

BIBLICAL INSIGHTS

For when you encounter someone
with beliefs different than your faith
and you don't know how to answer



- Andrew Verrett

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Acknowledgments

Many of the comments in this document come from the Grace Ministries India English Study Bible. The comments there reflect and reinforce the views of the author of this book.

The Grace Ministries India Study Bible is the translation used for the Scripture quotes in this book.

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1 Introduction

In the book of Matthew, Jesus gives an illustration in which believers are referred to as sheep and unbelievers are goats. As unbelievers, goats travel the broad path to destruction. The sheep travel down the narrow path that leads to life.

The problem believers have is that the desire of the flesh and the desire of the eyes and the pride of life (1 John 2:16) draws them toward the goat path - the broad path to destruction. Now, a believer who is truly saved cannot leave the narrow path and return to the goat path, but he/she can yearn to be there.

Along the way, believers can begin to doubt they are on the right path; or they can stop their progress and just kind of sit under the shade of a tree because something or someone has done something or taught them something that hurt, discouraged, or confused them; or they get complacent and just go through the motions of church attendance.

Also, there are churches who are more interested in entertaining the goats than they are feeding the sheep. They barely teach anything from the Bible. They substitute fun and excitement for the Holy Spirit. Some go so far as to say that you are to feed yourself, meaning they will not teach you Biblical truths; it's up to you to teach yourself. That leaves you without the church leaders who God appoints to equip you and

then you have to sort through doctrines and beliefs that are confusing and conflicting. What to believe?

Many times, you will encounter other religions or other Christian practices or cults. You may encounter someone who is considering following a false religion. In any of these situations, you will inevitably run into someone who will make a claim or ask a question that you don't know how to answer.

It may be that your Christian experience isn't going the way you expected. You are doing the things your mentor has instructed you to do, but you are not receiving the rewards that were promised. Or maybe you have heard many things that have confused you and spun your thinking around so much that you can no longer tell up from down or right from left.

Although everything that puzzles Christians about the practice of their faith cannot be covered in this short work, there is enough here to provide some direct answers and to help you discover the Scriptures that can give you a better understanding and discernment between good and bad doctrines.

Ultimately, it is hoped and prayed that those who read this material will one day hear Jesus say, "Well done good and faithful servant! Enter into the joy of your Master."

2 Learning and Unlearning

Have you ever had relatives or friends ask you to share one of their favorite experiences with them? It may have been a favorite food or music or aroma or activity. Then when you did share it with them, you thought, “That was terrible! How could they possibly like this?” Then you discover the reason they like it is because when they were children, it’s what they did.

Think about your local sports team. It could be your village, city, province, state, or even national team. You always want them to win and you want whomever they are playing to lose. Your passion is intense for your team because that’s what you have done since childhood and supporting them is the community ethos. But what if you had grown up in a different place? The team you so love now would then be your enemy. Whether it’s national pride, sports team allegiance, a plate of food, music style, pleasant smell, or fun activity, most of those favorites were all shaped by decisions your parents made and the culture of where and when you lived as a child. Things that you consider truth are based upon what your parents thought. What you are now as an adult or older teenager is based upon what you were as a youngster and will stay that way unless you experience a significant, life changing event.

The same is true for how you worship and what you believe about the Bible. The challenge is understanding

why you believe what you believe. Can you defend it? Can you say that you have reached your conclusion after a careful study of the Scriptures? Or do you believe it because it is what you were always told or it is what your parents believed?

Christians should always be growing in their faith. God is infinite and our minds are so finite that while in this life, we can never know everything about Him. We should always be learning and experiencing His goodness, grace, and mercy. We must accept the fact that since we cannot know everything about Him and His kingdom, that there are answers to our questions we will not get. Additionally, there are things that He has not revealed to us and we must be content with not knowing and avoid speculation.

There are things that men imagine and teach about God which have no Biblical basis. In those cases, when examining the Scriptures and determining some of the things we have been taught are false or baseless, we must unlearn things we have accepted as fact.

Examples of things you may have been taught:
Jesus fell 3 times (some say 7) while carrying His cross. No where in the Bible does it say He even fell!

Jesus' ministry lasted 3 ½ years. That is not recorded in the Bible. It is based upon how some theologians interpret John's Gospel in which Jesus attended at least three annual Passover feasts during His ministry: one in John 2:13, another in John 6:4, and His final Passover the night before His crucifixion in John 11:55-57. That doesn't mean He didn't attend other Passovers that are not recorded in John's Gospel. All we really know is that His ministry started sometime shortly after John the Baptist began his. For John the Baptist's ministry,

Luke 3:1,2 records: Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. Tiberius was appointed emperor in 14 AD so his fifteenth year would be AD 28 or 29. That suggests Jesus began His ministry around 29 AD.

Jesus was born on Christmas Day in the year 1 AD.

Jesus was born during the reign of Herod the Great, who died in the year 4 BC. Therefore Jesus would have been born before 4 BC, possibly as early as 6 BC. Was He born on Christmas day? Luke records in 1:26: And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. By the "sixth month", Luke means the sixth month of Elisabeth's pregnancy. The angel's announcement of John's birth to Zacharias was while he was serving in his assigned period for the priestly division of Abia's rotation. Abia's descendants served for one month every two years. Zacharias' month began on the seventeenth day of the third month, the Jewish month Sivan, which is part of May and part of June on our calendars. If this is the case, Elisabeth became pregnant in late June. Therefore, Gabriel's visit to Mary was in December. If Mary became pregnant around that time, Jesus would have been born in late September or early October.

You have most likely seen a map of the Middle East with Mount Sinai on the south central part of the Sinai Peninsula. The reality is: we don't know with any certainty where Mount Sinai actually is. There are

several other locations that are possibilities. How did we get the one you may have seen on a map? The selection of this spot came through secret visions and supernatural revelations supposedly given to Emperor Constantine. His mother, Queen Helena chose the actual site of Jebel Musa in the Sinai Peninsula as the site of the Biblical Mt. Sinai.

Fortunately, none of the previous examples have an influence on a person's salvation. And, there is no reason not to celebrate Jesus' birth on Christmas day, whether you do so on December 25th or January 7th.

However, there are doctrines that can lead you onto the path of despair or even destruction. Paul wrote: For if the one coming to you preaches another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if you receive another spirit, which you have not received, or another gospel, which you have not accepted ... such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, outwardly changing themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan outwardly changes himself into an angel of light. So it is no big thing if his servants also outwardly change themselves into servants of righteousness. Their end will be according to their works (2 Corinthians 11:4,13-15). But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than the one we have preached to you, let him be under a curse (Galatians 1:8).

Paul uses this strong language to show the great importance of the gospel he preached and the terrible sin of people who try to pervert it. He knew that Christ Himself had revealed the gospel to him, and that it alone was the power of God for salvation. Anyone trying to change it was, knowingly or unknowingly, trying to take away from men the only way of salvation.

This is a great crime against mankind and against God, and no language is too strong to condemn it. Those guilty of it will pay for their great crime, unless they repent of their folly and wickedness. Paul gives the reason why he was afraid for some Christians in Corinth – they seemed to be lacking in love for the truth and an ability to recognize error. At least they were unwilling to take a stand against false teachers. They were so tolerant that Paul was alarmed.

Not every religious teacher who has some spirit or other, or some power or other, has God's Spirit and His power. And not everyone who seems to be preaching the gospel is preaching the true gospel of Christ.

Some false beliefs won't keep you from heaven, but they could deprive you of receiving rewards from Jesus. For the Son of man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each one according to his deeds (Matthew 16:27). Look, I am coming quickly, and My reward will be with Me to give to every man according to his work (Revelation 22:12). If you determine you have been influenced by a false doctrine, then you need to unlearn it.

3 The Bible was Altered or is False

Many people say the Bible is a collection of fables; or they say it is the work of one or more men to create a religion; or they may say it was translated inaccurately or was intentionally or unintentionally changed over the years. Many claim the Bible is full of contradictions. Most who claim these things have neither read the Bible nor studied it; or they are only repeating what others have said.

A foundational principle is that the Bible is God's personal message to mankind. You could say it is His love letter to us. As each section was originally written, it was accurate and without error. It is intended to teach us about His love, the way that we can gain His blessings and fellowship, and gain His wisdom. Therefore, the Bible is dependable and reliable for all aspects of life and death.

Proof of the Bible's authenticity and reliability is in archaeological discoveries. Christian and secular archaeologists have discovered many ancient documents, stone reliefs, coins, and abandoned towns that verify people, places, and events as described in the Bible.

Another demonstration of the Bible's authenticity and reliability is the fulfillment of its prophecies. There are many fulfilled Biblical prophecies recorded in the Bible and secular history. Additionally, in both the Old and

New Testaments, the Bible gives predictions of what will occur in a time that is still in the future to us, the most famous being the second coming of Christ, the Battle of Armageddon, and the “666” mark of the devil. The Bible also foretells things that are occurring today; such as many people claiming to be Jesus and that there will be wars, rumors of wars, famine, and disease in various places (Matthew 24:5-7,23,24). It foretells the increase in knowledge and people traveling (Daniel 12:4).

Yet, an event that is far more important for Bible prophecy has already occurred. It's so easy for us to overlook the fact that none of the Bible's end-of-time prophecies could be fulfilled if there were no nation of Israel. After the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and Israel in 70 AD, the land was renamed Palestine and was ruled by various powers for centuries. The Jews were scattered. The temple, their center of worship, was destroyed. There was no nation of Israel and no intent to revive it. Around the year 1900, Sir Robert Anderson wrote the book, *The Coming Prince*. At a time when Palestine was under the control of the Islamic Ottoman Empire, the Jewish people were dispersed and no one was remotely contemplating recreating Israel, Anderson confidently predicted the return of Israel as a nation to be once more occupied by the Jewish people. Where did he get his insight for such an incredible prediction? It was based solely upon what he read in the Bible. On November 29, 1947, almost 30 years after Anderson died, the United Nations General Assembly voted 33 to 13, with 10 abstentions, in favor of a Partition Plan that created the State of Israel. The British relinquished their mandate over Palestine in 1948. After 1,878 years, Israel became an independent nation again. What other nation has disappeared as an entity for almost 1,900 years and then reappeared on the same

piece of land and was reoccupied by the descendants of its ancient inhabitants who are still practicing the same religion as their ancestors? What other nation has been given such a prediction? It seems impossible! Yet, this is the case with Israel. The need for Israel to be a physical, existing nation to fulfill the last Biblical prophecies were written by over a half a dozen men who lived over 800 years apart, the most ancient writing sometime around 740 BC and the most recent around 90 AD – the latter writing after Israel had already been destroyed! Can you name any other religion, secular institution, or other ancient prognosticator who has dared make such a bold prediction that we have seen come to pass? Furthermore, how could men who lived so long ago make many similar predictions and were proven to be accurate every time? Men and women make predictions all of the time today, from who will win a sporting event to the mystics who predict the fate of famous people, but most of their predictions are wrong and none of these modern-day seers are correct every time. The only plausible explanation as to how the writers of the Bible were able to predict Israel's reemergence as a nation is because there really is a God who knows the beginning from the end; who is ultimately in control; and who communicates with mankind. Everyday that Israel is in existence proves the credibility of the Bible.

Additionally, there are multitudes of people from across the globe that were once alcoholics, addicts, wife-beaters, robbers, thugs, murderers – the dead-beats of society, who once they heard and accepted the message of the Bible, became loving spouses, responsible parents, and positive contributors to society.

All of these factors taken together demonstrate the Bible is no mere book written by the imaginations of men of

antiquity. Those who read the Bible, understand it, accept it, and apply it according to its instructions are true Christians. When they live in accordance with Biblical teachings, you can recognize them. They have a peace, joy, contentment, and quiet confidence that distinguish them from the rest of the crowd.

4 Only Bad People are Sinners

A Philippian jailer asked the Apostle Paul and Silas, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household" (Acts 16:29-32).

The jailer knew he needed to be saved, but saved from what? From what do you need to be saved? You need to be saved from your sin and the consequences of your sin. Sin is what separates us from God. Sin is the root cause of death and suffering. Sin is what has us on the path to eternal destruction and is why we need to be saved. "What must I do to be saved?" is the most important question that you can ask as it deals with where you will spend eternity after your life in this world is over.

Are you a sinner? Many people think of sin as doing something really bad – like robbing a bank or killing someone, but the Bible says, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). And to ensure you understand what God considers as sin, He listed examples in Exodus chapter 5:

You shall have no other gods besides Me.

You shall not make for yourself any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; You shall not bow down to them, or serve them.

You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain. Honor your father and your mother, so that your

time may be long in the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

You shall not commit murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal.

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

Have you ever used God's name or Jesus' name as part of a curse word or with the intention of expressing anger or frustration? Then you have used God's name in vain and even if you only did it once, you are a sinner. Have you ever stolen anything? Then you are a thief and a sinner. Have you ever desired to take something that belongs to someone else? Then you have coveted and are a sinner. All the other laws concern outward actions, while covetousness concerns the secret desires of the heart. The apostle Paul once thought he could keep all of the Law, but this one command revealed to him the uncontrollable desires that were in his fallen nature and convicted him of sin (Rom 7:7-8). More than any other law perhaps this one shows that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

The Lord Jesus revealed that sin is in the inner desire as well as in the outward act of a person. In the book of Matthew, He explains the meaning of the Law is deeper than the letter of the Law: "You have heard that it was said to those of olden times, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I tell you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. Whoever divorces his wife, except for the cause of sexual immorality, causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced

commits adultery” (Matthew 5:27,28,32). “For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, sexual immorality, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man” (Matthew 15:19,20).

Sin in its most basic definition is rebellion against God. It is your thoughts and actions that are in opposition to God’s standards of holiness. It is not that God wants you to live a sterile life void of pleasure. After all, He could have made a world void of color except black and white. He could have made food tasteless. He could have made a world without music, pleasing smells, and enjoyable things to touch. Instead, He created many things for your enjoyment. But He established boundaries because He knew that attaining lustful things could be destructive – jail time for theft, a spouse’s wrath for adultery, deadly revenge for murder.

