

*the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming.*” This is also pictured in Revelation chapter 19:11-21.

Revelation 19:20 - 20 And **the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence**, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; **these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone.**  
NASB

It is interesting to note the phrase *“the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming.”* This amazing language describes the doom of the Antichrist, which is wrought personally by the very “Word of God” who is Jesus Himself, and by *“the breath of His mouth,”* and also *“by the appearance of His coming.”* The word “appearance” here is in the Greek *epiphaneia* and translated elsewhere as *“glory, splendor, brightness, or radiance.”* The picture is that the very brightness of the glory of the returning Christ will render this mere man utterly powerless and He will be personally and radically avenged and destroyed by Jesus the King.

**2 Thessalonians 2:9-10** - 9 that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, 10 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. NASU  
A. 9 that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders 10 and with all the deception of wickedness – Paul further identifies the Antichrist by speaking about the scope of his influence and nature of it. He is *“the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan.”* Jesus characterized Satan as a thief, a liar, a murderer and a destroyer. This surely is an apt description of the work of the Antichrist, whom Paul calls *“the man of lawlessness, the son of destruction.”* This we should expect to see in full array, **the most deceptive, murderous, destroying liar and thief that ever lived** upon the face of the earth. This *“activity of Satan”* Paul describes as coming *“with all power and signs and false wonders, 10 and with all the deception of wickedness.”* Note well that Antichrist will be a powerful being who will do amazingly deceptive *“signs and false wonders,”* and also seek to kill and destroy many *“mighty men”* and *“holy people”* (Dan 8:24). In Revelation 13, these *“signs”* are attributed to the false prophet, the Antichrist’s right hand man.

Revelation 13:13-18 - 13 And **he performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men. 14 And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs** which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who had the wound of the sword and has come to life. 15 And there was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, **that the image of the beast might even speak and cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed.** 16 And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, **to be given a mark on their right hand, or on their forehead, 17 and he provides that no one should be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark,** either the name of the beast or the number of his name. NASB

Jesus also warned that during the Great Tribulation that Antichrist would seek to deceive even the very elect people of God, by many *“signs and wonders.”*

Mark 13:21-23 - 21 "And then if anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ'; or, 'Behold, He is there'; do not believe him; 22 **for false Christs and false prophets will arise, and will show signs and wonders, in order, if possible, to lead the elect astray.** 23 "But take heed; behold, I have told you everything in advance. NASB

Some argue that his signs are not real, but an illusion, because Paul describes them as *“signs and false wonders.”* But the Greek is not conclusive on this matter. What is surely true is that the *“signs and false wonders”* do achieve the purpose of *“deception”* as they successfully lead the whole world astray to believe *“what is false”* (v-11), except for God’s elect (v-13-14) and the nature of these *“signs and false wonders”* is *“the deception of wickedness.”*

B. for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved – See

here who are the pitiful subjects of this **“deception.”** It is **“those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.”** These are identified as **“those who perish,”** as opposed to those who **“receive the love of the truth”** and are **“saved.”** And so is the destiny of all who reject the truth of the Gospel, they **“perish”** in a hopeless and Christ-less eternity (v-1:8-9) which they have chosen of their own accord, having spurned the free grace of God and salvation which is freely offered to all who will believe. The nature of the **“deception”** in verse 9-12 is clearly an opposition to the Christian Faith, as the words **“because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved”** indicates a rejection of the salvation of God that is offered by receiving **“the love of the truth”** about the person and work of Jesus Christ by faith alone, which is the agency of being **“saved.”** Further, the deception brings clarification that the **“apostasy”** of verse 2:3 is as discussed, a departure from the truth of the Gospel in accepting the **“abomination of desolation”** as outlined in Revelation 13:12-17. This identifies the central attack of the Antichrist against the saints of Daniel 7:21-27 and Revelation 13:5-10 as an attempt to silence the voice of the Christian Faith/Gospel being preached in the world so that people can be **“saved.”** He deceives concerning the truth about being **“saved.”** It is this silencing of the mouth of the Christians that is what is in view when Daniel and John state that the **“saints”** will be **“overcome, overpowered, and worn down”** (Dan 7:21,25, Rev 13:7). This of course is to fulfill God’s purpose of allowing the sin of mankind and their rejection of the Gospel to run its full course and bring iniquity to its fruition, resulting in the vengeance of God.

