

GOD'S PATHWAY THROUGH PROPHECY
"The Strong Delusion"
(2 Thessalonians 2:11-12)

INTRODUCTION: Daniel's Seventieth Week starts with, and is signaled by the signing of a seven-year pseudo-Peace Treaty cut between the nation of Israel and a yet obscure European Ruler. Originally this perverse political figure, who is destined to rule over a newly revived Roman Empire, shall be yet unknown to Israel, and to all who are willfully ignorant of, and blind to the truth of God's prophetic program because of their obstinate unbelief. Shortly after cutting this seven-year covenant with Israel, this sinister sovereign shall be unveiled as Satan's chief commander, the Antichrist. However, before the revelation of his true identity takes place, at the very time the Treaty is signed, a strong delusion will fall upon all those who had before been afforded the opportunity to hear and believe the truth of the Gospel, only to reject it in unbelief.

This strong delusion shall ensure that the signing of the Treaty with Hell, also seals and secures the doom and destruction of all those who prior to the Treaty heard and rejected the Gospel. It is this strong delusion that the Holy Spirit reveals through the inspired and infallible pen of the Apostle Paul and stands as a grim and gracious warning of God Almighty to all those who hear the Gospel in a flippant and frivolous fashion based upon the Satanic deception that men can choose to believe in their own time, and on their own terms. The coming strong delusion shall prove the truth of God's sovereignty in salvation as contained in the following declarations: "*Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near*" (Is. 55:6); for, "*Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation*" (2 Cor. 6:2). Man comes to God only on God's terms and at God's times! The day is rapidly approaching in which this Christ-rejecting world shall be sovereignly sealed in their stubborn hardness and unbelief, so as to be doomed and damned for eternity. When God closes the door of salvation, it is shut and sealed, and none can ever open it again. This is the truth behind the coming strong delusion of which the Spirit solemnly sounds the alarm!

In 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 the apostle Paul teaches us eight transforming truths concerning the coming strong delusion. All who have an ear to hear, would be wise to heed. These eight truths form the focus of the present study of the coming Strong Delusion which the Sovereign Lord shall send upon an unbelieving humanity at the outset of Daniel's Seventieth Week. This ominous Word of the Lord mercifully provides a warning to all who continue to pine in their sin.

- I. The **ORDINANCE** concerning Strong Delusion – 2 Thess. 2:11.

"And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie."

This is the seed and sole text concerning the last days "strong delusion" (Gk. *energeian planes*). This particular construction occurs nowhere else in the entire scope of sacred writ. No other writer save the apostle Paul employs the term in any other Biblical book. This

“strong delusion” is a key eschatological theme that provides insight into how the diabolical rule and reign of the antichrist will successfully sway the masses of mankind with seductive subtilty.

Thus, “strong delusion” is a purely Pauline prophetic concept reserved for the latter days.

The word “delusion” itself occurs only two times in the whole of the English Bible. It is found once in the Old Testament, and once in the New Testament. Regarding the former we read, “*I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear: but they did evil before mine eyes, and chose that in which I delighted not*” (Is. 66:4). This passage stresses the supreme sovereignty of God, as the One whose throne is heaven, and whose footstool is earth; the One who is infinite, incomprehensible, and independent; the One who has spoken and not been silent. This God stands in sharp opposition to man’s sin sick depravity which so dilutes their reason and rationality as to render them irresponsive to His Word, and unable to draw the most simplistic distinctions between holy and unholy, between right and wrong, and between lawful and unlawful. To such puny men, the sovereign Lord announces that it is He alone who “*will choose their delusions!*” God and God alone, has the power to give light or darkness, sanity or insanity to the heart and mind of man (Rom. 1:28). And He has decreed to do so in perfect harmony with the way in which man responds to hearing and heeding His Word. To the one who chooses light, God grants more light until light dawns and the day breaks. To the one who chooses darkness, God grants more darkness until the night falls and delusions darken even the darkness of depravity. It is sinful man who chooses the darkness of his own depravity, but it is the Sovereign God who chooses the delusions of depravities darkness; and oh, how great these delusions can be when once, God withdraws His light of general grace and leaves man to his own devices. Indeed, they can, and one day shall become “**STRONG DELUSIONS**” sent forth as the sever and just judgment of the King of Heaven who never acts capriciously, but declares, “*Even as they*” (v. 3), “*Even so I*” (v. 4)! Paul points us to a day and hour in prophetic history when God shall choose to turn mankind over to the most severe and strong delusion of His choosing. The term Paul uses is a graphically colorful one that literally implies, “an energizing and effectual deception that secures and seals a sure seduction.” Just as God’s grace is irresistible and effectual to draw all those who humbly hear and heed His Word; so likewise, His wrath is irresistible and effectual to delude those who haughtily refuse to hear and heed His Word. The same sun that melts the butter also hardens the brick. God’s Word is a sword that cuts both ways. It converts the humble believer and condemns the haughty unbeliever. His Word will not return void. God’s Spirit will not always strive with sinful man, and His grace shall not continue to restrain the severity of His wrath in the face of mankind’s mockery. The day is coming when the God who controls and chooses all delusions, shall choose the “strong delusion” which shall come upon all those who having had an opportunity to hear and heed His Word, refused to hear it, and chose not to heed it.

