**Lesson: The Grand Delusion**

 We begin this lesson with a scripture from St. Paul.

* 2 TH 2:8–12 ~ After the wicked one is revealed the Lord will consume him with the spirit of His mouth, and will destroy him with the brightness of His coming. Not only the one who acts on behalf of Satan, with power, signs, and wonders, but also followers who likewise possess deceptiveness and unrighteousness, hating the truth that could save them. For this reason, God will send them a strong delusion, and allow them to believe that lie. Those who will not believe the truth and find pleasures in unrighteousness will be damned.

 Beware and prepare when evil encompasses the righteous, for Satan is establishing a stronghold on Earth, deceiving many with fake miracles, slacking the laws, perverting the truth, and promoting wickedness. You will see an abandonment of decency and integrity, law and order, and charity and compassion for others, when the focus centers on the world, and assorted desires of the flesh. These priorities will replace godliness, ethics, and spirituality causing a massive falling away from the faith. Like Jesus said, you cannot love God and mammon (material things).

* HAB 1:4 ~ The law becomes loose and justice is not served, for the wicked encompass the righteous and wrong judgment proceeds.
* DAN 11:23–24 ~ He will make alliances deceptively, and will plunder. He will corrupt people. He will forecast devices against his enemies. He will employ the power of forces. He will honor with money, pleasure, and luxury.
* MAT 6:24 ~ Nobody can serve two masters, for they will end up loving one and despising the other. You cannot serve God and money at the same time.
* 2 TH 2:3–4 ~ There will be a vast falling away when the man of lawlessness comes, who is the son of perdition. He exalts himself to be a god or an object of worship, taking the seat in the temple of God.

 Current events suggest a rapid regression away from God and His will, centered on one’s own will and the will of those in power. People will be playing God, pretending to be sovereign or in control, and greedy for more. Rather than being justified by faith in God, they will justify themselves in total disregard for God and people of faith. Those striving for riches, power, pleasure, and control will never be satisfied; but regarding those who rely on the Lord, He will provide (MAT 6:25–34).

* ECC 5:10 ~ Those who love money will never be satisfied with it; those who love abundance will never have enough.
* HAB 1:11 ~ They are blown with the wind and pass on, those guilty men who relish their own power as their god.
* GAL 6:7–8 ~ Do not be deceived; for God cannot be mocked. Whatever a man sows that will he also reap. People who sow to please their sinful flesh will reap destruction. People who sow to please the Holy Spirit will reap eternal life.
* 2 TI 3:1–4 ~ There will be a time of great distress. People will love themselves. They will be abusive, arrogant, conceited, disobedient, treacherous, slanderous, ungrateful, unholy, inhumane, haters of good and lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.

 Psychologically speaking, a delusion is a false belief or belief system and is a common symptom of psychosis. Simply put, psychosis is an extreme mental disorder characterized by impaired intellectual and social functioning, and a significant departure from reality and truth. Spiritually speaking, the strong delusion addressed by the apostle Paul fits exactly the above descriptions. There may be organic reasons why a person is mentally ill such as a chemical imbalance in the brain, for which medication often helps. Then there are people who choose to believe the lie over accepting truth; they deliberately distort reality to correspond with personal preferences. This fabricated reality becomes very resistant to factual information and disconfirming evidence, resulting in the relativism of truth and the conviction that truth cannot be absolute. But indeed, for something to be absolutely true it must be true for everyone and for all time. God’s truth will always remain relevant and will never change. A partial truth is not definite and therefore subject to variations in interpretation, never approaching factuality or consistency with known reality.