According to God’s standard of holiness and sinfulness, everyone alive today is a sinner: Then when desire has conceived, it brings forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, brings forth death (James 1:15). For the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). Physical death is a reality confirmed every day. Worse than physical death, the possibility of spiritual death is the final result of sin. The penalty of spiritual death is frightening. The Apostle John wrote: And I saw a great white throne and Him who was sitting on it. From His face earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by the things written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and each one of them was judged according to

his deeds. And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whoever was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:11-15).

The consequences of sin is the certain knowledge that sinners will be cast into the lake of fire. The Gospel is the good news that you can be saved from your sin and the consequences of your sins (including the lake of fire) if your name is written in the book of life.

How then, does one get his or her name written into the book of life? Many think it is by being a good person, or doing good deeds, or having more good deeds than bad deeds, or more good karma than bad karma. All those are the thoughts of false religions. That is the idea that people can elevate themselves through a combination of positive actions and denial of bad behaviors to achieve the level of holiness that God will accept or even the idea of becoming a god themselves. That is the concept of all false religions – that man is innately good or can become good enough to reach heaven. But the Bible says: we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteous deeds are like filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). If the best works anyone can do are like filthy rags, what must their worst be like? And what right do people have to present their filthy rags of so-called merit to God and expect salvation in exchange for them?

But God, knowing that the best you can do is like filthy rags, made a way, but that way required a difficult payment. According to God's Law almost everything is cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness (Hebrews 9:22). Since the best we can do is filthy rags, the shedding of our own blood will not make the payment. Nor will animal sacrifice do, for it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of

goats should take away sins (Hebrews 10:4). The only thing that will rescue us from the wrath of God is a sacrifice by God of God. And that is what He did: For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16). Herein is seen the difference between the true God of heaven and all the false religions, and that is God came to earth as a man when He sent His Son to become a sacrifice so that our sins could be forgiven and we could have eternal life. In due time Christ died for the ungodly. But God demonstrates His love toward us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, now having been justified by His blood, we will be saved from God's wrath through Him (Romans 5:6,8,9).

Then to demonstrate that God has power over death, after three days and three nights in a tomb, God raised Jesus from the grave. Christ's shed blood made the payment for our sins. But that payment is not automatically applied. God offers it as a gift. His gift is free to us. All we have to do is accept it. How do we accept it? We do so through faith. For by grace you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, so that no one should boast (Ephesians 2:8,9).

What is faith? It is not belief without proof; it is trust without reservation. What is grace? It is unmerited favor. It is that God purchased our freedom with the blood of His Son and forgave all our sins. This immeasurable gift was given to you when you believed. You didn't work for it and you didn't even deserve it. And how do we accept it? By acknowledging His offer. That if you will confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart man believes for obtaining righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made

for salvation. For the Scripture says: Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame. For whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved (Romans 10:9-11,13).

Notice this offer of salvation is available by grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus alone. You don't have to clean up your life first – you aren't capable of that. You don't have to do some great religious act or a bunch of good deeds – then it would be by works and that would be accounted as filthy rags.

Salvation comes to those who understand they are a sinner in need of a Savior, that Jesus' death and resurrection were real events, that He will forgive their sin and grant them eternal life, and they call upon the Lord to be saved.

5 Salvation Comes by Works

If salvation is a gift from God, then why does the Apostle Paul write, “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12)? Does that mean we have to work to earn our salvation or to keep it? Does it mean we can lose our salvation?

Paul does not say, “work for your salvation.” He well knew that salvation cannot be earned by good works and human effort. Paul is using the word salvation as one continuous event that we break down into three phases.

Phase one is when someone is first saved. We call that phase justification. In Christian terms, to justify is to declare righteous. Justification is an act of God in which He pronounces a sinner to be righteous because of his or her faith in Christ. It is God’s declaration about the sinner, not any change in the sinner’s lifestyle. It declares him or her to be not guilty before God and therefore treated as holy.

By “salvation”, Paul is talking about phase two, the actual change toward holiness in the sinner. We call that phase sanctification. It begins the moment the sinner is saved (justification) and continues for the rest of his or her life.

The third phase is glorification. That is when the saved person dies and goes to heaven. At that point, he/she

will no longer have a sin nature. He/she will be perfected. Paul, writing about sanctification and then glorification, explains, “Now (sanctification) I know in part, but then (glorification) I will know even as also I am known” (1 Corinthians 13:12).

In order to grow spiritually during sanctification, believers should work out in their lives the salvation they already have. They should have the same attitude Christ had and apply the truth to every part of their lives. The work is extremely important and has eternal consequences. It means dealing with the God of the universe. So it demands reverence. Because God works in believers we are not to think we have nothing to do. We are to work with Him in the living out of the inner spiritual life He has given us. We are not puppets or robots. God is active in us. He is directing us with a good will toward a good goal – He wants us to be more and more like Christ. We should cooperate with Him in this most sublime work. And what is God’s purpose in sanctification for us? That we should be conformed to the image of his Son (Romans 8:29).

6 You Can Lose Your Salvation

There are those who teach if you sin, you will lose your salvation. They use verses like “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12) as evidence. It is never clear how much you have to sin to lose your salvation or what happens if you are sinning at the moment you die and you never had the chance to confess that sin.

The overwhelming evidence in the Bible is that God guarantees salvation is eternally secure. The confusion lies in observing those that were once faithful, but have denounced their faith. The real issue is that not everyone who appears to be saved or who thinks they are saved, truly ever were. As the saying goes, “Standing in a church doesn’t make you any more a Christian than standing in a garage makes you an automobile.” John wrote, “They went out from us, but none of them were of us.

For if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us. But they went out, so that it might be made evident that all of them were not of us” (1 John 2:19). Thus, they were not real believers, not born again, not of God’s spiritual family. Their going out proves they did not belong. God’s chosen ones remain in the faith. Therefore, to understand how this can be, it is necessary to understand what salvation entails. It is more than saying a prayer or making a decision for Christ. Salvation is an act of God that washes

unregenerate sinners of sin, renews them, and causes them to be born again by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit gives them a new heart and a new spirit. There is a realization of the need to repent of their evil ways. The Holy Spirit will cause them to desire to walk in obedience to God's Word. They become new creatures in Christ. If "the sinner's prayer" was uttered without faith or a "decision for Christ" was made to impress others, there was no salvation. Also, salvation is a personal decision followed by a personal act of faith. Someone else cannot be saved for you. An infant baptism was not your decision and cannot save you. A prayer after your death cannot save you.

Even if salvation actually occurred, it doesn't mean Christians won't sin again. If Christ's blood cleanses us from every sin, doesn't this mean we are sinless? Not at all. Lest anyone should mistakenly think so John made the point clear: If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us (1 John 1:8). No human being on earth, no believer is sinless, not even the holiest. Paul, the great and holy apostle, spoke of sin living in him (Romans 7:17). None of us in this life ever gets beyond the need of confessing sin and of the blood of Christ cleansing from sin. If any of us think our nature is sinless "we deceive ourselves" – that is, we are leading ourselves astray. Thinking we are sinless comes out of our own efforts to think so, not from God's Word. Therefore, if it were possible to lose our salvation, we would.

It is unfortunate that Christians sin. God knew that from the foundation of the world. He would not offer us a gift of salvation at the expense of the awful suffering His Son endured if it was so fragile that we could easily lose it.

Numerous passages of Scripture declare the fact that, as an act of God, salvation is secure:

Believers are born again when they believe (John 3:3; Titus 3:5). For a Christian to lose his/her salvation, he/she would have to be un-regenerated. That means he/she would have to die spiritually. The Bible gives no evidence that the new birth can be taken away. Could a newly dead Christian be reborn again and again and again?

And you He has made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins ... even when we were dead in sins, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved) and raised us up together, and seated us together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:1,5,6). No one separated from Christ has true spiritual life. Because everyone has sinned, every person is spiritually dead until Christ gives him/her new life. This death means separation from God's life and fellowship and is the reason the new birth is essential for salvation, but God has made believers spiritually alive and brought them into union and fellowship with Christ. The Holy Spirit indwells all believers (John 14:17; Romans 8:9) and baptizes all believers into the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). Christ is the representative of all believers. Because they are "in Him" and united to Him, God counts what happened to Him as if it happened to them also. For a believer to become unsaved, the Holy Spirit would have to leave and the believer become detached from the Body of Christ. In God's eyes, believers on earth are already raised from the dead and exalted to heaven. If we lose our salvation, are we no longer in Him, no longer united to Him, and no longer seated in heavenly places? How could God consider believers on earth to be already raised from the dead and exalted to heaven if they could lose their salvation on their death beds?

Whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life (John 3:15). If you believe in Christ today and have eternal life, but lose it tomorrow, then it was never “eternal” at all. If you could lose your salvation, the promises of eternal life in the Bible would be in error.

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give to them eternal life, and they will never perish, neither will anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who gave them to Me, is greater than all. And no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand” (John 10:27-29). To get Christ’s sheep away from Him requires a stronger arm than His. No evil men, not Satan himself, can steal Christ’s sheep from Him. Christ is the good Shepherd. For any shepherd to keep his sheep two things are necessary – an earnest desire to do so, and the ability to do so. Christ has this desire and the ability in the fullest measure. The sheep are safe because of who and what He is. Christ’s people are a special gift of love to Jesus from His Father (John 6:37; 17:6). He will do all in His power to keep this gift – and His power is limitless. It is unthinkable that He would lose any of them. Two almighty hands enclose Christ’s sheep. Here is double security. The life of believers is hidden in the depths of God Himself. And who can remove it from there?

For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38–39). The same God who saved you is the same God who will keep you. Once you are saved, you are always saved.

Now to Him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Savior, who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen. (Jude :24,25) Notice, He is able!

7 Another Chance after Death

Nothing is sadder than to lose a loved one to death and not know if they are saved, except for your own death and then hear Jesus say, “I never knew you. Depart from me, you evildoer.”

One doctrine that teaches you have a second chance is the doctrine of Particular Judgment. Immediately after death, each soul undergoes what is called the Particular Judgment (Catechism of the Catholic Church 1021-1022). This is not a court trial with uncertain outcomes, but a revelation of truth in the presence of Divine Love. The soul sees its life laid bare before God, not to humiliate, but to heal and reveal. The Particular Judgment determines the soul’s eternal destiny: entrance into Heaven (immediately or after purification in Purgatory), or separation from God in Hell. This judgment reflects the soul’s state at death – its openness to grace and its friendship with God. (From the e-zine Catholic 365 article “Catholic Teaching on Death, Judgment, and the Last Things: What Catholics should know.”) Purgatory is a place where Christians go to after death to be cleansed of the sins that were not fully satisfied during life.

However, the idea that a soul of a born again believer is not cleansed of sins at the point of death is contrary to the teaching of the Scriptures: And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the

Spirit of our God (1 Corinthians 6:11). Paul speaks in the past tense – you were washed, sanctified, justified. In other words, it was already done. It is finished!

The concept of purgatory comes from the verse that “no defiling thing will ever enter it, or anyone who commits an abomination or tells a lie.” (Revelation 21:27) From this it is inferred that a less than cleansed soul isn’t fit for heaven. It needs to be cleansed or “purged” of its remaining imperfections. However, this quote is incomplete and out of context. The rest of the verse says, “but only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life” and if you read verse 10 of Revelation chapter 20, you will see that “it” is not heaven but the new Jerusalem. Albeit, the requirements to enter heaven are the same – your name must be written in the Lamb’s book of life. How do you get your name written in the Lamb’s book of life? By calling on the name of the Lord you will be saved because it is by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ that your name will be written in the Lamb’s book of life. This is not something anyone or the church can do for you.

Another verse used to support the doctrine of purgatory is: And whoever speaks a word against the Son of man, it will be forgiven him, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this world or in the world to come (Matthew 12:32). The logic is it implies that it’s possible for sins to be forgiven in the next life, and a soul dies with sins that need to be forgiven. (From Catholic e-magazine, Catholic Answers article “On Forgiveness after Death Because of God’s infinite mercy, our venial sins can be forgiven in the afterlife”.) There are many false doctrines that have been taught through the ages based upon what men believe the Scripture implies. Not everything that Scripture implies is false doctrine

(one example is the doctrine of the Trinity), but before you accept an implied doctrine as fact, you should be able to find a volume of verses that support the premise and ensure those verses are not taken out of context.

The Apostle John reinforced the doctrine stated by Paul about being washed: But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7). Notice that the process of cleansing goes on continually. (The Greek verb is in the present continuous tense – “goes on cleansing.”) Cleansing of sin is accomplished through the blood of Christ, not the church. Two verses later, John points out that forgiveness of sins is a personal responsibility: If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). Nowhere in John’s letter is any hint of needing the church to intervene or the concept of having sins that were not fully satisfied during life.

Also, purgatory doctrine is based upon 1 Corinthians 3:13 - every man’s work will be made clear, for the day will make it known, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test everyone’s work as to what sort it is. The purgatory doctrine interpretation is: this is a purging of the soul’s sins. Paul’s statements are clear about this verse. It is the man’s works that are judged by fire, not his soul. This judgment is not about the Particular Judgment and purgatory, but it is about a saved person’s rewards. Theologians call this the bema seat of Christ. The fire at the bema seat has nothing to do with the sanctification of a man’s or woman’s soul. This is seen in verse 15 as Paul wrote that although his rewards may be lost, yet “He himself will be saved.”

Those who are doing works they think will please Jesus

to earn salvation will be turned away. Jesus defined the only work that is pleasing to God: This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent (John 6:29).

