

Testing the pirits

**AN INVESTIGATION
OF VARIOUS
SYSTEMS OF BELIEF
AND
PRACTICE**

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

1 John 4:1



***Compiled and Prepared
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INTRODUCTION

THIS IS A STUDY that will hopefully prove to be very valuable to all who invest the proper time and effort. For some, it will undoubtedly prove unpopular. This is an investigation into some of the world's different systems of religious belief, and not all appreciate or enjoy such studies. Many are afraid of offending another with the truth of the Bible. The thought of showing the error of another's system of belief is considered (by some) arrogant. Some would call such an endeavor, "insensitive" or "intolerant."

Let it be clearly understood at the outset, it is not our intent to be arrogant. Our purpose is not to be insensitive or intolerant. This not about making fun of anybody's beliefs. Our goal is to understand better the teachings of God's word, and to equip ourselves in the defense of His truth. If that happens to offend another, but ultimately leads to their acceptance of the truth, then maybe we need more studies of this nature! The apostle Paul said the preaching of the cross was offensive to some, but that did not stop him from boldly preaching Jesus Christ and Him crucified (1 Cor. 1:23). Jesus Christ is offensive to many people in the world (cf. 1 Pet. 2:8), should we no longer preach the gospel message?

We should be reminded that there is scriptural precedent and instruction for investigating, and if need be, exposing false religious beliefs:

I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are **some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.**

Galatians 1:6-7

As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus so that you may **instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines**, nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith.

1 Timothy 1:3-4

Holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to **exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.**

Titus 1:9

But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be **false teachers** among you, **who will secretly introduce destructive heresies**, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.

2 Peter 2:1

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but **test the spirits** to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

1 John 4:1

Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you **contend earnestly for the faith** which was once for all handed down to the saints.

Jude 3

Consider some of the language used in those texts in regards to the presentation and defense of the truth:

- ✓ **Instruct**
- ✓ **Refute**
- ✓ **Exhort**
- ✓ **Contend**
- ✓ **Test**

The reason for these strong words is that there are those who will:

- ✓ **Disturb**
- ✓ **Distort**
- ✓ **Deny**
- ✓ **Contradict**
- ✓ **Destroy**

In this study, we are going to “test the spirits” as we carefully examine some of the world’s religions in view of the Holy Scriptures. We will instruct, refute, and contend for the truth. When these various religions and systems of belief are held up to the word of God, will they pass the test? In our first lesson, we will even put some of our own beliefs to the test.

This material comes from a variety of different sources. Much of it I have written and/or collected, based on my own personal studies. The two lessons on Islam were written by another. The author for that section is appropriately noted.

More than just a detailed Bible study, this material is designed to be collective resource. It is a tool you can use when trying to understand the religious beliefs of another, as well as your own.

John Buttrey II

LESSON ONE

FINDING THE TRUE STANDARD

DRIVING THROUGH ANY CITY one is bound see any number of church buildings. Most of all of them have different names on the sign. With all these different names, one would think there must be differences (great or small) in belief. Indeed, there are many differences! But are the differences really all that important? Does it really matter which “church” one attends?

There is the thought among some, that one church is as good as another; that they’re all pretty much the same. This is a false belief. Did you know, not all religious groups (churches) believe Jesus is God? That’s a big difference! Did you also know, that not all believe He is God’s *only* Son? That too, could be considered a major difference. On and on we could go, listing various and significant differences. The fact is, it does matter what one believes (cf. Rom. 10:2). It matters *greatly* what one practices (Lev. 10:1-3; 1 Sam. 15:22ff; Js. 2:19). Our beliefs and practices must be consistent with God’s book.

This is a study on the beliefs and practices of the various religions of the world. We will investigate each to see if they are consistent with the word of God. Each will go through a four-fold test to determine the truth or error of the particular system of belief. This four-fold test will be explained later in this lesson.

As a starting point for our study, we want to review some important truths about *the one true church*—Christ’s church. Yes, there is only one TRUE church. Unfortunately, this is a thought that is not very popular in the “religious world.” Such a thought seems politically incorrect and intolerant. However, it is what the Bible teaches (Eph. 4:4ff).

