God's Strong Delusion
Scripture: 2 Thessalonians 2
Code: BQ011912

Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness. (2 Thessalonians 2:11–12)

Specifically, unbelievers will be deceived by Antichrist and perish because **they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.** The phrase **the love of the truth** appears only here in the New Testament, and adds a compelling thought to Paul's argument. The unregenerate are eternally lost, not because they did not hear or understand the truth, but because they did not **love** it. The **truth** includes both "the word of truth, the gospel" (Col. 1:5), and the Lord Jesus Christ, who is truth incarnate (John 14:6; cf. 1:17; Eph. 4:21). Unbelievers do not welcome either Jesus or the gospel He proclaimed. Their antipathy to the truth is not intellectual, but moral, and their self-imposed blindness leaves the unredeemed under a damning level of satanic deception. It is not surprising, then, that Antichrist will deceive the entire lost world.

The Bible clearly teaches that those who go to hell do so because they reject the truth. Speaking of Jerusalem's rejection of the truth, Jesus lamented, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling" (Matt. 23:37). John 3:19–20 says, "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed." To the unbelieving Jews Jesus declared, "You do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He sent. You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life" (John 5:38–40). He reiterated that truth later in John's gospel:

Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins …. But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me. Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me? He who is of God hears the words of God; for this

reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God. (John 8:24, 45–47)

Because the unredeemed **did not receive the love of the truth** they “do not know God and … do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus” (1:8). They willfully choose to love their sin, believe Satan’s lies, and hate the gospel and the Lord Jesus Christ. They are like those Jewish leaders described in John 12:42–43 who “believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God.” In Matthew 10:37 Jesus taught that salvation involves loving Him above all else: “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.”

The terrifying reality is that God will seal the fate of those who hate the gospel by sending **upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false.** Though, as noted above, Antichrist will deceive people with satanically empowered false miracles, signs, and wonders, his deception only will succeed because it fits into God’s sovereign purpose. He will sentence unbelievers to accept evil as if it were good and lies as if they were the truth. Those who continually choose falsehood will be inextricably caught by it. In the words of Proverbs 5:22, “His own iniquities will capture the wicked, and he will be held with the cords of his sin.” They will be abandoned by God to the consequences of their choice to reject the gospel.

The story of Pharaoh is a grim reminder that God will judicially harden the hearts of those who persist in hardening their hearts against the truth. Because Pharaoh hardened his heart (Ex. 8:15, 32; 9:34; 1 Sam. 6:6), God hardened Pharaoh’s heart, fixing him in a path from which he could never return (Ex. 4:21; 7:3; 9:12; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:4, 8).

In Isaiah 6:9–10, a passage quoted repeatedly in the New Testament (Matt. 13:14–15; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10; John 12:40; Acts 28:26–27; Rom. 11:8), God said to Isaiah, “Go, and tell this people: ‘Keep on listening, but do not perceive; keep on looking, but do not understand.’ Render the hearts of this people insensitive, their ears dull, and their eyes dim, otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and return and be healed.” God told Isaiah that He would sovereignly prevent hard-hearted rejecters of the truth from responding to his preaching. Similarly, Jesus spoke in parables not only to reveal spiritual truth to believers but also to conceal it in judgment on unbelievers (Matt. 13:11–13; Luke 8:10). There comes a day that those who persistently reject the truth will be unable to believe it; God will harden their hearts and fix them in the path they have chosen.

In the future, God will again use Satan as an instrument of His judgment, **in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.** Satan will, through Antichrist and the false prophet, delude the world into believing the lie that Antichrist is God. Unbelievers will be confirmed in that belief because they will choose not to love the truth, but rather to

take **pleasure in wickedness.**

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