Does the Particular Judgment and purgatory doctrine say you are offered a second chance? Definitely not if you have refused Christ. But it seems to offer hope to the casual Christian or the non-practicing person who calls himself/herself a Christian. The reality is: this person has no chance because as great as the doctrine sounds, it is found nowhere in the Bible. It is a false doctrine that is based entirely upon church tradition. Jesus warned, "by your tradition, you have made the commandment of God to be no longer in effect" (Matthew 15:6). By tradition, the hope of God's salvation is made of no effect for those who rely upon purgatory as a route to heaven. Once a person dies, it is too late to be born again. Burning candles will not change the eternal destiny of anyone. Only those who have accepted Christ as their Savior go through sanctification and that is while they are serving Christ on earth. The process of sanctification and cleansing is completed at death. Look, now is the acceptable time, now is the day of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2). Don't depend upon the Particular Judgment and purgatory. Call on the Lord today.

Others think they will be reincarnated and get another chance to live a better life. But in Hebrews 9:27, "And as it is appointed to men to die once, but after this the judgment," the Bible does not teach that individuals are born physically again and again on earth and die again and again. The idea that through reincarnation individuals can obtain salvation is completely unnecessary (as well as false). Christ by the sacrifice of Himself took away all our sins. In a moment of time

any of us by trusting in Him can receive complete forgiveness, spiritual birth, and eternal salvation. After that one death that men die, there is something that awaits them, and it is not rebirth back into the world. It is judgment.

In Job 11:12, Zophar is quite sure that a wild donkey can never become a man. The writers of the Bible all knew that men are men and animals are animals and that the one would never become the other. There is no kind of reincarnation taught in the Bible. There is never the slightest suggestion by anyone in the book of Job (or in the rest of Bible) that Job (or anyone) was possibly being punished for sins done in a former life.

The Bible is God's revelation to men. It contains all the truth they need now to know. The Bible completely ignores the Hindu and Buddhist teaching of reincarnation. By ignoring it, the Bible shows that the idea of reincarnation does not contain any truth that men need and does not explain a single thing we should know. The Bible teaches resurrection, not reincarnation. According to the Bible, a person lives but once on this earth and dies but once. At the end there will be the resurrection of the dead and God's judgment.

In John 9:2 the disciples asked Jesus about a man born blind, "Teacher, who sinned, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answer in verse 3, "Not because either this man or his parents sinned, but that the works of God might be revealed in him," is contrary to the doctrine of reincarnation. If Jesus had believed that doctrine, or thought it had any significance at all in explaining man's life on earth, this was the perfect opportunity to say so. Instead, He denied the very basis of the doctrine - that a person's own sins in any

supposed previous life affect what he will be in this life. You will spend eternity in the condition in which you die. If you die in Christ, you'll spend eternity in Him. If you die outside of Christ, then you'll spend eternity outside of Him. There will be no second chance or rehabilitation or escape from Hell.

8 Saved People are Free to Sin

If Jesus' death on the cross means all our sins are forgiven, are we now free to do whatever we want, however we want, and whenever we want? In other words, are we now free to sin?

Doesn't 1 John 1:9 say, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"? And then, "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus ... For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the Law of sin and death" (Romans 8:1a,2). The problem with using the Bible reference from Romans as evidence is that it omits the second half of verse 1, "who do not behave according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." That is, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus if they do not behave according to the flesh, but behave according to the Spirit. If someone believes and lives a life of being free to sin, it is doubtful they are actually saved and are in Christ Jesus.

Paul addressed this issue directly: What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin so that grace may abound? Absolutely not!

How shall we who died to sin, live any longer in it (Romans 6:1,2)? Throughout Romans 5, Paul shows how ignorant, how absurd such a question and suggestion are to a believer who understands Christ's gospel.

If a person is truly saved, the Holy Spirit would be active in his/her life and the idea of willfully sinning would be abhorrent. As it is, there should be a battle raging within the Christian. Paul wrote, "I find, then, a law: When I choose to do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the Law of God in the person I am inwardly. But I see another law in my bodily members, making war against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death" (Romans 7:21-24)? Paul stated the evil within was as powerful as a law of nature. It was not something that happened only occasionally, and was gradually weakening and fading away out of his life. Always he wanted to do good and only good (this is what the believer's new nature in Christ is like), but always in trying to do the good he wanted to do, he found the evil alien within opposing him and trying to turn him in its direction. This law is "making war" against him and actually takes him prisoner.

This knowledge of evil within, and this unsuccessful struggle with himself to be good, brought a deep groan from Paul's heart. This is the cry of a man face to face with the basic, total, incorrigible depravity of his fallen nature, which he himself can do nothing at all to change. For a person who can without a feeling of guilt continue to sin with the idea that Christ's shed blood has empowered them to behave in such a manner without remorse, should examine themselves and determine if they are truly saved and consider the following warning: For if we willfully go on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins, but only fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation which will consume the adversaries. He who despised Moses'

law died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses, Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought deserving who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has counted the blood of the covenant with which he was sanctified an unholy thing, and has insulted the Spirit of grace: For we know Him who has said, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay", says the Lord. And again, "The Lord will judge His people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Romans 8:26-31).

9 I Don't Have to Go to Church to Worship God

There are some who believe they can worship God just as easily while they are out doing recreational activities in nature as a lifestyle or sitting at their table sipping tea instead of going to church. Others quit church because someone hurt their feelings. Others quit because they say the church is full of hypocrites. Others quit because they have committed a grievous sin and are too embarrassed to return. And others are like Demas who deserted Paul because he loved this present world. (2 Timothy 4:10)

Attending church is not an option, rather it is a command: Not forsaking our meetings together, as the way of some is, but encouraging each other, and so much the more as you see the day approaching (Hebrews 10:25). No believer should give up going to meetings where other believers will be. Each one needs fellowship and each one should encourage others in this life of faith.

It is important to remember that a local church is made up of human beings who have faults and tendencies to sin. Maybe the person who hurt your feelings was having a bad day and said something that they regretted, but didn't come back and apologize. Maybe the person didn't even know you were offended. Maybe you misconstrued something said or done.

It is also important to remember that a local church has members that are “tares”, non-believers who look and act like real believers. (Jesus) put another parable before them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away. But when the blade sprang up, and began to produce a crop, the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? Then from where have these tares come?’ He said to them, ‘An enemy has done this.’ The servants said to him, ‘Do you want us to go and gather them up?’ But he said, ‘No. While you are gathering up the tares you may also root up the wheat along with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will say to the reapers, “First gather the tares together and tie them in bundles to burn them. But gather the wheat into my barn.”’ ... Then Jesus sent the crowd away and went in the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, “Explain the parable of the tares of the field to us.” He answered and said to them, “He who sows the good seed is the Son of man. The field is the world. The good seed are the children of the kingdom, but the tares are the children of the wicked one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels.

Therefore just as the tares are gathered up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom everything that causes stumbling, and those who do evil” (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-41).

The people who hurt your feelings and the hypocrites you are seeing may very well be tares. They probably don't know they are tares. As a tare, they are sown in

your church by the devil and even though they are oblivious to it, their thoughts, words, and actions are controlled by the devil. Their purpose (again they don't know it) is to get believers to quit church. Don't let Satan have the victory, get back in church. Accept the fact that you may get your feelings hurt. Focus on God.

It is embarrassing to return after committing a grievous sin, but God is a God of forgiveness and so are His people. Jesus told this parable, "And when he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread and I am dying from hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and against you, and am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired men."' And he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him, was moved with compassion and ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and against you, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him. And put a ring on his hand, and sandals on his feet. And bring the fattened calf and kill it. And let us eat and celebrate, for this son of mine was dead, and is alive again. He was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate" (Luke 15:17-24). God is not waiting for you with a big stick to beat you. He is waiting to fall on your neck, kiss you, and celebrate your return. It requires courage to return. It also requires humility and an earnest plea of forgiveness. It's not too late if you are wandering or embarrassed. Come back.

You may have dropped out of church not because of something you did, but because of something done by someone you loved or maybe because of something that

occurred outside of the church that wasn't your fault but was still embarrassing. There is never any help for your situation outside of the church. There is nothing of value in the world. Do not love the world, or the things that are in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world – the desire of the flesh and the desire of the eyes and the pride of life – is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passes away, and its desires also; but whoever does the will of God continues on forever (1 John 2:15-17).

The local church has leaders who are responsible for you: Obey your leaders and be submissive, for they watch over your souls, as those who must give an account, see that they are able to do so with joy, and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you (Hebrews 13:17). Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2). When you drop out of church, you no longer have a local pastor who will watch over your soul and you no longer have others that will bear your burden. You also will not bear their burdens so you will not fulfill the law of Christ.

For whatever reason a person decides to drop out of church, consider the following:

And He gave some to be apostles, and some to be prophets, and some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all come into the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a complete person, to the measure of the mature state of the fullness of Christ, so that we will not be children, tossed this way and that and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery and cunning craftiness of men

in their deceitful plotting, but speaking the truth in love, in everything may grow up in Him who is the head, that is, Christ. From Him the whole body joined and knit together by what every ligament supplies, with the effectual working of every part in due measure, causes the body to grow and edify itself in love (Ephesians 4:13-16).

Jesus gave the local church gifts through the Holy Spirit so that you might become a complete person able to discern between false doctrines and truth. Out of the church, you are not being perfected. You are no longer a functioning, contributing part of the whole body so the body will grow and edify itself in love. Also, you have been given a spiritual gift to minister to the local church. You can't exercise that gift if you're not there.

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal, but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroy, and where thieves do not break in or steal (Matthew 6:29, 20). You are not storing up treasures in heaven. Giving to a non-Christian, philanthropic organization or to a family member in need is not putting treasure in heaven.

Now if anyone builds on this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, every man's work will be made clear, for the day will make it known, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test everyone's work as to what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on the foundation remains, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss. He himself will be saved, but as if through fire (1 Corinthians 3:12-15). For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that everyone

may receive according to the things he has done in the body, whether good or bad (2 Corinthians 5:10). After your life is over, you will stand before the Lord Jesus at the bema seat where your works will be tried by fire. It is neither to determine your salvation nor make an accounting for sins. It is where you will give an accounting for what you did with your life in service to God. Those things that you did that God deems of value will be rewarded. Everything else will be burned up. For some, they will have nothing. If you have dropped out of church, most, if not all, of your works will be burned up and you will have little to nothing.

When you stand before Christ, how do you think the Lord Jesus will accept your explanation for why you dropped out of church? How will your excuse compare to the following:

He is despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief and we hid, as it were, our faces from Him. He was despised, and we did not esteem Him
(Isaiah 53:3).

Therefore since we also are surrounded with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that so easily adheres to us, and let us run with patient endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the author and finisher of our faith. For the joy that was set before Him He endured the cross, despising the shame and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such opposition from sinners against Himself, or else you may grow weary and faint in your minds. You have not yet resisted to the shedding of your blood, fighting against sin (Hebrews 12:1-4).

How does your excuse compare to what Jesus endured? You most likely haven't been threatened with death for attending church. Is any reason you have remotely as bad as many of the saints who experienced trials of cruel mockings and beatings, yes, and bonds and imprisonment? They underwent stoning, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were killed with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, ill-treated, and tormented (of whom the world was not worthy). They wandered in deserts, and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth (Hebrews 11:36-38).

Do you really expect Jesus to say to you, "Well done, good and faithful servant! Enter into the joy of your master"? Or do you suppose He may say something like, "I gave you a spiritual gift, and you never used it. I was hungry, and you did not give Me food. I was thirsty, and you did not give Me anything to drink. I was a stranger, and you did not take Me in. I was naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me. You did not make disciples and teach them to observe everything that I commanded you."

10 You Can't Eat Bacon

A favorite tactic of scoffers is to ask questions about the Mosaic Law. Questions like, “Do you think someone who committed adultery should be stoned?” Other questions revolve around eating shellfish, catfish, and pork. Whether the person is sincere and confused or is a scoffer baiting for a look of confusion, this one is easy to untangle.

The Mosaic Law was established for the nation of Israel to set them apart from other nations and to protect them from false worship. The idea was that when Gentiles passed through Israel as they traveled from Europe and Asia to Egypt and back, they would encounter the Jews and upon observing their laws, recognize how great God was. Moses expressed it, “See, I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the LORD my God commanded me, so that you should do so in the land where you are going to possess it. Therefore keep them and do them; for this will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, who will hear all these statutes, and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’ For what nation is there so great, who has God so near to it, as the LORD our God is to us in everything for which we call on Him? And what nation is there so great, that has statutes and judgments so righteous as this whole law which I set before you this day” (Deuteronomy 4:5-8)?

Also, understand there were three categories of the Mosaic Law: the moral laws, the judicial/civil laws, and the ceremonial laws.

The moral laws are forever binding on all people of all ages in all places. Therefore murder, stealing, and perjury are crimes today.

Judicial/civil laws were for the nation of Israel as a nation in the ancient Near East. These laws expired when the nation of Israel was destroyed, but they still have value because they were based on the moral laws. Therefore today we have things like charges of manslaughter that are similar to the Old Testament laws for when things occurred like an ox gores a man or a woman and they die and the owner knew the ox had the tendency to gore.

The ceremonial laws were designed to do two things. First, identify Israel as God's unique people and worship Him in their unique relationship and second, to point forward to the Person and work of Jesus. That is where things like the dietary laws, not mixing seed, not mixing clothing materials, trimming the edge of a beard, etc. are found. It's also where the sacrificial and feasts laws are recorded. They were specifically for the Jews.

Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone who believes (Romans 10:4). Christ has severed the connection between the believer and the Law of Moses. And when you were dead in your sins and the lack of circumcision in your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, forgiving you all trespasses, and blotting out the handwriting of decrees that was against us, which was opposed to us, and took it away, nailing it to His cross. And having plundered

principalities and powers, He made an open spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross. Therefore let no one judge you in the matter of food or drink, or regarding a festival, or new moon observance, or sabbath days. These are a shadow of things that were to come, but the substance is of Christ (Colossians 2:13-17). Because Jesus fulfilled the Law, believers now are not under such Old Testament rules and regulations. These regulations are part of the written code that Christ nailed to His cross.

