

2 Thessalonians 2:11-12**PREFACE**

Remember that verses 9-12 are parenthetical in nature; chronologically they should be inserted into the middle of v8, between the lawless one being revealed, and his slaying by the appearance and breath of Christ Jesus.

Verses 9-10, which we looked at last week, focuses on the nature and behavior of the “man of lawlessness,” as well as the rejection of the truth by his followers (or the unregenerate during the Tribulation).

The passage before us today, vv11-12, focuses on God’s response to their rejection of Him and His truth.

Read 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12.**v11**

The beginning of v11 points back to the end of v10.

For this reason...

What reason?

because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.

What will God do for this reason?

God will send upon them a deluding influence

Why will He do this?

so that they will believe what is false,

To what end?

in order that they all may be judged

To a world culture that, if it believes in Him at all, clings tenaciously to the admittedly Biblical concept that “God is love,” this behavior by Him comes as quite a shock. Why in the world would God force upon the unsaved any influence that would finalize and condemn that condition?

This world (including, sadly, many of its churches) is filled with individuals that believe in a one-dimensional God. They do not even permit His personality and nature the subtle gradations they permit themselves. For example, seeing and embracing His love, they remain blind to His other qualities—such as holiness and justice—and how these all work together. And if they *do* believe in His justice, they think it goes only in one direction: grace—i.e., *Surely he knows that, at heart, I am a good person*—when, in actuality, His justice requires Him to pronounce condemnation on them: *You have no goodness in yourself. If you will not acknowledge My Son as Savior and Lord, you are lost. This is utterly just.*

For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence

This is not new for the Lord God. This is not something He trots out special for the End Times.

deluding influence^{nasb}, **strong delusion**^{kjvs,esv}, **powerful delusion**^{niv} = literally, an activity or working of error, an active power of misleading.

Turn please to 1 Kings 22.

King Ahab was right up there as one of the most evil kings of Israel. Near the end of his reign he wanted to once again go to war against Aram to reclaim Ramoth-gilead ([raw-mothe' gil-awd'](#)) for Israel. The king of Judah would go with him into battle, but first he required the king of Israel to seek the word of the Lord on the matter.

Read 1 Kings 22:6.

Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, knew the four hundred prophets were just telling King Ahab what he wanted to hear. So he asked if there was any *honest* "prophet of the Lord."

Read 1 Kings 22:8-9.

So here's the scene: The two kings are decked out in their best finery, sitting on matching thrones. All around them are these four hundred "prophets" babbling on, saying, "Go up to Ramoth-gilead and prosper, for the LORD will give it into the hand of the king." The messenger prompts the true prophet, Micaiah, "Listen, there's a consensus among the prophets that the king should go to battle. Don't rock the boat; just go along with the rest."

Standing before the throne, his king puts the question to him, and he first answers, mimicking and mocking the sea of false prophets surrounding him, "Go up and succeed, and the LORD will give it into the hand of the king." But Ahab knows the prophet is just scamming him.

Read 1 Kings 22:16-18.

And then Micaiah recounts a scene taking place in heaven, and this is what ties into our Thessalonian passage.

Read 1 Kings 22:19-23.

Ahab went to battle and, indeed, he was killed. Now let's look at a more familiar account in Romans 1 where the Lord God intervenes to "give over" evil individuals to even deeper evil. We were here just recently, so we'll look at just the bottom line.

Read Romans 1:28.

So what God will do during the Tribulation is nothing new. To be honest we have to ask, *Does God's action in these situations constitute Him sending evil upon these individuals?* Our text in 2 Thessalonians states, "God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false." *Is this an instance of God making them sin?* After all, James tells us that God will not do this.

Read James 1:13.

But as we read on, James answers the question for us.

Read James 1:14-15.

John Peter Lange: Does God Himself send an energy of delusion? The Greek Fathers thought this too harsh, and softened the expression by taking the sending for a bare permission; but improperly. Our fathers of the Reformation especially insisted on recognizing the will of God as powerfully active even in judgments of this kind. Already in the Old Testament He sends evil spirits (1Sa_16:13 sqq.; 1Ki_22:22); to wit, for the punishment of sin by sin (comp. Rom_1:24 sqq.). He is the holy God, and therefore is never the first Author of evil; but the evil that already exists He turns to His own holy ends. He does not produce in the heart falsehood and wickedness; but where they are already in the heart, there He puts a lying spirit in the mouth of the false prophets. From the corrupt seed that is in the heart he brings forth this fruit, that it serves His purpose. Thou art to have thy will, and reap what thou hast sown. This judgment is never a faint, impotent permission, but a powerful operation, though to the last with a salutary aim (Rom_11:32); only in cases where the period of grace is trifled away, does it issue in irreclaimable obduracy (Mat_13:14-15). [obduracy = hardening]

As I read in our last session, all of this this that Lange has written, Matthew Poole condensed into one sentence.

