

Strong Delusion

2 Thessalonians: 2:9-16

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10/27/2024

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2 Thessalonians 2:9-16 (NIV)

⁹ *The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with how Satan works. He will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie, ¹⁰ and all the ways that wickedness deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. ¹¹ For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie ¹² and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.*

¹³ *But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters loved by the Lord, because God chose you as firstfruits to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. ¹⁴ He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

¹⁵ *So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter.*

¹⁶ *May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, ¹⁷ encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.*

v9-10 – What does it mean, *the coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan?*

The Antichrist will come with **power**, with **signs** and with **lying wonders**. But all of this **is according to the working of Satan...**

Revelation 13:13-14 – *He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast*

Does displaying spiritual power, signs, or wonders, prove someone is from God?

No... Satan can perform his own powerful works, either through deception or through his own resources of power. The Antichrist is Satan's messiah, an infernal caricature of the true messiah.

2 Timothy 3:8 – *Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith*

Pharaoh's magicians were able to duplicate some of Moses' miraculous signs in an attempt to discredit him as being from God.

Who will be deceived by the works of the Antichrist?

Among those who perish: However, the deception can only take root in those who *do not receive the love of the truth*. These people are ready for the deception of the Antichrist, because they *want* a lie, and *God will send them a strong delusion* (v11).

What does it mean to perish?

Perishing is the second death; it is eternal separation from God...

Revelation 20:14 – *Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.*

Why do people perish?

They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. Due to their pride, people insist on their own way of salvation instead of God's way (usually salvation by works). Or, they totally reject the Creator-God thus making themselves god.

v11 – Why will God send a strong delusion?

In the end, the Antichrist is effectively God's messenger. God has judgment to bring, and He will **send ... a strong delusion** through the Antichrist. God will not *force* this **delusion** on anyone, but those who **do not receive the love of the truth** will instead receive this **strong delusion**.

- They were first deluded, which was their sin; and God sends them strong delusion as punishment.

What is this strong delusion?

That they should believe the lie: Specifically, God sends them **the lie**. This isn't just *any lie*, but **the lie**, the lie that has enthralled the human race since Adam...

Genesis 3:5 – *in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil*

This is **the lie** that God is not God, and that we are or can be just like Him (transhumanism).

How is it “the” lie rather than “a” lie?

The Greek word pronounced “ho” is a definite article usually translated “the”... Per Strongs concordance used 20,404 times in the New Testament – only 543 times translated other than “the” and much less than that “a”.

- The same word is used in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 (the apostasia – the falling away).
- Translating this word “a” instead of “the” is a judgment call going against the usual translation – probably a bad judgment call.
- Consult a Greek Lexicon for yourself

What is transhumanism?

The desire to evolve beyond our current human condition.

- This often is in order to have eternal life. But it is always considered to be the result of human effort and technology to “improve” on human DNA.

It is man’s way to have eternal life, not God’s way... a modern Tower of Babel attitude.

What is the connection between transhumanism and the Mark of the Beast (Revelation 13:16-18)?

Jesus said the characteristics of the time before His return would be *as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be* (Matthew 24:37).

- Besides a proliferation of violence, evil thoughts and people being oblivious to coming judgment; there will be alterations to human DNA. That is why Noah was chosen to re-boot the human race: *Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations* (Genesis 6:9).
- It is likely the Mark must also include a change of DNA because those who take it can no longer be saved by the human blood of Christ (Revelation 14:9-11).

What brings the lie into prominence?

This is in the context of the rapture of the church (Thess 2:1, *our being gathered to Him & falling away*, v3). So, there will be a plausible explanation for the rapture of the church... probably extraterrestrial technology. Oh, and by transhuman evolution, people can be like the extraterrestrials; there is no Creator-God, just alien beings with such advanced technology, they are like gods.

How do we see the nations being deceived by the strong delusion?

The very idea that they have any chance of prevailing in a battle with the Creator-God...

Revelation 16:13-14 – *And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.*

They must believe that God is not really God, he is just another extraterrestrial like the ones they are allied with who are here to help humans become transhumans and fight against other extraterrestrial invaders.

v12 – What will become of those who embrace the lie?

That they all may be condemned: As God gives rebellious man the lie he desires, it isn’t out of His generosity. Instead, it shows God’s judgment on those who reject the truth. As Romans 1 points out, in judgment God may give a man up to the depravity of his heart, to his **pleasure in unrighteousness**.