11 Jesus Never Said I am God

It is true that Jesus never said the precise words, "I am God." But just because there is not a direct claim doesn't mean there is not an existence of a claim. For instance, it is not necessary for a man to say, "I am a father." If he says, "I have children," then you know he is a father. You know a woman is an athlete if she should say, "I won the gold medal at the Olympics." You know someone is a teacher should he/she say, "I teach mathematics." There are also actions. If someone is running in a race, you know they are a runner. If someone has tennis trophies on the fireplace mantel, you know he/she plays tennis. If someone enters a room that has a sign "Only Cast Members Allowed", you know that person is a member of the cast.

If someone said to you, "I caught a touchdown pass for the San Francisco Forty-niners," you probably wouldn't know what he meant if you didn't follow American football. But anyone who does follow American football would understand exactly what he meant. This is similar to when Jesus made several statements: "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30). Also He said, "Truly, truly I say to you, before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58). In both these cases, those listening to Him picked up stones to kill Him. At His trial, the conversation went like this: Again the high priest asked Him, saying to Him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" And Jesus said, "I am. And you will see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power and coming in

the clouds of heaven.” Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, “What need do we have of any further witnesses? You have heard this blasphemy. What do you think?” And they all condemned Him declaring Him to be worthy of death (Mark 14:61-64). Why did they want to kill Him? Because in their culture and understanding of the Old Testament, they understood by the words He said that He claimed to be God. Just like with those who do follow American football know what a San Francisco Forty-niner and a touchdown pass are and those who don’t follow American football don’t, so with the case of Jesus’ statements – people not familiar with Jewish culture and the Old Testament would not understand Jesus’ claim, but the Jews knew what He meant without specifically saying, “I am God.”

The Bible declares Jesus to be God: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. This same One was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him not one thing was made that was made ... And the Word became flesh, and lived among us, and we saw His glory, the glory as of the only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:1-3,14). For by Him all things were created, things that are in heaven, and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers – all things were created by Him, and for Him (Colossians 1:16). And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God appeared in the flesh, was declared righteous by the Spirit, seen by angels, preached to the Gentiles, believed on in the world, and received up into glory (1 Timothy 3:16). As we look for the blessed hope and the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13). Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not think it robbery to be equal with God

(Philippians 2:5,6). The Greek here for “being in the form of God” can mean only one possible thing: Christ has the very nature of God. In nature and attributes God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are equal.

If you use a translation that has, “and the word was a god” instead of “and the word was God” then you are using a translation that was written with a bias. If you have a translation that has, “because by means of him all other things were created in the heavens and on the earth, the things visible and the things invisible, whether they are thrones or lordships or governments or authorities. All other things have been created through him and for him” then you have a biased translation. The word “other” is not in the original Greek, but was added because the translator does not believe in the deity of Christ. Therefore, he or she had to change the Bible to fit his or her theology. This is an attempt by a false religion to get you to follow a false Jesus. You need to throw that bible away and get a different version.

For in Him all the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily (Colossians 2:9) is one of the clearest statements of the deity of Christ anywhere in the Bible. This means that Christ is the incarnation of the one true God, the Creator of the universe. All the fullness of the divine nature dwells in His body.

Matthew chapter 8 is a chapter of miracles. In it, the Lord Jesus shows His authority and power over human diseases (vs 1-17), in the matter of spiritual life (vs 18-22), over the forces of nature (vs 23-27), in the unseen world of spirits (vs 28-34). All this is abundant evidence that He was just who He said He was - the Lord from heaven (John 3:13; 8:23). Christ’s miracles showed forth

His glory (John 2:11). They were evidence that God the Father had sent Him and that He was one with God (John 5:36; 10:37-38; 14:11; Acts 2:22). They were Christ's credentials, God's commendation – not in writing, but in action. They were proof that the kingdom of God had come (Matthew 12:18).

The miracles of the Lord Jesus were not tricks which can be performed by a magician's art. He healed diseases like leprosy, generally regarded as incurable, opened blind eyes (Matt 9:27-30; 11:4; 20:34), walked on water (Matt 14:25), and raised the dead (Luke 7:11-15; 8:49-56; John 11:43-44). Jesus did more than teach; He revealed the power of God and the character of God in ways which were unmistakable. This does not mean that all who do miracles have come from God (Matt 7:22; 24:24). The miracles of false prophets are evidence of the power of Satan; and the character of false prophets is clear to Christ's disciples. What they teach and how they live shows what kind of people they are.

In Job 9:8, He (God) alone spreads out the heavens, and treads on the waves of the sea. In Mark 6:48, And about the fourth watch of the night He (Jesus as God) approached them, walking on the lake.

And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). Jesus did not correct Thomas.

The Bible tells us that we are to worship God and God alone. There are several instances in which Jesus was worshiped and He never stopped or rebuked those who did (Matthew 14:33; 28:9; 28:17). Only God has no sin (John 8:46; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15). Only God can forgive sins (Mark 2:5-12; Luke 7:47-49).

Prophetically speaking of Jesus, Isaiah wrote, "For to us a Child is born, to us a Son is given. And the government will be on His shoulder; and His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Father of Eternity, the Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6). This is the clearest possible declaration that the Messiah of Israel, the Lord Jesus, is the incarnation of God.

Some may object to the doctrine of the deity of Christ because of this conversation: And, suddenly, someone came and said to Him, "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do, so that I may get eternal life?" And He said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but one, that is God (Matthew 19:16,17). Jesus was not denying His own goodness. He was saying that if the man regarded Him as a mere human teacher he should not call Him good. All men are sinners (Romans 3:23), and Jesus called even His own disciples "evil" (Matthew 7:11). This youth's understanding needed to be enlightened to realize that God alone is good, and that Jesus is good only because He is God incarnate and not a mere man (John 1:1,14,18). In other words, if Jesus is truly good He is God, and the youth needed to see this.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation (Colossians 1:15). Some argue that if Jesus is the firstborn, then He wasn't eternal with God. However, this is a misunderstanding of the word "firstborn". "He is the image of the invisible God" means the Son of God shares the nature of God and is God. He is eternal. As God, He never had a beginning - was never "born". The Greek word translated "firstborn" (prototokos) here signifies pre-eminence and sovereignty. In this verse and in Colossians 1:16, Paul is saying that Christ is the Lord over all creation.

The modalist position defines the Father, Son, and Holy

Spirit as different modes or manifestations of God. In other words, sometimes God is the Father, at other times He is the Son, and at other times He is the Holy Spirit. They use the example of: "I am a father, a son, and a brother." This is a false teaching.

Several passages exist where Jesus prayed to the Father demonstrating they are separate and distinct Individuals.

Even in the very beginning of the Bible: And God said, "Let Us make man in Our image" (Genesis 1:26), God is talking as a plural. Could He mean He created them with the angels and in their image? No, the Hebrew word there for God is *elohim*. The *im* ending indicates a plural noun.

There are those who say Jesus cannot be God because Jesus died and God cannot die. Yet, Jesus said to the Apostle John, "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, I was dead, and, look, I am alive forever and ever" (Revelation 1:17,18). Jesus affirmed that He did die and yet is alive now and forever. How is that possible? It is because, like us, Jesus had an earthly, mortal body. That is what died, not His soul. Peter, speaking of his own pending death, wrote, "shortly I must put off my tent" (2 Peter 1:14). Our mortal bodies are but temporary houses for our soul which is eternal. So it was with Jesus. This is evident on the cross as He cried out, "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit." His physical body died, not His soul. Three days later, his body was raised from the dead.

Although Jesus did not use the exact phrase "I am God," He didn't have to. His words, works, actions, and the proclamation of others throughout the Bible demonstrate that He was.

12 Jesus and the Archangel Michael were One and the Same Person

Jehovah Witnesses base this claim is based upon:
The idea that both have names that focus on their roles
as leading advocates of God's sovereignty - Michael
(meaning "Who is like God?") and Jesus (meaning
"Jehovah is salvation").

In the end times, Michael, the great prince who stands
guard over the children of your people, will arise
(Daniel 12:1).

And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels
fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his
angels fought (Revelation 12:7).

Michael is called the archangel in Jude verse 9.

The Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a
shout with the voice of the archangel, and with the
trumpet of God
(1 Thessalonians 4:16).

The similarity of names is not an adequate basis for
such a conclusion. Joshua is a mighty warrior and the
leader of the children of Israel in the Old Testament.
His name is "God is salvation." The name Jesus means
"the Lord is salvation." Actually, the names are the
same. The only difference in the names is that Joshua is
the Hebrew spelling and Jesus is the Greek spelling. No
one thinks that Joshua and Jesus are one and the same.

In Daniel 10:13, the angel identifies Michael as ONE of
the chief princes not as THE chief prince. There is no

indication Michael is God's Son or anything more than an angelic being assigned to help Israel. In Daniel 12:1, Michael is contrasted as Israel's angelic prince in the spiritual realm as opposed to the demonic princes of Persia and Greece in Daniel 10:13. Michael is the angelic champion of Israel. Jesus is Lord of all nations and peoples, not just Israel alone. The key point here is Michael is one chief angel among others; he is not the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Not once is Jesus called an archangel by Biblical writers. When individuals in the Bible have two names, the Scripture makes it clear: "Simon, who is called Peter" (Matthew 10:2). "Saul (who is also called Paul)" (Acts 13:9). There is no verse where it is written, "Jesus, who is called Michael." It would be highly unlikely that such a fundamental understanding of Jesus would be neglected by the Bible.

When Jesus will descend with the voice of an archangel doesn't mean that He will be the one who speaks. In some courtrooms when the judge arises, a bailiff calls, "All rise." So, it would be stated that the judge arrives with the shout of a bailiff. That does not equate the bailiff to the judge. In ancient times, it was common practice to announce the arrival of a king or other dignitary with a blast of trumpets and an announcement of the presence of the dignitary.

When Jesus descends with the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God, the verse does not say to whom the voice or trumpet belongs. It simply lists these sounds as attending the Lord's coming. If everything belongs to Jesus while He is descending, then He is shouting with an archangel's voice and blowing God's trumpet. It makes better sense that others are announcing the arrival of Jesus as the victorious King

- an archangel shouts and another angel blasts the trumpet of God.

Michael, though an archangel, is only an angel. He is not God. The clear distinction in the power and authority of Michael and Jesus can be seen by comparing Matthew 4:10 where Jesus rebukes Satan, and Jude verse 9, where Michael the archangel, when he contended with the devil, disputing about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him an abusive accusation, but said, "The Lord rebuke you."

Hebrews 1:5-8 draws a clear difference between Jesus and the angels: For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are my Son, this day have I begotten you." And again, "I will be a Father to Him, and He will be a Son to Me." And again, when He brings the Firstborn into the world, He says, "and let all the angels of God worship Him." The relationship of God to the angels is made clear in this passage - all angels worship Jesus who, as God, is alone worthy of worship. All angels would include Michael. No angel is ever worshiped in Scripture. Therefore, Jesus cannot be Michael or any other angel.

Equating Michael with Jesus is an attempt to get you to follow someone other than Jesus, the divine son of God. Michael did not die on a cross and he cannot save you. He does not provide forgiveness of sin, salvation, and eternity with God.

13 Jesus was Executed on a Torture Stake

The Jehovah Witnesses teach that instead of the traditional Christian belief that Jesus was crucified on a cross, they argue He died on a simple upright pole or “torture stake.” In this method, the hands of the condemned are placed together over his head instead of spread on a crossbeam. They also believe that the cross is a pagan symbol that Christians adopted because of the influence of satanic forces.

It is true that the precise shape of the object on which Jesus was crucified cannot be proved explicitly from the Bible. An argument for the torture stake is that the Greek word used is *stauros*, which originally meant “stake.” They argue *stauros* did not mean “cross” until later than Jesus’ time, but by the time of Christ and in Roman contexts, it had broadened to mean a cross-shaped instrument of execution.

In John 20:25, Thomas wants to “see the print of the nails in His hands.” This is relevant because “nails” is plural. If Jesus was executed on a torture stake, there would only have been one nail used. Thomas’ statement indicates there was one nail for each hand. This fits the description of being nailed to a cross.

Historical accounts, such as those from Roman writers like Seneca, Tacitus, and Josephus, refer to crucifixion using terms that imply a crossbeam, including phrases

like “stretching out the arms.” Also, archaeological finds from digs in the early 1st and 2nd century confirm early Christian use of the traditional cross.

This is an attempt to get you to doubt the true Scriptures so they can more easily convince you to reject your Bible and accept their bible as a more correct version. Once they do that, then they will get you to deny the deity of Christ and have you follow a false Jesus. You need to understand that they have mistranslated the Scriptures in order to insert their false doctrines into the Word of God.

14 Jesus Has Already Returned

There are those who teach the second coming of Jesus has already returned. Some believe it occurred in 70 AD, right after the destruction of Jerusalem. The Jehovah Witnesses teach He returned in October of 1914.

If they are correct and He returned, why did no one see the event and no one sees Him now? The Jehovah Witnesses explanation that no one saw Jesus' return is by citing Acts 1:9,10: And when He had spoken these things, while they were looking, He was taken up and a cloud received Him from their sight. And while they looked steadily toward heaven as He went up, suddenly two men stood by them in white clothing, and they said, "You men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same manner as you have seen Him go into heaven." The logic is that when He went up in the cloud, no one could see Him and since He will return in like manner, a cloud hid Him when He returned. The problem with this is that Matthew 24:30 states: Look, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, and those also who pierced Him, and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of Him.

Some of them claim that no one sees Him now because His return was spiritual and not a physical one. But Jesus has a resurrected body. His flesh is not going to

be in heaven and His spirit here on earth.

The belief that the second coming has already happened was taught by false teachers in Bible days. Paul argued against it: their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among these are Hymenaeus and Philetus. They have veered away from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already taken place. And they upset the faith of some (2 Timothy 2:17-18).

There are events that will occur when Jesus returns. None of these have happened:

1 Thessalonians 4:16,17 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.

Matthew 24:15 The abomination of desolation stands in the holy place. (Before this can occur, the Temple has to be rebuilt in Jerusalem.)

2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 The Antichrist revealed.