II. The **OCCURANCE** of Strong Delusion – 2 Thess. 2:7-11.

“For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, 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.”

When shall the strong delusion actually take place? While lost man lives in the dark delusion of depravity at this very moment due to the mystery of iniquity that is already operative; deception is somewhat restrained by the goodness and grace of God, and by the presence of God’s Restrainer on this planet. However, the hour is coming when delusion shall be flooded by a tidal wave of prophetic strong delusion. The context makes it abundantly clear that this prophetic deluge of delusion will take place commensurate with the coming prince, “whose coming is after the working of Satan.” It is at the time of his public arrival onto the scene to officially launch his campaign, that the delusion shall begin. Note again, it is at his arrival, some three and a half years prior to his unveiling. The delusion shall occur at the outset of Daniel’s seventieth week, just prior to a series of subsequent events. Strong delusion shall come upon the world at that time, when the yet hidden and unveiled antichrist cuts covenant with Israel. This strong delusion will eventually be followed by a great falling away, then by the removal of God’s appointed and anointed Restrainer, and then by the Mid-Week manifestation of the anti-Christ as the Abomination of Desolation spoken of by both Daniel and Jesus (Dan. 9:27; Mt. 24:15). It is the strong delusion that paves the way for the successful seduction of the antichrist, for the movement and motion of his ruthless rule over the nations of the world, and his pending persecution of Israel once he breaks the so-called Euro-Israeli peace-pact!

III. The **OCCASION** of Strong Delusion – 2 Thess. 2:10b-11a.

“because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause...”

What occasions such a sovereign severity in sending of a strong delusion upon humanity? It shall be the result of man’s willful resistance and deliberately defiant rebellion against the truth of the Gospel which they had previously been graciously granted the opportunity to hear. A closer examination of the grammatical construction of the text bears this out in intricate detail. In a clearly causal connotation Paul candidly communicates that it is “because” (Gk. *anth’ hon*) they “received not” (Gk. *ouk edexanto* – negated 3rd person plural contracted 1 aorist active indicative) stressing a past punctiliar action that was full and final. It is not that they were passively indifferent to the truth, but that they decisively and defiantly despised and denounced the truth that could have and would have been their salvation. They hated the very thing that would have brought them into the truth because their nature loved the lie. In fact, Paul makes it clear that “the truth” they despised and denounced, providentially came to them for the purpose “that they might have been fully and finally saved” (Gk. *eis to sothenai autous* – 1 aorist passive infinitive of purpose). Because they were given the truth of the Gospel that they might be saved, only to fully and finally despise it and denounce it; they shall now be fully and finally

damned by sovereign severity without excuse. They desired delusion and damnation, and they will get it in its strongest form. Paul therefore emphasizes that it is “for this cause”! Because they heard and rejected, they shall be deluded and deceived so as to seal their damnation at the time the European leader cuts covenant with Israel. This principle has been stated accordingly, “Judicial infatuation is the penalty of disobedience to the truth of God in Christ” (Moffatt:50).

IV. The **OMEN** of Strong Delusion – 2 Thess. 2:3-7.

“Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.”

While the Godless truth rejecting world shall be sovereignly delivered over to strong delusion, the saints of God are never to be led astray regarding eschatological events such as the Day of Christ, and those various precursors which serve as omens of more ominous events still to come. The strong delusion shall itself be just such a precursor. Once the child of God sees the new European political ruler enter into covenant with the nation of Israel, he can know that the strong delusion is certain to immediately take place. When the strong delusion falls upon humanity, so that all who had previously heard the Gospel are turned over to deception, the sober saint will know by the sure signs of the times, that three other events shall follow shortly. The strong delusion will immediately lead to the Great Apostacy, or the final day falling away. In those days the counterfeit churches full of counterfeit Christians, along with the other counterfeit religious systems will fall hook-line-and-sinker for the system and charismatic subtilty of the Antichrist. On that day there shall be an abandonment of the true Christian faith such as the world has never known. Exactly three and a half years later, the strong delusion and the great apostacy shall be followed by the removal of God’s Restrainer. Once the Restrainer is removed the Man of Sin shall officially be revealed as he personally enters into the inner sanctum of God’s Holy Temple in Jerusalem and commits the Abomination of Desolation by declaring himself to be God! At that time all HELL shall literally break loose as the Great Tribulation begins, the False Prophet emerges to institute the Mark of the Beast, and worldwide Beast Worship is demanded of all!