**Daniel 7:21-22 - 21** "I kept looking, and **that horn was waging war with the saints and overpowering them 22 until the Ancient of Days came,** and judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, **and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom.** NASB

**Daniel 7:25-26 - 25** 'And he will speak out against the Most High **and wear down the saints of the Highest One,** and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time. 26 'But the court will sit for judgment, and his dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever. NASB

**Revelation 13:7-8 - 7** And **it was given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them;** and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him. 8 **And all who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written** from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain. NASB

Hence see here more clear evidence of the Church’s presence in the Great Tribulation as they are yet preaching the Gospel and this **“love of the truth”** that they proclaim becomes the very object of the Antichrist’s deception, as he seeks to lead people astray concerning this **“truth”** and they finally reject it by believing his lies and up committing the ultimate **“apostasy”** by worshipping his image and receiving the mark of the beast (Rev 13:15-17). The result of mankind’s rejection of the Gospel on this worldwide scale is that they **“perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.”**

**2 Thessalonians 2:11-12 - 11** For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, 12 in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness. NASU

A. 11 For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false – Notice here how God’s sovereignty in bringing this age to its fulfillment in clearly in view in Paul’s mind as he ascribes the deluding influence of Antichrist’s deception to God Himself. The picture is much like Romans 1:24-32 where God **“gives men over to a depraved mind”** and to their own sinful persistence, allowing their wickedness to run its course and bring their iniquities to fruition, resulting in His clear indictment as they are **“storing up wrath”** for themselves **“in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.”** Because mankind has ultimately rejected the Gospel of Jesus Christ and **“did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved,”** it is **“for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so**

*that they will believe what is false.*” See here that when people’s rejection of the Gospel is final and complete (on a worldwide scale), that God will ultimately act in removing the restrainer and allowing the **“deception of wickedness”** (v-10) to run its full course by sending **“deluding influence”** which causes them to **“believe what is false”** and fall prey to Antichrist’s dooming idolatrous **“abomination of desolation”** (Dan 11:31, Matt 24:15-21, Rev 13:15-17). We are not told specifically here what this **“deluding influence”** is except that we know it comes directly from God’s command, as Paul states **“God will send upon them a deluding influence.”** See here God’s *patience* in waiting until their has been a complete rejection of His Gospel, and the *certainty* of His judgment for rejecting the free grace of His salvation in Christ which is offered to **“whoever believes in Him”** (John 3:16). It should be noted here that the God Himself does not delude people, but there is an evil agent of this delusion sent by God to accomplish this. God never carries out evil with His own hand, but evil always accomplishes His ultimate purpose for it, and He always has free moral agents who are willing to commit evil to bring His purposes to fulfillment. Leon Morris has an insightful comment here, *“In Hebrew thought the powers of evil have no independent existence, but always depend on God. He makes the wrath of man to praise Him (Psa 76:10), and He works His purposes out even in the evil that people (or Satan) do. In particular, God uses the evil consequences of sin in His punishment of the sinner. These consequences are not simply the result of impersonal process; Paul can say that God gave people up to the consequences of their sin (Rom 1:24, 26, 28, 11:8). God’s hand is in the process whereby the sinner receives the fitting recompense of sin. But we should not miss the point that even in dealing with disobedience, God’s purpose is mercy (Rom 11:32).*

B. 12 in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness – Paul says **“in order that they may all be judged.”** See here that the **“deluding influence”** of verse 11 has a distinct purpose in God bringing His certain judgment on those **“who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.”** Because people have ultimately rejected the Gospel and **“did not believe the truth,”** but rather than repent of their sins as the Gospel commands, they **“took pleasure in wickedness”** and brought God’s certain judgment upon themselves, even as the Gospel warned. Consider Paul’s language here in light of Jesus statements in John chapter 3.

**John 3:19-21** - 19 "And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and **men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil.** 20 "**For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.** 21 "But he who practices the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God." NASB

The contrast between those who **“believe the truth”** and those who reject is always clearly seen by the repentance that comes from true saving faith. People who are truly born again and saved do not take **“pleasure in wickedness,”** but rather repent of wickedness and seek to flee from it. This is not to say that true Christians never sin, but rather that the general *pattern* and habit of their life is to flee from and turn away from wickedness and sin.