Revelation 8:11 The star Wormwood falls from the sky and a third of the waters became wormwood, and many people died from the water, because it had been made bitter.

Revelation 9:15,16 A 200 million man army kills one third of the earth's population.

Revelation 11:7-12 The 2 witnesses must live, be killed, and be resurrected while their enemies watch and hear a voice from heaven call them.

Zechariah 14:4 And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley; half of the

mountain shall move toward the north and half of it toward the south.

If Jesus has returned, where is He today and what is He doing? Do the years since the alleged dates of His return reflect how the Bible says Jesus will reign on earth?

Revelation 2:27 He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels. Revelation 12:5 And she bore a male child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. The statement is an obvious reflection of Psalm 2:7-9: You are My Son; this day I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations as Your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth as your possession. You will break them with a rod of iron; You will dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

Zechariah 14:16,17 And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. And it shall be that whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, on them there will be no rain.

Jeremiah 3:17 At that time Jerusalem shall be called "The Throne of the Lord", and all the nations shall be gathered to it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem.

Revelation 14:1 Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand.

The doctrine that Jesus returned in 70 AD is called

preterism. In preterist theology, most (if not all) of the end-time events recorded in the Bible have already occurred. Preterists believe that the events written in Revelation chapters six through the end of the book have already happened. The problem with this theology is that the book of Revelation was written 20 years after the fall of Jerusalem. Revelation 1:7 - "Look, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, and those also who pierced Him, and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of Him" repeats Matthew 24:30. It is future tense, so Jesus had not yet returned 20 years after the fall of Jerusalem.

An outline of Revelation is written in 1:19: Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are now, and the things which will take place after these things. Chapter 1 is what John has seen. Chapters 2 and 3 are the things that are now. Chapters 4 and beyond are the things that, "must take place after this." In chapters 4 - 13, Jesus is in heaven and not on earth (example Revelation 5:6-12; 6:1,3,5,7,9,12) Remember, Revelation was written 20 years after the destruction of Jerusalem. These things could not be of things which will take place "after these things" if the preterist view is true.

There are people today who claim to be Jesus reincarnated, but Jesus said, "Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ.' and will deceive many" (Matthew 24:4,5).

Once more, these are all attempts to convince you to follow a false Jesus. Their Jesus, including the supposedly reincarnated ones, do not have any power. Their Jesus is not ruling the world with a rod of iron. The world today is not anything like the world is prophesied to be after the return of Christ.

15 Babylon Destroyed Jerusalem in 607 BC

You get a knock on your door and there are two very nice Jehovah Witnesses eager to talk with you. They may ask to pray with you or share Bible lessons with you. Perhaps this is the first time you met them or maybe you saw them in a public place with a sign and literature.

Your conversation with them is pleasant. At some point, they demonstrate to you that “your” Bible says that Jesus died on the cross (as in Matthew chapter 27), but it also says He died on a tree (Acts 5:30). They are inferring that you can’t trust your translation. Then they point to the consistency of their translation and show you a drawing of Jesus on a torture stake. They tell you Jesus died on a torture stake and their bible consistently translates it that way. They also provide historical evidence for that form of punishment.

Sooner or later they will tell you that Jesus returned in 1914 AD. They will use the prophecy of a dream that Nebuchadnezzar had about a tree stump. (See Daniel 4.) Then they will talk about a formula that ties the tree stump vision to the year 1914 and that Babylon destroyed Jerusalem in 607 BC.

The problem is the year 607 BC is incorrect. The actual year is 587 BC. That’s a 20 year difference.

If you suggest their date is in error, you may get a response of, "Who do you want to believe, a secular historian or the Bible?" There is no date of 607 BC written in the Bible. What is written is: And in the fifth month, on the seventh of the month, which was in the nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, Nebuzaradan, commander of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem, and he burned the house of the LORD and the king's house and all the houses of Jerusalem. He burned with fire every great man's house (2 Kings 25:8,9).

There are several historical ways to demonstrate that the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar's reign was 587 BC and not 607 BC. They will always have a false counter to the historians. But if you read their Bible lessons closely, you can see they have the proof of the year when Nebuchadnezzar reigned, they have just hidden it.

They agree that the reign of Nebonidus was 17 years long and lasted from 556 - 539 BC. For the next 3 kings, they only give the number of years they reigned, and not their calendar years. Then they give Nebuchadnezzar's years of reign - with his dates being 20 years earlier than they actually were. If we use the data given in JW.org and add them up beginning with Nabonidus, we will get the proper reigning dates for all the Babylonian kings:

Nabonidus	17 years	556 - 539
Labishi-Marduk	9 months	556 - 556
Neriglissar	4 years	559 - 556
Evil Merodach	2 years	561 - 560
Nebuchadnezzar	43 Years	605 - 562

However, there are two pieces of evidence that cannot be denied without them distorting the truth. (Not that

the individuals know they are doing so. They are only reading from their doctrinal materials.) In ancient Babylon, they dated official documents, to include sales receipts, with the year of the king's reign. A clay tablet discovered and cataloged by archaeologists as VAT 4956 is an astronomical diary that records 13 lunar and 15 planetary observations. It details the position of the moon and the planets as they appeared near stars and constellations, indicating the days and the months throughout the 37th year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. Astronomers calculate an identical combination of astronomical positions repeats only every 40,000 years. The astronomical observations recorded in this tablet can only correspond to the year 567 BC. Jerusalem was destroyed 17 years before 567 BC, which would have been 586 BC. (Historians place it as 587 BC. There is a 1 year discrepancy because the Jews and Babylonians counted the years of a king's reign slightly differently. Without going through a lengthy discussion as to how, suffice it to say whether 586 BC or 587 BC, it is definitely not 607 BC.)

Then there is BM 38462. It has lunar eclipses recorded during the 1st 29 years of Nebuchadnezzar's reign. The list has Nebuchadnezzar's name on it, the dates of these lunar eclipses, how long they lasted, and whether they were visible or not from Babylon. Why is it important? These eclipses have been proven to have occurred during the period between 604 BC to 576 BC, not the years of 624 BC to 595 BC as these false teachers claim would have been Nebuchadnezzar's first 29 years. Every eclipse is unique so it's impossible to move this list back 20 years. The exact dates have mathematical confirmation. The exact times have mathematical calculation.

Your guests may have false information to discredit

VAT 4956 and BM 38462. “That is inaccurate” is a proper response to them. And remember, VAT 4956 and BM 3846 are only two pieces of evidence for the years that Nebuchadnezzar reigned. Babylonian, Egyptian, Jewish, and Assyrian historians and researchers all have the same accepted dates for the fall of Jerusalem.

It’s not just the dates for Jerusalem’s destruction that the Jehovah Witnesses have changed. They had to change other dates such as the battle of Carchemish. This was one of the most significant battles of the ancient world and occurred 18 years before the destruction of Jerusalem. But since the actual date of 605 BC is before their 607 BC date, they had to change that one also.

The point is that not only is their date for the fall of Jerusalem in 607 BC wrong, but the calculations used to determine 1914 AD are incorrect as well.

16 You and Your Spouse are Married Eternally

The Mormons teach that you and your spouse can be married for all eternity. If you are married in one of their temples, you will have a celestial marriage. Those spouses in eternal marriages will be able to have children.

This belief has no Biblical basis; actually the opposite is true. When questioned by the Sadducees about marriage after the resurrection, Jesus replied, “The reason you are in error is because you do not know either the Scriptures or the power of God. For when they rise from the dead, they will not marry or be given in marriage, but will be like the angels who are in heaven” (Mark 12:24,25).

Seeing as this is so clearly stated by Jesus, how did the idea of eternal marriage come to be? Through supposed divine revelation by church leaders who are considered prophets. But any divine revelation that directly contradicts the words of Jesus cannot be from God and should not be believed.

This is an organization that wants you to accept the word of their leaders over the actual word of God in the divinely inspired Scriptures. If they can do get you to do that, you will follow their Jesus who is not the same Jesus of the Bible.

17 You can Become a god

There are many who believe you can become a god.

The Mormons believe that by being joint-heirs with Christ and by receiving the fullness of the glory of the Father, it allows you to become a god. They claim for those whose marriage endures in eternity, the Lord says, "Then shall they be gods."

This is another heretical teaching. The Lord never said they shall be gods or a god, but rather He quoted Psalm 82:6: I said, "You are gods, and all of you are children of the Most High" or it could possibly be translated "mighty ones" or "rulers" or "judges." Certainly, there is nothing in Psalms 82 or anywhere in the Bible that mentions anything about marriages between mortals that endures in eternity.

Who are the people mentioned in this verse? They were not the gods worshiped then by some people in the land of Israel or by the nations outside Israel. God had nothing to do with such "gods", and was not speaking to them in Psalms 82. In fact, God says they are not gods at all and that He alone is God (Exodus 20:3; Isaiah 37:19; 44:6-7; 46:9; Jeremiah 16:20; 1 Corinthians 8:4-6).

Jesus defines who the "gods" of this psalm are as those "to whom the Word of God came." The "gods" in this psalm were the leaders, the judges in Israel. In Hebrew,

they are called “gods” in Exodus 21:6; and 22:7-8. God called them gods because they were appointed by God and acted as God’s representatives and judged on God’s behalf. Their national relationship to God was as children to a father.

Regardless of whether someone is a member of a Christian organization or some other religion, there is only one God and there will forever be one God. The idea that we can become a god has its roots from Satan in the Garden of Eden as he tells Eve, “For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:4).

18 We are All God's Children

The Bible does not say we are all God's children. Rather, it says we are His creation. The Bible says something quite different: those who are the children of the flesh are not the children of God (Romans 9:8). The Bible tells us that we must be born again (John 3:3,7) and Jesus differentiates mankind: That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit (John 3:6). He would later tell some of the Pharisees, "You are of your father the devil, and you want to fulfill the desires of your father" (John 8:44).

The Apostle John teaches us how to distinguish between the children of God and the children of the devil: In this the children of God are revealed, and the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God (1 John 3:10).

To further demonstrate that we are not all God's children, to become a child of God, one must be adopted. We become adopted as God's children when we are saved through our relationship with Jesus Christ: But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, to redeem, those who were under the Law, so that we might be adopted as sons. And because you are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, calling out, "Abba, Father" (Galatians 4:4-6). He predestined us to the adoption as children to Himself, by Jesus Christ, in accordance with the good pleasure of

His will (Ephesians 1:5). This can be clearly seen in Romans 8:14-17: For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are sons of God. For you did not receive again the spirit of bondage to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we call out, "Abba, Father." The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit, that we are the children of God and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. Also, Paul wrote, "For you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:26).

Since we are adopted, that means prior to our adoption we were not God's children.

To believe that you are a child of God but have never called upon the name of the Lord to be saved is a terrible mistake with eternal consequences.

19 More than one Path to Heaven

Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). He also said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, even though he dies, yet he will live. And whoever lives and believes in Me will never die" (John 11:25,26) He is not one way among many, but the only way there is. It was not His disciples, but He Himself who insisted He was the only way to God's presence. Many people do not like this teaching of Jesus, but not liking it will not change it. Far better it is to decide to like it, because Jesus is the Truth and does not lie. He Himself said that He is the only Son of God.

Surprisingly, not all professing Christians believe that Jesus is the only way and because of that, they do not tell others the only way to salvation. Here are some reasons they give for not sharing the Gospel with those of other religions:

They can get to heaven through their religious beliefs
We shouldn't impose our ideas on others
The Bible tells us not to judge others
To not share the Gospel with others is to leave them without warning that they are on the wide road that leads to destruction.

Consider Jesus' words from the sermon on the mount, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord', will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me in that

day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name drive out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Depart from me, you evildoers'" (John 7:21-23). Think about this: if people who did works to support Jesus will be rejected, what about those whom you didn't bother to tell? The Bible states it like this: For the time has come that judgment must begin at the house of God.

And if it first begins at us, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear (1 Peter 4:17,18)? And Paul wrote: For whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. How, then, will they call out to Him in whom they have not believed? And how will they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? And how will they preach unless they are sent (Romans 10:13-15)?

Then consider this: the night before Jesus was crucified, He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from Me" (Luke 22:42). If there was any other way, any at all, the Father would have changed Jesus' fate. If there was any other way, why was it necessary for Jesus to suffer through such a cruel and painful ordeal and shed His blood? Why not just follow another religion? The answer is **because there was no other way.**

Some say that Christians, Jews, and Muslims all worship the same God – the God of Abraham – and thus they will all go to heaven. The Bible demonstrates that is not true: They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father" ... Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I set out and

came from God ... You are of your father the devil, and you want to fulfill the desires of your father ... He who belongs to God hears God's words. So you do not hear them because you do not belong to God" (John 8:39,42,44,47). The Jews to whom Jesus was speaking insisted that Abraham was their "father", and probably meant that this was true in a spiritual sense as well as physical. Jesus says their behavior shows this could not be true. So even though they did ritual acts of worshiping God and keeping the Law, they did not belong to God because they did not love Jesus. The Jews, Muslims, Jehovah Witnesses, Mormons, and some other faith groups have rejected Jesus as their Savior and/or His deity. Nonetheless, they must still hear the Gospel message because some of them will accept it.

What about a somewhat religious organization that invites you to join and they say you don't have to believe in the God of the Bible, just as long as you believe in some deity? The Bible says: Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has the one who believes with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said, "I will dwell in them, and walk in and I will be their God, and they will be My people. Therefore come out from among them, and be separate," says the Lord (2 Corinthians 6:14-17). You can't have a "blended" religious bond. Don't join them. Politely refuse their invitation.

This does not mean you isolate yourself from those who practice other faiths. Otherwise, how will they hear the Gospel? There is no expectation that you have to

memorize the entire Bible to share the good news about Jesus. You can give someone a pamphlet. You can share what Jesus has done for you. You can refer someone to a Christian friend or church leader. The worse thing you can do is allow someone to die without even trying to tell them about the Gospel.