V. The **OBJECTIVES** of Strong Delusion – 2 Thess. 2:11b-12.

“that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

This explanatory clause communicates the dual providential purpose for the strong delusion. God is never capricious, causeless, or careless about what He has done in the past, is doing in the present, or shall do prophetically. Accordingly, there will be two objectives for the last day's strong delusion. First, the strong delusion is going to come upon the masses of godless humanity "*who*" when given an opportunity "*believed not the truth,*" so that, or for the purpose "*that they should believe a lie*". Second, the strong delusion shall come in order "*that they all might be damned!*" A closer examination of these two purposes clearly communicates the providential power and sovereign supremacy within the strong delusion.

The first objective is unmistakably clear, "*that they should believe a lie!*" This infinitive purpose clause rendered from the Greek, "*eis to pisteusai*" points out that God's first purpose behind the strong delusion is to ensure the solidification of the unbelief of the unbelieving. At some point in the past, prior to the signing of the pseudo seven-year peace pact, they chose not to believe when they first heard the Gospel of truth. Now, they shall be sovereignly sealed in their unbelief. The verbal notion of the infinitive is the 1st aorist punctiliar which denotes a once-for-all and forever final state of unbelief. It speaks not of a temporary or fluid faithlessness, but a firm, fixed, and final faithlessness void of any possibility or prospect for change. Why? Because it is purposefully and providentially signed and sealed by the strong delusion.

It should be noted that not only will they not be allowed to believe the truth, but instead, they will be seduced into believing "a lie"! When men refuse to believe the truth, they will always end up believing a lie. The phrase, "a lie," is an articulated form that literally denotes and designates "THE LIE" (Gk. *toi pseudei*). Not only will they not be permitted to believe the specific truth of the Gospel, they shall also be energized to believe the specific and supreme lie of all lies, namely, the lie of the antichrist! The point is basic, he who refuses to believe in Christ, will in the end believe in antichrist. This was Jesus' precise warning to the unbelieving religionists of His day when He prophetically proclaimed, "*I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive*" (Jn. 5:43). Jesus spoke these words concerning the world-wide belief of the coming prince, who shall come in his own name, the antichrist. Jesus makes it emphatically clear that all who believe not on Him, will in the end be seduced by the strong delusion into believing in the antichrist.

The final objective in the strong delusion is equally candid, "*that they all might be damned!*" In this final purpose clause, the preposition "*that*" (Gk. *hina*) stresses the strongest final purpose possible in the language of the New Testament. The strong delusion is sent upon sinners who in previous times refused to believe, in order to ensure that in times following the newly signed peace-pact, they will not believe, so that, or in order that they might be damned!" God's day of grace will have past for these pathetic and perverted unbelievers. His day of vengeance is shortly to come upon all of Christ rejecting humanity. At that hour the strong delusion will come to demand and determine the eternal damnation of all those who when given an opportunity to believe, defiantly declined, only to then be signed, sealed, and delivered over to Satan and satanic seduction for ultimate and eternal damnation with him in hell. Since they would not have Christ in heaven, they will have antichrist in hell. They asked for it, and they got it, because in their depraved disposition, they not only hated God and godliness, "*but had*

pleasure in unrighteousness.” Sinners simply love sin, and will ultimately get the sinfulness of sin until it sickens them!

The justice behind God’s just judgment finds its justification in the concept of the truth. Consequently, Paul employs inspired bracketing to drive home the central place of the truth in defense for the Divine wrath upon stubborn and stiff-necked sinners who revolt against the truth, when they should have rejoiced in the truth. The bracket commences with the causal clause, *“because they received not the love of the truth.”* The bracket concludes with the phrase, *“who believed not the truth.”* When these sinners heard the truth, they neither received it, or believed it. Instead, they *“had pleasure in unrighteousness.”* They hated the truth, not because the truth was not true, but because they loved the lie. This leads to a fundamental biblical principle by which God deals with those who are blessed to hear the truth. Whenever God graciously grants a person the priceless opportunity to hear the truth, He also obligates that person to heed the truth. With the blessing of hearing, comes the burden of heeding. Whoever hears God’s truth immediately becomes accountable and responsible for that truth. In God’s divine economy, the way in which man responds to God’s truth is the way in which God deals with that man. To the man who hears and heeds the truth, God shows Himself merciful. To the man who hears but refuses to heed the truth, God shows Himself sever.

The truth test provides insight into the actual condition of the person hearing. When the elect of God hear the truth; they love the truth, receive the truth, and believe the truth. Their response to the truth testifies to their status before God. Conversely, when the non-elect hear the truth; they hate the truth, reject the truth, and believe not the truth. How one responds to the truth displays whether they are children of God, or children of the devil. The apostle John points out the principle of the truth test in vivid verbiage: *“They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error”* (1 Jn. 4:5-6). So is the divine “Law of Hearing!” How we hear God’s truth not only determines how God deals with us; it also displays who we are within the eternal economy of God. Thus, God is just in justifying the elect, and also just in judging the non-elect; because both His just justification, and His just judgment are rooted in the principles of hearing and heeding the truth!