Thus ends this great section (2 Thess 1:7-2:12) of the Pauline corpus dealing with the Second Coming, the timing of the rapture, and the deceptive events of the Great Tribulation under the influence of that evil worker the Antichrist. The clarity of Paul’s thought and the striking parallels to Jesus Olivet Discourse enlighten us like the noonday sun! Let us heed well the warning of both Jesus and Paul we they tell us, **“See to it that no one misleads you,”** (Matt 24:4) and **“Let no one in any way deceive you”** (2 Thess 2:3).

**2 Thessalonians 2:13-14** - 13 But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. 14 It was for this He called you through our

gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. NASU

A. 13 But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, - Even though there is a transition here in Paul's focus from the previous section, he nevertheless presents a powerful contrast between those whom God has chosen to save and those who **"perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved."** Paul now seeks to reassure the Thessalonians that they will not come under the judgment of God, or be swept away by **"deception"** under the influence of the **"man of lawlessness,"** but rather they have been **"chosen"** by God **"from the beginning for salvation."** Notice here Paul ascribes the surety of these things to **"God"** when he states **"we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord,"** showing God to be the author of their salvation by His sovereign electing grace, because they are the objects of His love. God has freely chosen these Thessalonians who are **"beloved by the Lord,"** and for this Paul says **"we should always give thanks to God."** See here that salvation belongs to the Lord, and man is not receive the glory for it, nor for the wise choice he made in coming to it, but thanksgiving is to **"always"** be ascribed to God.

B. because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. 14 It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ – Here Paul explains why **"we should always give thanks to God."** His reason, **"because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation."** Salvation is something that comes to individuals according to God's own sovereign will, for salvation's election, calling, and sanctification are wholly according to God's own purpose and grace (2 Tim 1:9), which He purposes to do from before the beginning of time.

**2 Timothy 1:9-10** – [God] <sup>9</sup> **who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace** which was granted us in Christ Jesus **from all eternity,** NASB

**Ephesians 1:4-6** - 4 just as **He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world,** that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love <sup>5</sup> **He predestined us to adoption as sons** through Jesus Christ to Himself, **according to the kind intention of His will,** <sup>6</sup> to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. NASB

**Romans 8:29-30** - 29 For **whom He foreknew, He also predestined** to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; 30 and **whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.** NASB

This is why Paul states that their salvation is a result of God's electing love, which he says happened, **"from the beginning."** Paul then describes two of the *means* of God's salvation when he says, **"through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth."** Salvation is frequently spoken of as happening *through* the course of time (past, present and future) and depending on certain *conditions* (such as God's **election** (Matt 11:27, John 15:16, Eph 1:4, Tit 1:1-2, 1 Peter 1:1-2), **predestination** (Rom 8:29-30, 9:22-24, Eph 1:5,11) or **calling** (Rom 8:28-30, 1 Cor 1:24, Gal 1:15, 2 Tim 1:9, 2 Pet 1:10), or man's response of **repentance** (Acts 2:38, 20:21, 26:20, 2 Cor 7:10, 2 Tim 2:25), **faith** (John 3:36, Acts 10:43, 26:20, Rom 3:22-24, 5:1-2, 10:9, Gal 3:22, Eph 2:8-9) or **perseverance** (Rom 11:22, 1 Cor 15:2, Col 1:23, Heb 3:6). In Scripture, Christians are seen as having been saved (**past tense**, salvation, Jer 1:5, Gal 1:15, 2 Tim 1:9, Eph 1:4), now being saved (**present tense**, sanctification, Acts 2:47, 1 Cor 1:18, 2 Cor 2:15), and will be saved (**future tense**, glorification, Matt 24:13, Rom 5:9-10, 8:30, 1 Thess 5:23-24). Therefore when Paul says that salvation happens **"through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth,"** he means to say that these are both ways and means that God uses to save us. They are not the exclusive way or means, nor do they work exclusively apart from each other, but work together to save us. It is "sanctification of the Spirit" of God, which in this text is the process of being conformed into the likeness of Christ progressively over time, and "faith in the truth" which is the gift of God (Eph 2:9) that is the conduit or vehicle which lays hold of the righteousness of