20 Jesus Suffered in Hell

This heretical teaching with no Biblical evidence goes like this: When Jesus cried, “It is finished!” He was not speaking of the plan of redemption. Jesus’ death on the cross was only the beginning of the complete work of redemption. He went to hell to suffer the same torment we would have suffered if we were sent to hell. He paid the ultimate price, experiencing death to the ultimate degree.

This is pure fantasy.

The first obvious error with this doctrine of Jesus suffering in hell at the hands of demons comes from Jesus’ promise to the thief on the cross, “Truly I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43). That’s not a place of suffering.

The Bible does speak of Jesus going to the realm of the dead. Now that “He ascended”, what is it but that first He also descended into the lower parts of the earth (Ephesians 4:9). By whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison (1 Peter 3:19). There is a lot of disagreement about what these passages mean. The passage from 1 Peter is obscure and difficult. It seems that sometime between His death and ascension into heaven Christ went somewhere and proclaimed something to some spirits in prison.

Peter does not tell us what he means by “spirits” or

“prison” or by Christ’s going there. In a statement of faith called “The Apostles Creed” these words appear: “He descended into hell.” Christ certainly did not descend into hell to endure punishment. All His sufferings were ended on the cross (John 19:30). But it seems He went to the unseen realm of the dead. Peter does not use the Greek word which means preaching the gospel, but a word which means to proclaim something as a herald.

In Hebrew, the realm of the dead is called Sheol. In New Testament Greek, it is called Hades. We can come to some conclusions about whether or not Jesus was tormented in hell. From the story that Jesus told of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31), there is evidence of two compartments in Hades - the place where the righteous went (called Paradise or Abraham’s bosom) and the place where the unrighteous went (the place of torment also called Tartarus).

Chances are when Jesus went to Paradise with the thief on the cross, He was able to speak to those on the torment side - just like Abraham spoke with Lazarus. Certainly, He would have been able to speak to those on the Paradise side. In either case, He was not in a place of torment.

If you follow someone who teaches that Jesus suffered in hell, then you need to follow someone else. They are using sensationalism to convince you that they have special revelations from God so you will listen to them and possibly donate to their ministries.

21 You Can Speak Things into Existence

Sometimes, we need a miracle because we find ourselves in a desperate situation. At other times, we want a miracle so we can gain a lot of wealth, prestige, power, or sense of comfort and ease. How to get these things are offered by teachers in the secular, eastern religions, and some realms of Christianity. It might go by names such as Manifesting Miracles or Name it and Claim it or Seed Faith or The Power of Positive Thinking. They typically teach you to replace negative thoughts with positive thinking and speaking what you desire out loud so that your words create the reality you desire.

It is true that positive thinking is a powerful tool that can help you succeed in life. Positive thinking is not just about being optimistic or ignoring negative situations. It is about shifting your mindset to focus on the good in every situation and believing that good things are possible. A positive attitude can without doubt help you overcome obstacles and achieve your goals.

But the so called “Christian” version is on a whole different level. If you say something positive about yourself or someone else, it will come to pass. If you say something negative about yourself or someone else, “the enemy” will hear it and make it come to pass. In other words, what you say will directly control what will happen.

There are problems with this when someone teaches that you can use the “power of faith” to create your own reality or get what you want. In essence, faith is redefined from “a trust in God despite your circumstances” to “a way of controlling God to give you what you want.” Faith becomes a means by which you can receive health and satisfy your desires for the things of the world. Manipulating God is the attempt instead of being content with God’s provisions and patiently waiting on Him even during times of trials and suffering.

It is true that words you speak out loud will bring consequences. If you slander someone or praise someone, there will be a response. But to say, “I want such and such” or to say it this way, “Thank you God for giving me such and such,” when He hasn’t yet and He has yet to promise it is not true faith. It is a way that you think you can coerce God to do your bidding. The Bible says: Who is he who speaks, and it comes to pass, when the Lord has not commanded? (Lamentations 3:37) God is the only one who can speak things into existence. It is not something we, as human beings, have the power to do. God is not obligated to fulfill our desires based upon our spoken words.

Yes, Jesus in Mark 11:24 said, “Therefore I say to you, whatever you ask for when you pray, believe that you will receive it, and you will have it.” But Mark 11:24 is tempered by James 4:3: You ask, and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, that you may use it up on your desires. Similarly, in Matthew 7:9,10, Jesus said, “Or which one of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for fish, will he give him a serpent?” One would suppose this is a true corollary: “Or which one of you, if his son asks for stone to eat,

will give it to him? Or if he asks for a serpent to eat, will he give it to him?" Surely our heavenly Father will not give us things He knows are detrimental just because we spoke it out loud or asked in faith.

Consider this, you have an outdoor event planned on a farmer's property. There are dark clouds in the sky on the morning of the event. So, by faith, you speak, "It will not rain!" But that same farmer desperately needs rain for his crops. So he speaks, "It will rain all day today!" You can't both have your spoken word become reality.

If you follow this teaching you will live in fear – always afraid you might say the wrong thing and the enemy will use it against you. In an odd way, you are actually glorifying Satan because you are saying that he has unchecked power, even though the book of Job demonstrates otherwise.

You will also live in frustration because you aren't receiving what you are claiming.

Aside from that, you cannot speak something into existence that does not agree with God's will. Faith does not change God's ultimate plan. Faith is how you come to know God, how you live for Him, and how you share Him with others. Hebrews 11 highlights the stories of those who lived by faith and demonstrates that God uses human faith to execute His unchanging purposes. Ultimately, faith does not change God's will, but is the channel through which His will becomes reality in our lives. Your faith is not powerful because you have a positive attitude; your faith is powerful because you align your thoughts and desires with God's will for your life. Faith becomes the strongest when you understand what God wants from you, in

you, and through you and, even though it may seem impossible, you know He will do it.

The point is, quit trying to get God to do your will the way you want it, when you want it, and how you want it for your own desires and start asking God what He wants you to do, when He wants you to do it, and how He wants you to do it. When you make that adjustment, you will experience God in a more personal and powerful way.

22 God Wants Us

All to be Wealthy – Seed Faith

There are those who teach that God wants us all to be wealthy and the way to accomplish that is by Seed-Faith, a term they use to refer to our giving to God as a seed we sow, and not a debt we owe. They say God has a plan for your needs to be met.

When you sow your seed – give of your resources – you can expect that God sees your giving, and will multiply back to you what you have given, just as he promises in His word (Luke 6:38). You can talk to God about your specific need, as you give, trusting Him and releasing your faith for that need to be met.

Typically, the giving of your resources is inferred to be to the individual's ministry who is teaching this principle.

This is another attempt at coercing God. You don't have to "prime the pump" by giving first to someone's ministry. This is similar to telling God that if He will give you a bunch of money, you promise you will donate a lot of it to build a church. God will meet your need when you take it to Him in your prayer closet, unless of course your real motive is financial abundance to do whatever you want, when you want, and how you want.

Maybe you are coached to pray the prayer of Jabez: And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, "Oh, that You would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, and that Your hand might be with me, and that You would keep me from evil so that it does not grieve me!" And God granted him what he requested (1 Chronicles 4:10). But the focus you are coached to do is on "bless me indeed by enlarging my territory" when the real focus should be on keeping you from evil. Perhaps, you should be praying the prayer of Agur the son of Jakeh: Two things I have asked of You, LORD; do not refuse them to me before I die: Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but feed me with my allotted portion of food, or I may become full, and deny You, and say, "Who is the LORD" (Proverbs 30:7-9)?

Yes, there will be some whom God blesses financially, but in reality it is not in God's plan for everyone to be rich. In the Lord's prayer (or the model prayer if you prefer that term), Jesus teaches us to ask, "Give us day by day our daily bread" (Luke 11:3). He didn't say, "Fill our barns so they overflow."

Remember the rich man? "The ground of a certain rich man was very productive. And he thought to himself, saying, 'What will I do, because I have no room to store my crops?' And he said, 'I

will do this: I will pull down my barns and build bigger ones, and there store all my crops and goods. And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years. Take your ease, eat, drink, be merry.' But God said to him, 'You fool, this very night your soul will be demanded from you. Then who will have those things which you have provided?' This is what he is like who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich

toward God” (Luke 12:16-21).

To the angel of the church at Smyrna, Jesus said, “I know your works and tribulation and poverty (but you are rich) (Revelation 2:9). He commended them for their richness in spiritual things, yet He didn’t tell them He was going to relieve their financial stress. If anything, He suggested their poverty would continue.

To the church at Laodicea He said, “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, neither cold nor hot, I will spit you out of My mouth. Because you say, ‘I am rich, and have many possessions, and need nothing’, and do not know that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Revelation 3:15-17).

This idea that God wants us all to be wealthy really plays to the lustful desires of the flesh. It is also sad because it preys upon the needs of the poor and desperate. It tells the poor man who is barely making it or the wife whose husband is gravely ill to send money they can’t afford to waste to a charlatan (who is likely a multi-millionaire) who only wants their money and gives them a false hope that this deceiver wants them to think is on the behalf of God. If you don’t get the money or health you desired, the charlatan says it is your fault because you didn’t have enough faith.

Some teach: If you’re a tither, lender to the poor, an investor in the Gospel, and sower of praise offerings, there’s good news for you – you have a heavenly account full and ready for your use! Once you realize that you have these deposits in your heavenly account, you need to learn how to make withdrawals. When a man makes deposits with God, he has a right to call

upon these deposits and make withdrawals. These teachers even have a guide to teach you how to make withdrawals from your heavenly account.

This is such a terrible teaching. First because it reduces God to be your personal banker. Secondly, it is false because when you give it is repaid at the resurrection. Jesus said, "But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, for, because they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous" (Luke 14:13,14). Thirdly, when you give it is supposed to be a love offering, a gift to God. The doctrine of a heavenly bank account is not a love offering. It is the attitude of an investment for earthly desires.

Like with the rich man who wanted to tear down his barns, the teaching of a heavenly bank account from which you can withdraw is what he is like who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

Finally, it is a huge rejection of the concepts that 1) your Father who is in heaven gives good things to those who ask Him (Matthew 7:11); 2) you should cast all your care upon Him, for

He cares for you (1 Peter 5:7); 3) He will feed you and clothe you (Matthew 6:31-33-34); and 4) He knows what things you need, before you ask Him (Matthew 6:8). Why is this a rejection? Because it is the idea that your monetary works (which are but spiritually filthy rags) is what gives you the right and thus obligates heaven to give you money.

Furthermore, as part of this teaching, you are told: you have the authority in Jesus' Name to order Satan out of your financial affairs. This is your responsibility. Don't

ask God to do it. You do it in Jesus' Name.

And this is how you are coached to do it – by praying, “Devil, in the Name of Jesus, we take authority over you; we bind your operation now and render you helpless.” Yet Michael the archangel, when he contended with the devil, disputing about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him an abusive accusation, but said, “The Lord rebuke you” (Jude :9).

Also they teach: The Bible also says that angels hearken to the Word of God (see Psalms 103:20), so when you use the Word in the Name of Jesus, they are obligated to follow your command.

And this is how you are coached to do it – by praying, “Ministering spirits, we charge you to go forth and cause this amount to come to us according to Hebrews 1:14.” But, Psalms 103:20 says, “His angels, who excel in strength, who do what He says, listening to the voice of His word.” This is not the angels listening to your voice because you read something out loud from the Bible. This means they stand before the Lord, waiting for His orders; listening with great attention to what He says, and then readily execute it. Or it could be translated as, “at hearing the voice of His word”; that is, as soon as they hear the voice of His word, or hear Him speaking, they immediately perform it.

Hebrews 1:14 shows us that the angels are sent to serve those who will inherit salvation, those who are believers in Christ. Although we are not told here what service angels perform for us, Psalms 91:11 reveals God will give His angels orders concerning you, to protect you in all your ways.

There are no instances in Scripture where humans were

able to command angels, not even in Jesus' name or by quoting Scripture out loud. There are no passages in which man has control over the work that angels do. On the contrary, Hebrews 2:7 teaches that mankind was created a little lower than the angels. In God's hierarchy, angels outrank men. An angel, who stands before God, is not going to obey your command if God doesn't want you to have the purpose for which you are commanding His angels. Furthermore, they are God's angels, not yours.

This whole idea of having a heavenly bank account appears to be another attempt to convince you to give to someone's ministry. It plants the idea that you can give huge sums to them without worry, because if you ever need or even want that money back, all you have to do is command angels, bind Satan, and tell God you want your money back. It is completely void of love for God and the joy of giving.

Now, what about Luke 6:36 - "Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, men will pour into your lap. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you." Certainly this is true, but again what is the motive and who is the benefactor of your giving? In verse 35, Jesus says, "lend, hoping for nothing in return, and your reward will be great." In verse 35, it appears the benefactor is your enemies.

It would be wise to follow the advice Paul gave to Timothy, "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. So having food and clothing let us be content with that. But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful desires which drown men in

destruction and ruin. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. Some while coveting it have gone astray from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows (1 Timothy 6:6-10). People (including some Christians) may think that running after money is a very wise thing to do. But such people are terribly deceived, and are in the way that leads to destruction. Desire for riches is a trap laid by the devil, a temptation he puts to ruin us. This desire never brings contentment, but only increases as possessions increase and at last it leads to destruction.

The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil because it turns us away from God and spiritual matters to material things, and lets them have power over us. Love of money is actually hatred toward God. If we keep the command to love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind (Matthew 22:37) there will be no room in our hearts for the love of money. On the other hand if we allow the love of money to possess us there will be no room in our hearts for the love of God.

One of the sins (possibly the principal sin) that made Judas Iscariot like a demon was the love of money. If we have any spiritual understanding, any sense at all, would we want to follow that path? Running after money is the same as chasing after grief and misery. The rewards wealth gives its lovers are sadness, delusion, dissatisfaction, and eternal loss and ruin.