Matthew Poole: They were first deluded, which was their sin; and God sends them strong delusion, and that is their punishment.

so that they will believe what is false

How this plays out on the ground is that God will wrap them up in the straitjacket of their own sin. He will send upon them a supernatural force—in the OT it would be called an evil spirit—that will insure that they are fully and fatally taken in by, correctly, *the* lie—the *big* lie that has been with man since the Garden, that God is not who He says He is, and that we need not listen to Him or obey Him.

In a sense, just as the Antichrist is the dark mirror image of Christ Jesus, this “deluding influence” is the dark mirror image of the perseverance of the saints. Those who are truly regenerated *will* persevere to the end—God will see to it. Just so, during the Tribulation, to those who have been doggedly unregenerate, persistent in their rejection of truth, God will insure with this deluding influence that their end will be what they deserve. Under this influence, they will believe and follow after every outrageous claim made by Antichrist; having lost their reason, they will be powerless against him. Here is the justice of a holy God.

v12

To what end? What is God’s end-game?

Read v12.

in order that they all may be judged

In our common versions, only the NASB translates this literally.

judged = *krino* = properly **to distinguish, i.e. decide** (mentally or judicially); by implication to try, condemn, punish :- avenge, conclude, condemn, damn, decree, determine, esteem, judge, go to (sue at the) law, ordain, call in question, sentence to, think.

Though the Greek is neutral, not mentioning a verdict, the other versions project the obvious: **condemned**^{niv,esv,nkjv}, **damned**^{kjv}. God's verdict is not in question. The context makes it clear. And who will be judged?

[those] who did not believe the truth,

Let's return for just a moment to this societal position that God is love, God is gracious, and certainly would not do such a hateful thing as condemn people to an eternity of torment in hell. OK, let's look at God's definition of love.

Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-6.

True love, *agape* love, does not take pleasure in unrighteousness, evil, but instead rejoices in the truth—not just truth, but *the* truth. So a God who is love *must* condemn evil, as He delights in the truth. In contrast, the individuals described here did *not* believe the truth.

believe = *pisteuo* = from <G4102> (pistis); **to have faith** (in, upon, or with respect to, a person or thing), i.e. credit; by implication **to entrust** (especially one's spiritual well-being to Christ) :- believe (-r), commit (to trust), **put in trust with**.

They refused to place their faith in the truth about God, and His Son, the *true* Christ. Instead, they

took pleasure in wickedness.

We must not make the mistake of accepting a casual meaning of this word translated "took pleasure."

took pleasure = *eudokeo* = from <G2095> (eu) and <G1380> (dokeo); **to think well of, i.e. approve** (an act); specially to approbate (a person or thing) :- think good, (be well) please (-d), be the good (have, take) pleasure, be willing.

This is not a picture of someone dabbling in that which is evil, taking pleasure in it when they occasionally feel like it. No, this is a description of someone who *agrees with*, who *approves* of wickedness. Let's return to Romans 1 to see how Paul closes a long list of those with a depraved mind.

Read Romans 1:32. (Not KJV)

"Give hearty approval" in the NASB is a form of the same word in our Thessalonian passage, *syneudokeo*. Even though they "know the ordinance of God," even though they know they will be judged as deserving death, they not only join in this behavior, they gladly, *eagerly* join the club. God may have the final verdict on them, but they have already condemned themselves.

As we bid a relieved adieu to this dark passage of Scripture and its leading character, let us close with this convicting reminder from the late George Sexton.

George Sexton: Men pursue an evil course until they come to believe it to be right. Look at that fine boy who is just leaving his home for the workshop or the college. He has been brought up in a pure family, surrounded by all that is good and pious. But the first day in his new surroundings words fall on his ears which horrify him; these, or similar, he will hear again and again, until they cease to affect him. Then, and at a later stage, he will himself indulge in coarseness and profanity with the rest, and perhaps become the very blackest of all that black company. The inworking of sin and error will destroy conscience, and that most fearful of all states be reached in which no remorse be experienced, but rather pride in sin. Man very largely moulds his own character, and with it his beliefs; and very often, alas if he comes to “believe a lie,” and his doing so is entirely his own fault.

The work of sin in our lives cannot be blamed on a holy and just God. It percolates up from our own nature and proclivities.

But let's not end with this; let's end on a more positive, affirming note, which we find in the text for our next session.

Read 2 Thessalonians 2:13-15.