hf_z4fUI); **Stairway to Heaven on organ**: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LElatWaNphU>; **Bon Jovi**: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RYL6gGYNGgU>.

A quote often attributed to Charles Spurgeon is very relevant to our day:

“A time will come when instead of shepherds feeding the sheep, the church will have clowns entertaining the goats.”<sup>13</sup>

I believe the ‘great falling away’ predicted by Paul is taking place right now.

2) Well, as the writers of Scripture predicted, deception is all around us today.

And as we’ve seen, *deception* will prove to be the enemy’s most effective weapon of the Last Days.

AI is taking analog deception and jettisoning it out into the digital age.

We’re watching the technology that will facilitate the Antichrist’s short, but devastating, reign develop right before our eyes.

It increases in efficiency with each passing day.

The stage for the appearance of the Antichrist is already set.

The apostasy, ἡ ἀποστασία, the great defection from Christ, the great falling away of the Church, is happening as I speak.

Counterfeit Christianity is evident in every Church that calls people to assemble, but never calls them to the cross.

These are the “many” who will come to Jesus in the day of judgment calling Him Lord and spouting their resume of religious activity.

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. <sup>22</sup> On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ <sup>23</sup> And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness’” (**Matthew 7:21-23**).

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<sup>13</sup> The quote “A time will come when instead of shepherds feeding the sheep, the church will have clowns entertaining the goats” is attributed to Charles Spurgeon in multiple sources. However, a critical examination by *Lifeway Research* indicates that no verifiable record exists of Spurgeon uttering or writing this exact phrase. The quote appears in various articles and sermons posthumously, but its origin remains unconfirmed in Spurgeon’s known works. Therefore, while widely cited, the statement cannot be definitively traced to Spurgeon’s original writings or sermons.

Those to whom the Lord will say, ‘Away from ME! I never knew you!’

- 3) There have always been attacks on the purity of the Church – both doctrinally and morally – but never like today.

The Church of the Last Days will barely resemble the Church our Lord founded. It will be led by deceivers. As Paul put it, “people will be ... having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power” (2 **Timothy 3:5**).

And so, friends, these widespread false teachings within the Church must not be seen as mere curiosities; they are warnings. Paul wrote that “the day of the Lord ... will not come, unless the rebellion [ἡ ἀποστασία, the rebellion, the falling away] comes first.” We’re currently witnessing what happens when the Church trades holiness for cultural approval. Any Church that does this is a part of the *great falling away*.

In **Psalm 12**, David cried:

“Help, Lord, for the godly man ceases to be,  
for the faithful disappear from among the sons of men.  
They speak falsehood to one another;  
with flattering lips and with a double heart they speak”  
(**Psalm 12:1-2**, NASB95).

In **Luke 18:8**, Jesus Himself asked: “When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?”

Well, *there’s real faith here* – and in many other Christian communities who are not of this age, but are remnants of the Philadelphian Age of Church history. Amen? So, let’s continue to live out our faith in these dangerous times.