The recent *Promise Keepers* movement emphasized the need for “religious unity” despite doctrinal differences. For example, Bill McCartney, founder of the movement said in a *Promise Keepers* event:

There’s only one criterion for this kind unity: to love Jesus and be born of the Spirit of God. Can we look one another in the eye... Baptist, Presbyterian, Assemblies of God, Catholic, and so on—and get together on this common ground: “We believe in salvation through Christ alone, and we have made Him the Lord of our lives”? Is that not the central, unifying reality of our existence? And if it is, can we not focus on that and call each other brother instead of always emphasizing our differences?¹

That’s a nice sounding idea, but the problem is, there are some *serious doctrinal differences*, which must keep us, truly, from calling one another “brother.” The apostle Paul went to the synagogues of the first century to preach Jesus to the Jewish people of that day and time. Was Paul being insensitive, divisive, or intolerant? If doctrinal differences did not matter, why preach Jesus to them?

¹ Bill McCartney, *Seven Promises of a Promise Keeper* (Colorado Springs, CO: Focus on the Family, 1994), 161-162.

As mentioned earlier, it does matter what one believes and practices! The apostle John encouraged his readers and us today to “test the spirits... because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 Jn. 4:1). In this study, we will follow the apostolic instruction to “test the spirits.” Doing so will clearly reveal that we cannot in full truth call everyone “brother” simply because they believe in Jesus. James tells us “demons believe” (Js. 2:19); yet, when was the last time you called a demon, “brother”?

The Church: Built Upon the Rock

We should begin our study by defining the word “church.” If you were to look in a dictionary for a definition of the word “church” you would probably find a number of different ideas. The word “church” today is often defined as being “a building for the purpose of religious activities.” In another way, “the church” is what might be called “the hierarchy” of a religious group. However, each of these ideas are contrary to the Biblical usage of the word. When Jesus said He was going to build His church He was not talking about a building; nor was He describing the formation of a “religious hierarchy.”

The word “church” that we find in our New Testaments comes from the Greek word *ekklesia*, which literally means, “to call out.” This is a word which was used to describe a gathering or assembly of people. In Acts 17:38 *ekklesia* was used to describe Israel in the wilderness as *a congregation*. In simple terms, *ekklesia* speaks of people, not buildings. When Jesus said He would build His church, He was talking about *calling out* (assembling, gathering) His *people*.

With a better understanding of the meaning of the word *church*, it is important for us to closely consider what Jesus said about the building of *His* church. The gospel of Matthew describes the context in which Jesus made such a prophetic declaration.

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” And they said, “Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.” He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter answered, **“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”** And Jesus said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. “I also say to you that **you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church;** and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.” Then He warned the disciples that they should tell no one that He was the Christ.

Matthew 16:13-20

Jesus tells Peter, “Upon this rock I will build My church.” Upon which rock did Jesus mean? Some might take it to mean this planet; earth as a rock. But, while it is true the church was established upon *this rock*, such an understanding fails to capture the real truth of this promise. There are those who believe Peter was the rock; and that upon Peter, Jesus would build His church. This is sometimes used in an attempt to justify Peter as being the first Pope. This teaching has no scriptural support. Nowhere in the Bible is Peter called “the Pope.” The Bible even tells us Peter was married (Matt. 8:14; 1 Cor. 9:5), which would (according to Catholic doctrine) disqualify him for such a position.

So what then is the rock? In the Greek text, there is a word play that is not obvious in our English translations. The word play takes place between the words Peter and rock; which is why some have been led to the conclusion that Peter is the rock. Notice the differences between the two words.

| English | Greek |
|--------------|---|
| <i>Peter</i> | <i>Petros</i> (a detached piece of stone) |
| <i>Rock</i> | <i>Petra</i> (a large mass of rock) |

Although these two Greek words are similar, clearly there is a difference between them. **Peter** (*Petros*) was but a small detached piece of a much larger **rock** (*petra*). Thus, the rock could not be Peter himself. What is the rock? It is the great confession, which Peter made on this occasion. Peter said to Jesus, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” It was upon this great *rock-solid* truth that Jesus would build His church. It was this truth that qualified Him to build the church. Notice how this truth is confirmed in other scriptures.

