

A STRONG DELUSION

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At first glance, this statement in 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12 might seem surprising: “And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause *God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie*: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” This passage credits God with taking action to send a strong delusion to certain people. This thought may seem disturbing, but studying this passage and others like it can help us to better understand the mind of our Creator, particularly as it relates to our eternal destination.

God’s desire to save mankind

Clearly, God’s purpose is that all who do not love the truth, that do not believe the truth, and that have pleasure in unrighteousness will be damned (2 Thes 2:10-12). But God’s *first* purpose and desire is that all will be saved. This truth is taught in both the Old and New Testaments. Ezekiel 33:11 says, “*Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?*” The New Testament tells us that God “*will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth*” (1 Tim 2:1), and that the Lord is “*not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*” (2 Pet 3:9). For this reason, God has made Himself known to all mankind through the Creation, so that no one has an excuse to say that he or she did not know of His existence (Psa 19:1;75:1; 97:6; 100:1-3; 104:24; Rom 1:18-20). He has “left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness” (Acts 14:17). There is no acceptable reason for Him to be the “Unknown God” (Acts 17:22-29), which is why He “now commandeth all men every where to repent” (Acts 17:30). Finally, and most importantly, God has given His only Son Jesus Christ for all mankind, to save us from our sins and provide us the opportunity for eternal life (John 3:16; Rom 5:6-11; Titus 2:11; 1 John 2:1-2; Rev 3:20; 22:17). But God will not grant “universal salvation.” We must repent and obey Him or we will lose our souls for eternity (Matt 7:21-23; Luke 13:3,5; Heb 5:9). Thus, everyone without exception has the opportunity to be saved. But if a man

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rejects God, God's will is for him to be eternally damned in hell if he does not repent.

Man's responsibility and God's response

Therefore, God has a good and necessary reason for sending a strong delusion to certain ones. God sends a strong delusion *to those who do not love the truth, to those who do not believe the truth but have pleasure in unrighteousness* (2 Thes 2:10-12). We must love all the truth, the word of God (John 17:17), which God has given us. But in the particular context of 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12, "truth"

refers to what God has revealed to every man by the creation concerning His existence. In Romans 1:18, God's wrath is revealed against all who hold the truth in unrighteousness. In this context, the "truth" to which God is referring is "*that which may be known of God*" which has been revealed to all men, because God has showed it to them (Rom 1:19). This truth about God concerns the invisible things of Him and God has revealed it clearly by the creation: His eternal power and Godhead (Rom 1:20). That is, every man can clearly see from the creation that there is a God (see references in the previous paragraph). There can be nothing made without a maker (Heb 3:4). No man has an excuse because all men know that there is a God, whether they admit it or not. This knowledge that all men have gives everyone the responsibility to seek their Creator, to learn His will and obey it, to serve only Him (Rom 1:20-25). That is what it means to "love" this truth (2 Thes 2:10), to "hold it in righteousness" (Rom 1:18), and to "acknowledge" it (2 Tim 2:25). God has taken the first step by revealing Himself to all men. Then every man has the opportunity, responsibility and choice to either serve their Creator or not. Based upon man's response to Him, God will either help the person find God's will if he's seeking Him (Matt 7:7-8; Acts 17:26-27; Heb 6:11; Jas 4:8); or God will send the person a strong delusion so that they will be damned if they reject God (John 12:37-40; Rom 1:24-32; 2 Cor 4:4; Thes 2:10-12).

2014 ATTENDANCE FIGURES

Sunday mornings:	2628 total, 50.5 average
Sunday evenings:	2243 total, 43.1 average
Wednesday evenings:	2017 total, 38.8 average