

Wings

*"Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles."
Isaiah 40:31*



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Truth and Delusion

The breakdown of social order that we see spreading throughout our culture is not hard to understand, once we recognize the underlying process at work.

"The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess. 2:9-12).



Our purpose here is not to identify "the lawless one" whose coming Paul foresees. (Consult the commentaries if you wish to pursue that thorny question.) Rather, we want to look at a larger issue in play: the conflict between truth and delusion.

There are several key points that stand out in this passage. First, there is something in this universe called "the truth," or "that which conforms to reality." This reality is not created by human fantasies, but exists entirely independent of us. Truth is simply what IS, in a universe that we have little control over.

Second, we can choose whether or not to accept that truth. We can elect to "love the truth" and "believe the truth"—or not. How we view the truth, of course, will influence our behavior. Expressed another way, the decisions that define our lives are guided by how we perceive reality. Is there a God or not? Is there an objective moral standard to which I am subject, or am I free to make up my own rules? We are free to believe whatever we want about these matters; but what we choose to *believe* will determine *how we live*.

Furthermore, we can find sufficient reason for embracing whatever it is we choose to believe. Paul says that "God will send them a strong delusion"; which is to say, we can believe a lie and feel perfectly justified in doing so. It's not that God sets out to deliberately deceive us. Rather, our choice to reject the truth has a powerful self-reinforcing quality about it.

Finally, the outcome of our view of the truth can be catastrophic. Paul warns that those who do not love and believe the truth will be "condemned" and will

"perish." The threat here is not limited to the afterlife; it includes the life we live here and now. Novelist Philip K. Dick defined reality as "that which, when you stop believing in it, doesn't go away." If we refuse to believe the truth, it is still there, and it will impose its will on us with a fearful vengeance.

What Paul describes here explains much of the craziness that plagues our society today. Millions have traded the truth for lies, but the truth hasn't gone away. It's still there, and the deluded masses struggle to live with the chaos they have created. For example, when a society rejects gender as a simple binary fact of life (male/female) and replaces it with the notion that gender is a social construct that can be twisted into any one of dozens of different forms, is it any surprise when we can't figure out how to designate our bathrooms?

The Athenian orator Demosthenes observed that "the easiest thing of all is to deceive oneself; for what a man wishes, he generally believes to be true." Once we dismiss the truth, we are truly deceived, and will pay dearly for it.

– David King