Christ's believers should desire to be rich not in material things but in spiritual. Only in these is their eternal benefit. Contentment is the result of confidence and trust in God. The way to contentment is believing that God has put us in the place and position and circumstances He knows are best for us and has given

us what He knows we should have, neither more nor less. Contentment will keep us from complaining, and from going after greedy desires. It will keep us from allowing material things to rule us. Contentment is a very important quality in a servant of Christ. Refusing to be content is the same as criticizing God's ways and His behavior toward us. It leads to the sin of murmuring against God. We should be content with food and clothing - the things that are really essential to life. Paul does not even speak of a house of one's own - possibly because one can live his whole life on earth without owning a house.

Every servant of Christ, every believer must flee from the temptation to go after money and property. If they do not they are likely to fall into the trap of the devil. Let every one of us turn our back to all of that and go after the true riches - the fruit of God's Spirit. If we do so we will not need to worry about the necessities of life, and will have contentment along with them.

23 Can our faith make us healthy all the time?

There are those who teach that we should always be healthy and if we aren't there is something wrong with our faith. This is a dangerous doctrine which can easily destroy the faith of suffering people.

Here's the reality. We get sick because we live in a fallen world. Sickness was experienced by God's great men in the Bible - now Elisha had fallen sick with his sickness of which he died (2 Kings 13:14). Elisha was a great prophet, a faithful man of God. He did miracles for others, but there was no miracle for him when he fell ill. He was a man of great faith and even in chapter 13 of 2 Kings while on his death bed, he is prophetically giving instructions to the king of Israel.

The Apostle Paul left Trophimus at Miletum sick (2 Timothy 4:20). Acts records numerous healings through Paul: the lame man at Lystra (Acts 14:8-10); special miracles by the hands of Paul, so that from his body handkerchiefs or aprons were taken to the sick, and the diseases left them, and the evil spirits went out of them (Acts 19:11-12); Publius' father and others on Malta (Acts 28:8-9). These events were by the power of the Holy Spirit, but they were always subject to God's will rather than Paul's whim. Scripture never portrays the gift of healing as completely under the control of the person that has the gift of healing. For instance, he or

she cannot go to the local hospital and heal everyone in the children's ward unless the Spirit leads – "The Spirit distributing to each one individually as He wills" (1 Corinthians 12:11). Trophimus's illness shows that even an apostle could not override God's timing. We should pray for the sick, employ medical expertise, trust God's timing, and recognize that God's glory is displayed both in miraculous deliverance and enduring faithfulness amid weakness.

Sometimes God allows sickness for His glory: And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Teacher, who sinned, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Not because either this man or his parents sinned, but that the works of God might be revealed in him" (John 9:2-3).

Now a certain man was sick. He was Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. It was this Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. Therefore his sisters sent word to Him, saying, "Lord, look, he whom you love is sick." When Jesus heard this, He said, "This sickness is not to death, but for the glory of God, that through it the Son of God might be glorified" (John 11:1-4).

Now, imagine a young mother loses a child to illness and when she asks the church leadership why did this happen and they respond, "Because you didn't have enough faith." Can you see how distraught this would leave her? She would think she was a failure to her child and to God for the rest of her life, when in reality, there was nothing wrong with her faith.

Be careful of the doctrines to which you adhere, especially if there is Biblical evidence to the contrary.

24 Speaking in Tongues

This is probably the most misunderstood of the spiritual gifts in today's church and the easiest one to counterfeit.

"Tongues" or "languages" - the Greek word (*glossai*) appears 50 times in the Greek New Testament. Eighteen times it refers to the physical tongue. The other times it means a known language. In Acts chapter 2 when the apostles spoke in tongues, they spoke ordinary human languages which they did not know themselves but which their hearers did know.

Is Paul using the word "tongues" in 1 Corinthians chapters 12-14 with a different meaning? Some think so and some think not. The matter has not been proved either way to the satisfaction of all believers (there are obscure expressions in Paul's language in chapter 14 which have tended to keep the matter in doubt). But would it not be strange for the word "tongues" to be used in one way everywhere else in the Bible and in a different sense only here in these chapters of 1 Corinthians? But whatever Paul means by the gift of tongues, he clearly teaches that not all believers have it any more than they all have gifts of healing or miraculous powers or any of the other gifts.

This gift is not a sign that a believer has been baptized or filled with God's Spirit, and it is not any more a manifestation of the Spirit in a person than any other

spiritual gift.

The “interpretation of tongues” is the ability given by God to understand the meaning of what is said in “tongues” and put it in words understood by the hearers.

Speaking in “tongues” would be more easily understood if it were translated speaking in “other languages”. This is evident from Acts 2:4,6-11 – they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them ability to speak ... Now when this sound was heard, a crowd came together, and was bewildered because everyone heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marveled and said to one another, “Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? Then how does each of us hear in our own language in which we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, Egypt, and the parts of Libya near Cyrene, and strangers from Rome, Jews and converts to Judaism, Cretans and Arabians, we hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.” The words spoken were in real languages that were clearly understood by those who were listening.

Some believe that the miracle in Acts 2 was in the hearing, that is: those speaking all did so in Hebrew (or Aramaic), but the listeners heard it in their own language. This is doubtful as the Scripture clearly says, “began to speak in other tongues.”

Because there are examples in the Bible where people spoke in tongues right after being saved, some teach that it is something that everyone must do or can do

once they are saved: While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all those who heard the Word, and all those believers who came with Peter, who were circumcised, were astonished, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speak in tongues and praise God (Acts 10:44-46). But there was a purpose for the church in this miracle.

Because of this, the Jewish believers recognized that the Holy Spirit had been given to these Gentiles. This immediate outward evidence was necessary to convince them that God had indeed poured out His Spirit on people other than Jews – a thing that had never happened before. The circumstances were very unusual, and so God gave them an immediate sign that it had happened, for God wanted these Gentile believers to be accepted by the Jewish believers.

Speaking in tongues here must mean the same as it did in Acts 2:4-11 – that is, speaking in foreign languages they had not learned. There is no indication whatever that this in any way differed from what the apostles did on the day of Pentecost. Cornelius and his relatives were Romans and their native tongue was Latin. They may have known a few words of Aramaic, Hebrew, or Greek, but suppose that with great fluency they suddenly began to speak one of these languages, or perhaps some other language with which the Jewish believers were familiar – this would have been the kind of convincing evidence they needed. They must have spoken in a language that the Jewish believers could recognize as a real language, or these believers would not have identified this speaking in tongues with the same ability exercised by the apostles. Some rush of sounds from their mouths which could not be recognized as a human language would not have been

the kind of evidence they needed.

On other occasions in the Bible, there was a requirement for an interpreter: If anyone speaks in an unknown tongue, it should be done by two, or, at the most, by three, and that by turn, and someone should interpret. But if there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church, and speak to himself and to God (Acts 14:27,28). The question is: is the language unknown by the one speaking, or is it the language of the one speaking in his native language, which is unknown to the Corinthians? Either way, since the Corinthians don't know his language, there must needs be an interpreter. If no one there can interpret, then he must remain silent.

The gift of tongues can include supernaturally learning or acquiring languages. Those with the gift of tongues, that is able to speak in other known languages, aligns with the event on the day of Pentecost where:

God broke down barriers

God brought people from different cultures into one family

God demonstrated that Christ is for all people

Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses; for we do not know how to pray as we should. But the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groans which cannot be expressed in words (Romans 8:26). These are comforting words because it lets us know that the groans of the Holy Spirit are an indication that He is greatly concerned for our spiritual welfare. He longs for our growth in holiness and wisdom, our conformity to the Lord Jesus. With unutterable desires He works to keep us from the pit of sin and the influence of Satan. He strives to make us strong and fruitful children of God. The Spirit's help and intercession are greatly

needed, for believers are themselves in utter weakness, and know neither how to pray or what to pray for as they ought. We can say that God's Spirit works in us to turn our weakness into strength (2 Cor 12:9-10). Because of Him when we are weak, we are strong.

Believers have two all-wise intercessors praying for them, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. And they have the all-powerful Father who listens to the prayers of these two Intercessors. They always pray in the will of God, so the Father always answers the prayers of the Son and the Spirit. The whole Trinity is at work to help believers in their weakness and to enable them to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Having said this, if the Spirit intercedes in groans that cannot be expressed in words, then why do we think we can verbalize His groans? And of what use is it even if we are able to verbalize His groans? How could we expect anyone to interpret what the Bible says are groans that cannot be expressed in words?

If you are alone, and you speak in an unknown tongue, of what value is that to you? How do you know if the words you speak are inspired by the Holy Spirit or a demonic being? How can you be certain you are expressing praise to God or admiration to Satan? If the possibility that your unknown words or those by a church leader during a service may be demonic seems impossible, consider this experience as told by an evangelist:

Evangelist: A pastor told me he spoke in tongues, so I told him to get down on his knees and we would test his tongue to see if it was a demon.

Pastor: What do you mean?

Evangelist: The Bible says to test the spirits so I'm going to test your tongue.

Pastor: Well, I can't do it whenever I want.

Evangelist: Then I know you have a demon because the Bible says the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.

At this point, the pastor began to speak in tongues.

Evangelist: Spirit, I command you in the name of Jesus to profess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh.

The pastor continues to speak in unintelligible gibberish.

Evangelist: Spirit, I command you in the name of Jesus to profess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh in English.

Pastor: Hell no!

If someone speaks in an unknown tongue in church, how do you know if he is glorifying God, cursing you by demons, or just speaking gibberish to impress everyone? And should someone interpret, how do you know if he is accurately interpreting or just making something up? A preacher told about a time he visited a church that practiced speaking in tongues. Knowing New Testament Greek, he spoke a few words knowing exactly what it meant, and then waited until a supposed interpreter stood up and told the translation. The result was the interpretation was wrong. The real problem wasn't the wrong translation, the real problem was that someone stood up to give a translation when he did not have the gift of interpreting an unknown tongue. Very possibly, this interpreter had stood on many occasions and translated the unknown tongues of others. After all, who would know that he was just making something up? But the fact that he did suggests this congregation was accustomed to him doing so and never doubted his words. This demonstrates how easy it is to impress an audience by one or more people who are counterfeits.

Since most of the teaching on unknown tongues comes from Paul's letter to the Corinthians, it is worth a few moments to see the geopolitical background for this church. Ancient Corinth was a city in Greece. Modern Corinth is 5 kilometers (3.1 miles) northeast from the ruins of the old city. It was a place of international commerce. Corinth had two harbors: Lechaemum on the Corinthian Gulf and Cenchreae on the Saronic Gulf. Lechaemum was the principal port. It was the main trading station for Italy and Sicily. Cenchreae conducted the commerce with the Eastern Mediterranean. Corinth would be a natural place for foreigners to attend church, even if they didn't know the Greek language.

The way church service was conducted was different than the way most congregations do in today's world. Here, typically the service begins with a few songs. There may be a Scripture reading, announcements, responsive reading, recitation of the Lord's prayer and the Apostles' Creed. Then comes a sermon and maybe communion and a baptism. There might be an invitation to come to the altar. The major theme is the service is centrally controlled by a pastor and possibly co-led by a worship leader or minister of music.

This does not appear to have been the pattern which is revealed in Paul's letter: How is it then, brethren? When you meet together, each one of you has a psalm, or has a teaching, or has a tongue, or has a revelation, or has an interpretation. All things should be done to edify. If anyone speaks in an unknown tongue, it should be done by two, or, at the most, by three, and that by turn, and someone should interpret, but if there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church, and speak to himself and to God. Let the prophets speak, two or three of them, and let the others judge

what is said. If anything is revealed to someone else sitting there, the first speaker should be silent. For you may all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn, and all may be encouraged. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints ... Let all things be done decently and in order (1 Corinthians 14:26-33,40).

The church at Corinth gave the opportunity for those who were moved by the Holy Spirit to speak. This part of the service was not centrally controlled by a pastor. Because the church at Corinth was founded by the Apostle Paul, it only stands to reason that he taught them their order of worship and that he taught the same to every church he founded. Thus, when a visitor came, they would know when the opportunity availed itself to speak, even if they didn't know the language. (This is no different from today if the church you attend uses the same pattern. You know when to stand, sit, or kneel even if the leader forgets to instruct you to do so.) If non-Greek speakers were to participate at Corinth, they would need someone to interpret their words so the congregation could understand them. If no one could interpret their unknown tongue, they were to remain silent.

There are churches that follow this pattern today. Time is given for those who have a message from the Holy Spirit to speak after which the pastor delivers his sermon.

Now, suppose at your church a group of people arrive that do not speak your native language and no one in your church speaks theirs. Also, place this in the framework of the worship service model in Corinth. The only way that communication can be accomplished

with these visitors (aside from an internet app) would be for the Holy Spirit to give someone the gift of tongues to speak the unknown tongue of the visitors or to give one of the visitors the supernatural ability to speak your native language.

Another possibility would be for the pastor to miraculously speak their unknown tongue while delivering his sermon and then someone else is given the gift of interpretation so he can translate the pastor's unknown tongue into your native language. If the Holy Spirit does not gift someone with the ability to translate the unknown tongue, then the visitors would remain silent during the service. This manifestation of tongues is how it would have occurred in Corinth. It is nothing like what is performed today.

Regardless of how tongues manifests, Scripture insists: It must edify (improve) the church (1 Corinthians 14:12).

It must not create confusion because God is not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33).

It must be exercised with interpretation in public (1 Corinthians 14:27).

It must not elevate some believers over others (1 Corinthians 12:21).

Tongues is not a mark of spiritual superiority nor is it the best gift: I wish you all spoke with tongues, but would prefer that you prophesied. For he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may be edified (1 Corinthians 14:5). Paul is not at all minimizing the gift of tongues. He himself taught that it was a manifestation of God's Spirit for the good of the Church (1 Corinthians 12:7,10) and wrote do not forbid speaking in tongues (1 Corinthians 14:39). But Paul is writing about the misuse of this gift.