* PRO 12:17 ~ Those who speak truth reveal righteousness, but a false witness reveals deceit.
* PRO 17:4 ~ An evildoer gives heed to false lips; and a liar gives ear to a filthy tongue.
* PRO 21:6–7 ~ Obtaining wealth by lying is a vanity tossed about among those who seek death; for the robbery committed by the wicked will destroy them.
* PRO 26:28 ~ A lying tongue hates those who are affected by it, and a flattering mouth works ruin.
* JOH 8:44 ~ Jesus told the unbelievers, “You evil people belong to your father, the devil, and the evil of your father is what you do. He was a murderer and a liar from the start. He never tells the truth; in fact, he is the father of lies.”
* ROM 1:18–25 ~ The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against the wickedness of men, who suppress the truth through unrighteousness, though the things that are known about God are clear to them because God has made these things clear. Since the creation of the world, God’s invisible qualities have been obvious, including His eternal power and His divine nature. Therefore, they have no excuse; because, while they knew God, they neither glorified Him nor gave thanks to Him. Their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Though they claimed to be wise, they were foolish, exchanging the glory of God for graven images. God allowed them to become depraved, who turned God’s truth into a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator who is blessed forever.

 For those accepting the strong delusion, everything becomes make believe, lies are passed off as truth, and arguments fail to comport with reality. The grandiose claims, blatant fabrications, false narratives, fake news, cancellation of truth and the people who tell it, these are part of a calculated scheme to swindle the masses out of their wealth, livelihood, prospects, education, freedom, self-determination, and dreams in order to subjugate the citizenry, take away their choices and freedoms, confiscate their property, and remove their ability to retaliate or defend themselves. It is Marxism any way you look at it, though called by any number of names such as democratic-socialism, globalism, progressivism, communism, critical theory, tyranny, and the like. This is a charade and they know it, but they want you to take their propaganda seriously. The whole purpose of propaganda is to disseminate lies ad nauseum, assuming that people will come to accept it if not believe it. However, these charlatans are deceiving themselves if they think patriots are that stupid not to see through their fantasies and their play acting. I mean, some of the tall tales they tell are so inane they are laughable but for the fact that they are very dangerous.

* PRO 29:12 ~ If a ruler listens to lies, his entire cabinet will be evil.
* JER 9:3–5 ~ They bend their tongues like the bow, dispelling lies. They do not champion the truth but proceed from one evil to another. They don’t know me, the Lord says. Take heed of those around you and be careful who you trust, for a brother can be a deceiver and a neighbor a slanderer. They deceive people by avoiding the truth. They have trained their tongues to speak lies, and weary themselves with their sinful ways.
* HOS 4:1–2 ~ Listen to the Lord you children of Israel for He has a warning to the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, mercy, or knowledge of God anywhere to be found. Instead, there is cursing, lying, killing, stealing, and adultery; they break all laws such that bloodshed will follow bloodshed.
* ROM 1:25,30–32 ~ They exchanged God’s truth with lies and worshipped and served the creation rather than the Creator. They were filled with all kinds of wickedness, evil, disobedience, covetousness, boastfulness, insolence, malice, murder, deceit, slander, strife, and malignity. They were faithless, heartless, ruthless, and foolish. They enjoyed doing evil, even though they were warned that such wickedness would lead to death.

 Consider this illustration from recent developments. When you leave town on vacation do you take preventive measures to ensure your home is secure? Certainly, you would not leave your doors wide open which would welcome all kinds of nefarious people to enter your abode and steal your belongings, wreck your house, or burn the place down. This is exactly what happened when a movement sought to eliminate police, while civic leaders neglected to enforce the law. Anarchists barged in and engaged in looting, arson, assault, and murder while utter chaos proliferated. When security, order, and justice are abandoned it incentivizes such mayhem and lawlessness. When the federal government opened our border, crowds of illegal immigrants stormed into the country. Officials claimed this was normal, which would be accurate insofar as they removed the restrictions and sent out an invitation. But this was yet another giant deception, since the situation was far from normal given the record numbers that breached the boundary the moment restrictions were lifted. What could possibly be the motivation for allowing this? Would you call it equitable?