VI. The **ORCHESTRATOR** of Strong Delusion – 2 Thess. 2:11a

“And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion.”

Throughout this study of the coming strong delusion it has been repeatedly emphasized that the strong delusion is providentially poured out upon man, and sovereignly sent upon sinners. This should cause everyone to ask, “Who is the Subject behind the strong delusion?” “Who orchestrates it and operates it?” The Bible directly answers these questions with a single, solitary response – GOD! God and God alone *“shall send them strong delusion!”* It cannot be ignored or overstated that the “strong delusion” is assigned to God. It is not attributed to Satan, sin, or sinners. God, and God alone is the Divine Director of this damning delusion.

The constructions of the Spirit's inspired grammar of the passage emphatically stress that God is the Subject behind the verbal notion. He is the One who orders, orchestrates, and operates the strong delusion from start to finish. God is sovereign and His sovereignty holds true during the darkest days of demonic activity on this planet. Nothing is out of God's control. This includes the very wiles and works of Satan. God holds Satan in His Holy hands so that not even Satan can work outside the scope of God's sovereignty. God has Satan on the chain of sovereignty and decrees just how far Satan can go. The Lord God says to Satan, you can go this far, but no further. We catch a glimpse of this in the book of Job (1-2). All things work together to fulfill His eternal plan for all men, and all things, in this life, and in the life to come, because God works all things according to the predetermined counsel of His own will (Eph. 2:11)! This is true even as it relates to the strong delusion.

VII. The **OUTCOME** of Strong Delusion – 2 Thess. 2:10a

“And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish.”

As already observed, the ultimate outcome of the strong delusion shall be the final damnation of sinners in hell. But before this ultimate outcome comes, there will be two utilitarian outcomes that give practical support to the antichrist. First, the deluded mass of sinful humanity will be deceived, *“with all deceivableness.”* There is deception, and then there is advanced and extreme deception. The deception brought about by the strong delusion will reach lengths and limits of deception such as the world has never known. Strong delusion will energize the mother of all deceptions. These unlimited deceptions will be expressed through the deeds of the depths of delusional depravity. In their seduced support of antichrist sinners will be energized to express man's wrath upon man in ways never known before. The violence, vileness, and viciousness will make the atrocities of the holocaust pale in comparison. Once totally depraved sinners become deceived with the deceivableness of strong delusion the depths of depraved deeds will reach an all-time low as human history madly moves into the prophetic period of man's wrath upon man.

Jesus called this time of “strong delusion,” “the beginning of birth-pangs” (Mt. 24:8). This prophetic period will result in the second utilitarian outcome, unprecedented “unrighteousness!” The unrighteousness of the ungodly, will flow out of the deceivableness of delusion. Unrighteousness will become unrestrained toward the Jew and the Christian. Finally, mankind's hatred for, and hostility toward God and all godliness will become unlimited and unrestrained. Men will devise and develop new forms of unrighteousness, unlawfulness, and ungodliness as their unchecked depravity becomes energized by the dark depths of the deceivableness of strong delusion. Man will be moved against his fellow-man by a maniacal madness of satanic insanity!

VIII. The **ORDER** surrounding Strong Delusion – 2 Thess. 2:3-7.

“Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the

temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.”

Before leaving the present study, it is important to review and remember the order of eschatological events surrounding, and subsequent to the strong delusion. It must be kept in mind that the strong delusion is an event that shall occur at the start of Daniel’s seventieth week, and that it is followed by three additional events that come in sequence. Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is very careful to present each event in order. The strong delusion will lead to, and be followed by, the Great Apostacy. This great end-time falling away will then be followed by the Mid-Week removal of God’s appointed and anointed Restrainer. Following the removal of the Restrainer, the Man of Sin will be officially revealed as the Antichrist. His revelation will take place at the middle of the week by means of the event known as “*the Abomination of Desolation.*” Both Daniel and Jesus spoke of this event as a major turning point in prophetic activity (Dan. 9:27; Matt. 24:15). Now Paul describes it in detailed color when he states concerning the coming Antichrist, “*that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.*” It will be at this time that the beast who had previously been the beast out of the sea, will have just become the beast out of the bottomless pit. Being now fully indwelt and inspired by Satan, the great dragon, the Antichrist will declare himself to be God and the dreadful period of man’s wrath upon man will ultimately lead to that unprecedented demonic period known as the Beast’s wrath on man. Then the period of birth-pains shall give way to that period known in Scripture as the time of Great Tribulation!