- They think that they are acting in defiance of God. But in the end, they find that those very acts in which they expressed their defiance were the vehicle of their punishment.

v13 – Why was Paul thankful?

Paul repeats his idea from 2 Thessalonians 1:3, that he was obligated to thank God for His work in the Thessalonians, in light of the greatness of that work.

What was Paul thankful for?

Paul is first thankful that they are **beloved by the Lord**. God’s love for us is the primary motivation for all His work in and through us. And also...

Because God from the beginning chose you for salvation: Paul also praised the sovereign choice of God in bringing the Thessalonians to salvation. God’s choice was **from the beginning**. Before they chose God, He **chose** them, and He **chose** them for **salvation through sanctification**.

When did God chose us for salvation?

Also, from the beginning! The beginning of creation was preceded by the anticipation of Redemption, and the love of God to all who were one with Christ.

Ephesians 1:4-5 – *He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons*

How is salvation and sanctification connected?

The two go together. Those who claim to be chosen but lack evidence of **sanctification** (separation *from* the world and *unto* God) are on shaky ground.

- We can’t see if a person is *chosen*, but we can see if they are *sanctified*.

How does God’s sanctification work?

By the Spirit and belief in the truth: God’s work of sanctification uses two great forces, the **Spirit** and the **belief in the truth**. The Spirit of God and the Word of God are *essential* to our **sanctification**.

v14 – How does God call us?

He called you by our gospel: The call for this salvation comes through the **gospel**, the Gospel Paul preached (*we preach Christ crucified*, 1 Corinthians 1:23), and the Gospel that will enable us to obtain the glory of Jesus.

What will be the result of responding to the Gospel?

For the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ: Our being resurrected...

1 John 3:2 – *we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.*

v15 – What is the “therefore” there for?

Therefore, means that Paul wants us to consider what he has written up to this point. In this letter, he has given compelling reasons why Christians must **stand fast** and not be moved.

- **Stand fast** because the current distress (the *persecutions and tribulations* described in 2 Thessalonians 1:4).
- **Stand fast** because of the coming judgment of this world (*in flaming fire taking vengeance*, 2 Thessalonians 1:8).
- **Stand fast** because of the strength of coming deception (*all power, signs, and lying wonders*, 2 Thessalonians 2:9).
- **Stand fast** because of our glorious destiny (*the glory of our Lord Jesus*, 2 Thessalonians 2:14).

What should we do besides stand fast?

Stand fast and hold the traditions (teachings, NIV): The command to **stand fast** implies a *location*, and this tells us what Christians must **stand fast** upon. They must keep standing on God’s Word, delivered both by the authoritative word of the apostles (**by word**) and the letters of the apostles (**our epistle**).

But wait, doesn’t the Bible caution us about traditions?

Yes; the Bible recognizes that **traditions** can be a dangerous feature of religious systems (Matthew 15:2-3) or the traditions of man (Colossians 2:8).

- Paul has in mind here the *apostolic traditions* preserved for us in the New Testament.

v16-17 What does Paul remind us here?

Before Paul asked God to do something specific for the Thessalonians, he remembered all God *had* done for them. God has **loved** them, and gave them **everlasting consolation** and **good hope by grace**.

Why is it important to remember what God has done for us in the past?

In our intercession and petition, we do well to remember God’s past faithfulness and present blessing. His faithfulness in the past is a promise of His faithfulness for the future.

What did Paul ask God on behalf of the Thessalonians?

Two things: *comfort your hearts and establish you:*

- First, he wanted God to **comfort** their **hearts**.
- Second, he asked God to **establish** them **in every good word and work**.

This prayer for *comfort and continued testimony and work for Jesus* is fitting in light of the special needs of believers under pressure.

How is Paul’s prayer full of useful and important suggestions?

- Jesus is ours.
- God is our Father.
- God has loved us.
- God has given us good hope.
- We have everlasting *consolation (eternal encouragement, NIV)*.
- It is all through grace.

v17 – For what purpose did Paul ask God to strengthen the Thessalonians?

To share good deeds and encouraging words.

Why are good deeds and encouraging words important?

God can use them to attract people to Him.

What applications come to mind from this passage?

- The groundwork for the strong delusion is currently being established; we are at the end of the Age.
- Do not be deceived, salvation and sanctification go hand in hand.