* MAT 24:42–44 ~ Be watchful, for you never know when the Lord will come. If the man of the house knew when the burglar would come, he could have prevented his house from being burglarized. So be ready and watchful, for the Lord will come at a time when you least expect Him.
* ROM 13:1–5 ~ Everyone is subject to the higher powers, for all power comes from God; that is, all powers that exist have been ordained by God. Anyone who resists these powers are resisting the ordinance of God, and those who resist God receive damnation as punishment. Those who do what is right have no fear of the authorities, only those who do wrong are afraid of them. Do what is right and the authorities will commend you. Governments are God’s servants; they are there to make sure you do what is right. But if you do what is evil, beware, for they do not carry a sword in vain, but to execute judgment on those who commit evil. Submit to those who are in authority, not just because you will be punished if you don’t, but also as a matter of keeping a clear conscience.
* 1 PE 2:13–14 ~ Submit to every ordinance of society for the Lord’s sake, whether to the king, or to his governors who are given the authority to punish evildoers and to commend those who do right.

 Although the Bible encourages people to acquiesce to government, there may come a time when corruption grows so rampant that inhabitants feel they have no recourse but to revolt. The warning signs are readily apparent: promoting division and bigotry, eliminating civil rights, discouraging gainful employment, growing monopolies, destroying the middle class and small businesses, creating a welfare state by forcing the populace into dependency on the government, recklessly blowing money and distributing it to people who haven’t earned it, silencing dissention, and the list goes on. It’s ironic how foreigners have flooded the border, many from nations who imposed socialism and dictatorships, hoping to be part of the land of the free and to realize the American Dream. What a shock it must be for those who arrived only to realize they could inherit the very thing they fled from. Well, maybe if they become citizens and vote they will vote against this nonsense. Never in the history of humankind has a totalitarian government endured, because economic collapse occurs quickly then chaos ensues.

 It is easy to recognize fakery and deception, unless you are distracted by the smoke and mirrors. But these bad actors are not only bad people, they are bad at acting out their delusion. It doesn’t pass the smell test. They will pool the money, might, resources, technology, infrastructure, communication networks, media outlets, and corporate entities to grab everything in sight as long as they receive no resistance. The coveted result is two classes of people: the oligarchy and the general public; or as Marx put it, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Nothing in-between, just the rich ruling the poor, which is simply another form of slavery; it’s all about control. Do not fall for the lie that everyone benefits which is impossible. The steps recently being taken follow the same radical game plan to the letter, with the primary objective to take your liberty by force, which is your power. How else can they control you unless they seize power? Ironic seeing how they are obviously out of control given their numerous vices, irrational proposals, and foolhardy power grabs.

 Is there an occasion when revolution can be a righteous cause? I suppose the American Revolution would fit the scenario. This country prospered and progressed as long as we remained one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all. One might characterize the Civil Rights movement as revolutionary as well. Our nation again finds itself quite divided, with individual rights being compromised, no equal representation under the law, and justice being doled out unevenly. It is painful to be experiencing class warfare, crony capitalism, educational indoctrination, and cancel culture. The framers had it right, and our Constitution, Bill of Rights, and Declaration of Independence are still applicable, producing the best system of government ever implemented. The USA is still our republic, but can we keep it? We need to get government back into the hands of the people, and get control of our lives out of the hands of government.

* EXO 18:20–21 ~ Moses’s father-in-law counseled him suggesting he choose capable men who feared God to help him govern the land. They needed to be instructed in God’s ordinances and laws, and shown the way in which they should walk and the work that they should perform. They had to be truthful, hating covetousness.
* 1 SA 15:23 ~ Samuel told King Saul that rebellion was like the sin of witchcraft and stubbornness like the sin of idolatry. And because the evil king had rejected the counsel of the Lord, God had rejected Saul as king.
* 2 SA 23:3 ~ The Spirit of the Lord spoke to David telling him that a person who would govern others must be just, and rule in the fear of God.
* NEH 4:20–21 ~ If you hear the trumpet sound, come quickly; our God will fight for us. So, we continued our work [on the wall] with half of us holding weapons.
* PRO 29:2 ~ When the righteous are in authority the people rejoice; when the wicked rule, the people mourn.
* PRO 24:21–22 ~ Dear children, fear the Lord and the king, but do not meddle with those driven by change, for their calamity will rise suddenly. And who knows what ruin that both will bring?
* JOE 3:10 ~ Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruninghooks into spears. Let the weak say, “I am strong.”
* ACT 5:29 ~ As a united front, Peter and the other apostles declared, “We must obey God over men.”
* 2 TI 4:3–4 ~ The time will come when people will not endure sound doctrine, but will follow their own lusts. They will collect and listen to teachers with wayward teachings. They will turn away from the truth and toward fables.