Speaking in tongues feels dramatic; but drama doesn't equate with holiness. God's Spirit is in the world, but so are evil spirits. These evil spirits influence men to teach false doctrines and may also speak through them. So we must not believe every person who claims to teach the truth, or every spirit which speaks through men. One test is: We are of God. He who knows God listens to us, but he who is not of God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error (1 John 4:6). John means true teachers of God's Word, those whom God has sent. Real believers (those who know God) listen to them, recognize them as men of God and obey their teaching. If you admire someone because they speak in tongues, but that person speaks in church without an interpreter, then beware! This person is not obeying God's Word, and thus whatever they are saying is suspect.

25 Prophets

Many say the gift of prophecy no longer exists based upon this verse: But if there are prophecies, they will fail; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be ended (1 Corinthians 13:8-10).

The rationale is two-fold:

First, it is said that the gift of prophecy was an apostolic sign and with the passing of the apostles, the gift passed with them. But, 1 Corinthians 12:28,29 teaches that prophets were given to the church and were separate and distinct from the apostles.

Second, some scholars think Paul means those gifts will pass away at the completion of the New Testament (“that which is perfect”) – until then the gifts (the imperfect) were needed because the Church did not have God’s full revelation of truth. Afterwards the gifts were not needed and so passed away. They think the gifts were useful only during the childhood of the Church (1 Corinthians 13:11), but not now during the times of its maturity. This interpretation seems unlikely. 1 Corinthians 13:12 seems to put the time of “what is perfect” at the end of this age, or when believers are face to face with Christ in heaven, and not at the completion of the New Testament. The time of “perfection” is a time when they shall “know” even as Christ now knows them. This did not take place at the

completion of the New Testament.

(It is noteworthy that knowledge has not passed away, then why should have prophecy and tongues?)

Some redefined the gift of prophecy in the modern age to be the role of pastors and that the delivery of prophecy went from telling of new doctrinal revelations to forth-telling of Scriptures. But in Ephesians 4:11, Paul identifies pastors and prophets as two separate and distinct positions in the church for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ.

Also some claim the gift of prophecy no longer exists because all revelation has been given in the Bible. Yet, this seems to be a fundamental misunderstanding of the role of prophets. Prophets in Acts provided guidance from the Holy Spirit. They gave warnings, encouragement, and direction to the early church. Paul explicitly wrote: But he who prophesies speaks to men for their edification and encouragement and comfort (1 Corinthians 14:3).

And one of them, named Agabus, stood up and indicated by the Spirit that there would be a great famine throughout the whole world. This came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar (Acts 11:28).

And as we stayed on there many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. And when he had come to us, he took Paul's belt, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'So the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles'" (Acts 21:10,11).

The deacon Philip had four daughters, virgins, who prophesied. (Acts 21:8,9) Their names are not given and none of their prophecies are listed. Had they provided doctrinal revelation, it would have certainly been mentioned.

An example of prophecy in the modern era comes from the New Hebrides Islands off the west coast of Scotland. A revival occurred there from 1949-1952 after two sisters, Peggy and Christine Smith, had prayed fervently. During the time of the revival, Peggy sent for Duncan Campbell, the minister God used to lead the revival, and asked him to go to a small, isolated village to hold a meeting. As they knelt together in the cottage, Peggy prayed, "Lord, You remember what You told me this morning, that in this village You are going to save seven men who will become pillars in the church of my fathers." Duncan arrived in the village at seven o'clock and found a large bungalow crowded to capacity with many assembled outside.

When he had finished preaching, a minister beckoned him to the end of the house to speak again to a number of people who were mourning over their sins - among them, Peggy's seven men.

The problem with much of the prophecy today is not with the gift, but rather with the prophet. Many self-proclaimed prophets are not God's prophets, but are instead prophets in their own minds or wolves in sheep clothing.

Someone may say to you, "I have a word from the Lord for you," and then tell you something. Maybe they have a word from the Lord or maybe they don't. Or they may appear before your church and say, "I have a word from the Lord for your church." Maybe they do or

maybe they don't. You should use extreme caution before accepting their "word from the Lord for you." You should really be cautious when a prophet tells you to sell everything you have and move to another location or says something that casts doubts about your marriage. And, because we have the indwelling Holy Spirit, we should never seek a prophet to ask him/her about a life altering decision or any decision for that matter you are attempting to make.

If someone has told you they have a word from God for you and it doesn't seem right or troubles you, that is most likely spiritual discernment. The Holy Spirit is telling you something is wrong. Discernment is not the ability to discern between right and wrong; it's the ability to discern between right and almost right.

How do you know if you should trust someone who claims to be a prophet? When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not happen or take place, the LORD has not spoken that word, but the prophet has spoken it presumptuously. You must not be afraid of him (Deuteronomy 18:22).

If the prophet tells you to do something or believe something other than what is written in the Bible, do not obey that prophet.

If you are following the teaching of a false prophet, you will find yourself being slowly turned and twisted until one day, you find yourself tied in a tight knot. You won't know how you get there and you won't know how to free yourself. It is so important to study the Bible and spend time in prayer so you know the truth because the truth will set you free.

The best way to avoid being tied in a knot is to remove

yourself from under the influence of a false prophet. But then, you have to recognize one. Here are some tips:

False prophets say they speak for God, but they lie: Then the LORD said to me, "The prophets prophesy lies in my name. I did not send them, and I have not given commands to them or spoken to them. They prophesy to you a false vision and divination, and a worthless thing, and the deceit of their heart" (Jeremiah 14:14). Oh, how eager some are to have the title of prophet and how they run and deceive themselves and others! True prophets are often much more reluctant to go and speak. False prophets in their proud hearts may accept their own thoughts and ideas as divinely inspired. Or because their hearts are deceitful they knowingly prophesy false things. Through these three ways – false vision, worthless divination, and prophecies from deceitful hearts – much that is false in religion has gone out into the world, and still goes out.

False prophets give false hope: They lightly heal the hurt of the daughter of my people, saying, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace (Jeremiah 6:14). Many so-called prophets in order to fill their pockets will tell the people what they want to hear.

Zechariah ties the relationship of false prophets and shepherds (pastors): For the idols speak falsehood, and the diviners see a lie, and tell false dreams; they comfort in vain. Therefore the people go their way like sheep; in trouble, because there is no shepherd (Zechariah 10:2). Although there is a distinction between prophets and pastors, many pastors claim to be a prophet or to have divine knowledge or revelations. Therefore, you should closely examine what your spiritual mentors are telling you. Their false hope can feel like comfort, but disaster

is looming.

Peter ties false prophets and teachers together. Some teachers either claim divine inspiration or study and follow those who are false prophets/pastors/teachers. False prophets bring in destructive heresies and they are driven by greed and pride. But there were false prophets also among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways. Because of them the way of truth will be slandered and because of greed they will make merchandise of you with fabricated teachings (2 Peter 2:1-3).

Very cleverly they try to gain the confidence of Christians before introducing their false teachings. They mix truth with error so the false is more appealing and attractive. Many of them are pastors and teachers and professors and bishops accepted by churches and denominations. False teachings destroy the souls of individuals and whole churches. Religious lies are very deadly. Satan's first one (Genesis 3:4) plunged mankind into ruin. His followers keep many people there. Some false teachers deny Christ. This may mean they deny His deity or that they deny the necessity of His sacrifice. But they will call themselves Christians, and their denials may be subtle and sly. False prophets may act like they care, but in reality they care nothing for God's people or for the church. Their religious activity is not for God or for others, but for their own gain. Like Judas, they will sell anyone for money.

False Prophets are bold, arrogant, greedy, lustful, and slaves of corruption. But these people, as natural brute

beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand. And they will utterly perish in their own corruption, and will receive the consequences of unrighteousness as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are blots and blemishes, delighting themselves with their own deceitfulness while they feast with you. Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin, they entice unstable souls. They have a heart exercised with greedy practices. They are cursed children who have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness (and was rebuked for his wickedness. The dumb donkey speaking with man's voice prohibited the madness of the prophet). These people are wells without water clouds that are carried about by a storm. The blackness of darkness is reserved for them forever. For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much shamelessness, those who had completely escaped from those who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a man that same thing brings him into bondage (2 Peter 2:12-19).

Many times these false prophets fill the pulpit, electronic media, and huge auditoriums as pastors, co-pastors, and teachers. They are not humble enough to admit they are ignorant of anything. In their arrogance they speak evil of glorious truth beyond their understanding. Such people have no more spiritual understanding than animals. The satisfaction of bodily desire is all they want. They may pride themselves on their ability to reason, but behave as if they had none. They look at every attractive woman with lust and think how they might seduce her. They sin continually

in thought, desire and deed. They are utterly selfish, totally inconsiderate of others. False teachers and false prophets are for hire. They go after money or other worldly advantages, and are willing to teach what people want to hear. They appear promising on the outside but are empty of spiritual life. They profess to belong to God but are without God's Spirit. The ungodly are often great boasters. These evil teachers want to gain control over those who show an interest in the gospel, or who are new Christians, and try to corrupt them. Slaves to money and to lust, they sometimes stand and preach freedom to others – the freedom to be enslaved as they are.

False prophets do not appear as evil people. They are charismatic, charming, and can smile while they lie to you. Again, study your Bible, learn your Bible. Ask God for answers to your difficult questions.

26 Conclusion

It is so easy to forget we are engaged in a spiritual war. We are constantly at odds with our flesh, the world, and the wiles of the devil. Believers have a very clever enemy who is determined to defeat them and who is always plotting their downfall. It's a battle for your mind. The devil will use emotional stimulation and false teachers to sidetrack and distract your walk with Jesus.

He will attempt to fill your mind with wrong views about the gospel and Christian doctrine.

His favorite tactics are to get you to believe that the Bible or the translation you use is not dependable, deny the deity of Christ, twist the Scriptures to mean something other than what was intended, create false religions, introduce false doctrines, separate you from a Bible believing church, make you dissatisfied with your material possessions, induce a desire for power, pride, and prestige.

The other thing the devil does is to appeal to your heart. Here is an ally of his for the Bible says, "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can know it?" Every human being has a sinful nature, a heart prone to follow evil, a nature spiritually sick. A heart that gets offended easily. A heart that wants to be the center of attention. A heart that wants revenge. A heart that gets angry at the slightest offense.

No man fully understands its moral sickness, its deceitfulness, its depravity. They can think well of themselves even after breaking the most important commands in the Word of God.

Many times, the devil attempts to influence you through people who appear to be godly, but are false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves (Matthew 7:15). The Lord tells us to watch out for false prophets because they may not be obvious. They may have the appearance of genuine servants of God (sheep's clothing), but they are servants of Satan. Their teaching and ways are destructive. They are like wolves, the natural enemies of sheep. Their fruit (their teaching and their activities which are a result of their teaching) will reveal what they are, and the disciples of Christ who have discernment will know what they are. Their nature will be manifested in what they say and do not say, in what they do and do not do. If they continually bear bad fruit they cannot be good trees.

The warning to watch out for false prophets comes just after Jesus' exhortation to enter the narrow way. They will be polite. Their church will boast friendliness. They will foster a sense of family. All those things sound good, but false prophets will teach things contrary to the teachings of the Lord Jesus. They will present other ways and will try to keep people from entering the narrow way and keep you from growing and being conformed into the image of Christ. They will steal your joy and have you substitute your good works of gold, silver, and precious stones that you are currently doing with works of wood, hay, and stubble that will burn up. They will promise you miracles that will never arrive. They will leave you frustrated and spiritually bankrupt.

Therefore, you are instructed to take for yourselves the

whole armor of God that you may be able to resist them in the evil day and, having done everything, to stand. Stand, therefore, having your waist girded with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet fitted with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Above all, take the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying always in the Spirit with all kinds of prayers and requests, and being alert for this with all perseverance and requests for all saints (Ephesians 6:11-18). And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God (Romans 2:2).

For each individual believer there will come special times of temptation and trials when unseen evil authorities will make special efforts to defeat him or her. We can never know when those evil days may come, and so must have God's armor on every day. Without any warning, very suddenly Satan may strike at us. We cannot be passive spectators on this spiritual battleground and hope to participate in the victory. We must stand and fight against all evil powers, unshaken in faith and loyalty to Christ, with unfailing courage and determination to fight and win. If we do not, the battle for us is almost lost before it begins.

Holding right views about the gospel and Christian doctrine, important as this is, is not enough to give us the victory over the devil. Without prayer we will be without spiritual strength in the battle against Satan. We should be yielded to God and directed by Him in our praying. No person is greater than his or her prayer life.

Believers are to be “transformed” into the likeness of Christ. Transformation is an inner work of God’s Spirit. Believers are to do more than outwardly avoid the ways of the world – their inner life also is to be altogether different. This takes place by the “renewing” of their minds. Thoughts are extremely important. To a very large extent they will govern how believers behave.

The only way to live a transformed life is to keep our thoughts under control and have our minds filled with God’s truth. We are to love God with all our mind. This is the “renewal” we need. Those who will not give themselves to God, and who do not cooperate with God’s Spirit in the work of inner transformation, will be tossed this way and that and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery and cunning craftiness of men in their deceitful plotting (Ephesians 4:14).

If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house, and do not greet him. For he who greets him shares in his evil deeds (2 John 1:10,11). Evil deeds is what teaching contrary to Christ’s teaching really is. In fact, it is some of the most evil work possible to men. Believers must have no share in it, or seem to have a share in it, or help it in any way. We should not receive them into our house through the internet, television, radio, their books, or their magazines. We should not even greet them. If we do, we place ourselves in danger, and give the impression to others that their teaching may not be so bad after all. If we shouldn’t even greet them, then how much worse is it if we become members of their organizations or donate to their ministries!

What about you? Do you know your Bible well enough to spot the wolves in sheep clothing and their deceitful

doctrines? Have you wandered from church, from truth, and from God? Have you accepted a false doctrine without studying it? Are you following someone because he or she has charisma and tells things people want to hear rather preaching against sin and for holy living? Are you following someone because that's what your parents did? Having read this book, where do you go from here?

Do you know someone who is straying or who has asked questions that were discussed in this book? Then share what you have learned with them or have them download a copy from the Grace Ministries India website: <https://gmindiaonline.com>