 Administrations whose leadership are in rebellion to God are insufferable. God often intervenes for His people when unscrupulous rulers go astray in this manner. This occurred many times in the Old Testament, as well as during the American Revolution which resulted in a nation founded upon the Holy Bible and our Judeo-Christian philosophy. But we are departing from this underpinning and wandering into forbidden territory in the eyes of God. I pray God will intervene on our behalf once again and help us avoid bloodshed. But even though He guided and assisted the founders and freedom fighters, it was not without bloodshed. Evil always results in bloodshed. If you don’t agree, you don’t know Jesus Christ. What are Christians to do? For starters, be patient and tell the truth. God will reveal your direction if you allow the Holy Spirit to speak to your heart.

* EXO 14:14 ~ The Lord will fight for you and you will hold your peace.
* PSA 118:8 ~ It is better to trust in the Lord than to put your confidence in humankind.
* LUK 12:11–12 ~ Jesus said, “When they bring you before the authorities, don’t worry about what to say or do, for the Holy Spirit will provide the information when you need it.”
* 1 CO 2:12–13 ~ We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit of God, so that we may know the things that God has given to us for free. We speak of these things, not in the words that the world teaches, but in words that the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.
* 2 CO 3:3,17–18 ~ The Spirit of the living God has written His Word into our hearts; it is not written in ink or on tablets of stone. The Lord is that Spirit, and wherever that Spirit is found there is liberty. All of us can see His glory when we look into the mirror, for we have been changed into His image by God’s Holy Spirit.

 While the Bible does not address the idea of righteous revolution specifically, there are examples when God’s people had to reclaim their inheritance. God does not authorize governments or establishments to take from the people that which He promised or gave such as your inalienable rights and the opportunity to support yourself and raise a family via hard work. Consider the church of Corinth in the first century, which was shifting from faith towards a more secular footing (1 CO 3). Additionally, the church was divided between those following Apollos and those following Paul. Paul wrote to the church saying, “I planted the seed and Apollos watered it, but God is the one who makes things grow. The one who plants and the one who waters are one, for we are working together for God and you are the building” (1 CO 3:4–6). The body of Christ is the church, and here was a church divided, just as we are divided as a nation. Paul’s direction to the Corinthians was to reunite into a building erected upon Christ. We are commissioned by Christ to do our share of the work in the harvesting of souls by exercising our spiritual gifts. The keyword here is giving, of ourselves, to the causes of faith and truth. Paul reminded us that we are the temple of the Holy Spirit who lives in us (1 CO 3:16) and who directs our path and our service.

 What can we learn from this example? First, we must come together in unity of faith, regardless of denomination, remembering that God is in charge and His Word is our foundation. Secularism seeks to destroy the church, because it is their greatest threat; this has become their religion. If the body of Christ unites with the Holy Spirit binding us together, we will be a most formidable opponent. Second, we can employ our spiritual knowledge, talents, and influence in whatever societal function that we are involved, and shine the light of Christ. By doing what is right and moral, we expose that which is wrong and immoral. Third, we need to appoint leaders who will obey God’s rules rather than changing them. God used to select leaders for His people because they listened to their Heavenly Father, which is why He gave authority to fathers as spiritual leaders at home, and why He empowered our forefathers to build this great republic. We cannot abandon our principles of love, faith, honor, truth, and reverence toward God.

* PRO 12:7 ~ The wicked are overthrown and are eliminated; but the house of the righteous remains standing.
* ISA 41:10 ~ Do not fear for I AM with you; do not be dismayed for I AM God. I will strengthen you and I will help you; yes, I will hold you up with the right hand of my righteousness.
* 1 CO 3:18–23 ~ Do not deceive yourself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this world, let them become a fool, in order to become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness to God. As it is written: He catches the wise in their own craftiness, and also, the Lord knows the thoughts of the wise that they are vain. Therefore, let nobody glory in the ways of the world, for all things are yours. Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas (Peter), or the world, or life or death, or things past, present or future—all is yours, just as you are Christ’s and He is God’s.

 Secularists are trying to cancel our culture, but they cannot cancel God, and they cannot silence anyone through whom the Holy Spirit speaks and acts. What are they afraid of? Truth, they can’t handle it, for it exposes their sin, hypocrisy, and treachery. That is why the Church of Jesus Christ has become their greatest foe, since it stands for truth, faith, justice, freedom, and morality, the very pillars of our free society which they would bring down to gain advantage. The other aspect of truth they deny is judgment. They do not want to be held accountable, so they pretend to occupy the moral high ground, constantly engaging in virtue signaling. Bottom line: they are afraid because they are guilty as sin and they know it, so they live in denial, though the fear never leaves their hearts because it is not a godly fear but a human fear. Like a drug addict they are hooked on power, fame, and material riches. They hate the thought of losing, but this paranoia will destroy them; their souls are hanging in the balance for everyone who sells out (DAN 5:17–27). God has given everybody a conscience. Some choose not to listen to it because they know the consequences of evil yet refuse to face the facts. Hence, the big lie overwhelms their thoughts, diverting their attention toward unholy strivings, exchanging spiritual treasures for material ones, and forfeiting an eternal reward for temporary gratification of their flesh.

* ROM 2:14–15 ~ When the Gentiles, who were not given the law, do by nature the things required of the law, though they have not the law they are a law unto themselves. They exhibit the work of the law written upon their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness; because their thoughts either accuse them or excuse them for things they say and do.
* 1 TI 1:3–7 ~ Do not teach false doctrine, or recognize any myths or irrelevant genealogies, which only serve to raise questions not provide answers concerning the faith. The goal is to love with a pure heart, a right conscience, and a sincere faith. Some have wandered away from these principles and turned to meaningless jabber; desiring to be teachers of the Law yet knowing nothing about the Law or about what they purport to be true.
* 1 TI 4:1-2 ~ The Holy Spirit explicitly states that in the latter days some will depart from the faith, conferring with seducing spirits and following the doctrine of devils; speaking lies of hypocrisy, and possessing a conscience seared by a hot iron.
* 2 TI 1:7 ~ God did not give us a spirit of fear, but of power, love and a sound mind.
* TIT 1:15 ~ To the pure all things are pure, but to the corrupt and unbelieving nothing is pure; their minds and consciences are corrupt and evil.

 Everyone alive will have to take a side in the coming standoff; I hope you choose wisely if it happens in your lifetime. Remember this: if you cherish freedom, the truth will set you free.

* JOH 8:31–32,36 ~ Jesus said, “If you believe in my words then you are indeed my disciples; and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free. If the Son of God sets you free, you will definitely be free.”
* 1 CO 7:22 ~ Those who were servants when called by Christ have become free, and those who were free when called by Christ have become servants. You were bought with a great price, so do not become a slave to humankind, but remain responsible to God and the purpose for which He called you.
* HEB 12:25–29 ~ Do not refuse to listen to the one who speaks for God. If they could not escape after they refused His warning on the earth, they certainly could not escape after they refused to heed the warning coming out of heaven, when His voice shook the earth. God promises to shake the earth again, and not only the earth but the heavens also. And this Word, yet once more, will signify the ejection of things humans created, so things that are not dislocated may remain. Therefore, since we will receive a kingdom which cannot be moved, we should use this grace to serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire.
* 1 PE 2:19 ~ Be thankful if you must unfairly endure grief or suffering because you maintain an upright conscience toward God.

By Andrew V. Barber (Posted 06/01/2021)