For no man can lay a **foundation** other than the one which is laid, which is **Jesus Christ**.

1 Corinthians 3:11

[The church] having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ **Jesus Himself being the corner stone**,

Ephesians 2:20 (addition in brackets for clarification)

Jesus said to them, “Did you never read in the Scriptures, ‘**The stone which the builders rejected**, This became the chief corner stone; This came about from the Lord, And it is marvelous in our eyes’?”

Matthew 21:42 (cf. Ps. 118:22)

He is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, but which became **the chief corner stone**.

Acts 4:11

The New Testament reveals the truth that the rock upon which Christ’s church was built, was the truth of who He was, the Son of God (cf. Jn. 1:1-3, 14; 3:16). Homer Hailey notes:

The fact of Christ’s divinity, the fact that he is indeed and in truth the Son of God, is the rock which will never be removed or destroyed. Death itself can never overthrow that truth; even though Christ might go into the world of Hades, he could “not be holden of it.” Death could never prevail. Paul told the elders of the church at Ephesus, “Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood: (Acts 20:28).²

² Homer Hailey, *Hailey’s Comments Vol. 2* (Las Vegas, NV: Nevada Publications, 1985), 514-515.

The ONE True Church

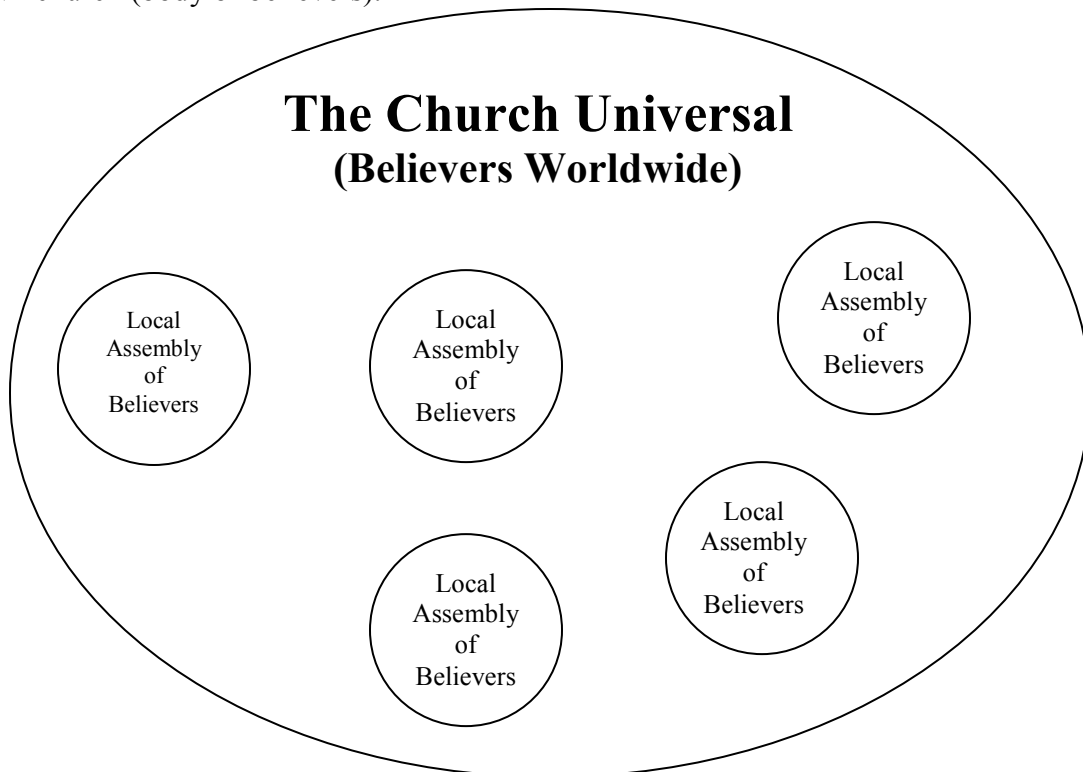
Jesus told Peter and the other disciples, “I will build My church” (Matt. 16:18). Jesus did not say He would build “churches” (plural). There is only assembled group of His people. There can be only one true church. There is only one *called out* body of people. Paul states this fact very clearly:

There is **one body** and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling;

Ephesians 4:4

Combining the words of Paul with those of Jesus it should not be hard to see that there is (according to the Bible) only ONE *true* church. The ONE *true* church is built upon the rock. Any church built upon a man is not built on the rock; and is thus not the ONE *true* church. Entrance into the ONE *true* church is by following God’s plan of salvation (Mk. 16:15-16; John 3:16; Acts 2:38; Rom. 10:17). Any group of people who do not teach God’s full plan of salvation are not a part of the ONE *true* church (cf. Gal 1:6-9; Jude 3).

In describing the ONE *true* church we are not saying there is only one local group of people who constitute the saved. Remember, the word church refers to the called out people. There are many *called-out* members of Christ’s church currently living in various places throughout the world. This world-wide body of believers is sometimes referenced as “the church universal.” The worldwide body of believers never *physically* assembles together to worship God. The worship and work of the church is accomplished in various local congregations. For example, there are MANY local churches of Christ, but only ONE church (body of believers).



ONE universal church, MANY local assemblies.

The Organization of the Church

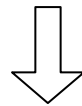
It is important to understand that the church universal has *no* earthly organization. That is to say, there is no universal eldership. Other than Christ as the head of the church, the universal church has no earthly organization. In this same way, the universal church has no universal combined and coordinated work. The organization and work of the church is all accomplished at the local level. This is the pattern established in the New Testament. Elders were established in each local congregation (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). The following chart outlines the *local* organization of each church.

Organization of the Church

Head of Christ (1 Cor. 11:3)

God

Supreme (1 Cor. 15:24-27)

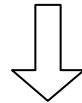


All Authority (Isa. 9:6ff; Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1:20-23)

Christ

Head, King, Lord, Master

1. Legislative
2. Executive
3. Judicial

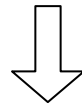


Delegated Authority (Matt. 16:19; 18:18; 19:28; 2 Cor. 5:20)

Apostles

Ambassadors

1. Bind
2. Loose
3. Deliver H.S. instructions

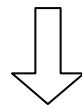


Delegated Authority (Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5, 7; 1 Pet. 5:1-3; Heb. 13:17)

Elders

Bishops, Pastors, Rulers
(Local church only)

1. Oversee
2. Rule
3. Superintend



Evangelist

Preach the Word
(1 Tim. 4:1-3).
No authority

Deacons

Appointed Servants
(1 Tim. 3:8-13).
No authority

Members

Faithful Service
(1 Cor. 15:58; Eph. 4:11-16).
No authority

A Four-Point Pattern for Testing

Over the course of our study, we will be comparing some of the world's religions to the ONE TRUE church as taught in the Bible. In doing so we will apply a four point test.

1. Authority:

What is their source of authority? Is it the Bible? If so, is the Bible the only source of divine authority? If not, it is not the true church (1 Cor. 4:6; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Jude 3).

2. Doctrine:

What do they believe and practice, and are those beliefs and practices consistent with the Bible? If not, it is not the true church (1 Tim. 4:1-3).

3. Organization:

Is the organization of the religious group consistent with the Bible? If not, it is not the true church (Acts 14:23; Eph. 1:20-22; Titus 1:5).

4. Lordship of Christ:

Is Christ exalted as Lord? Remember, the TRUE church was founded upon the great confession, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God." If not built upon this sure foundation, it is not the true church (cf. 1 Jn. 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 Jn. 7).

If *any* of these four areas of testing shows a negative response, the particular religion should be rejected. In some cases, a religious faith might be positive in three of the areas; and while that might be encouraging, unless *all four* are met with a positive response it does not pass the test—it has failed.

Questions:

1. Why is it important to test the teachings of other religions?
2. Does it *really* matter what a person believes? Isn't believing in God enough?
3. With what should we test the beliefs of the world's religions?
4. How do we know the Bible is an accurate standard for "testing the spirits"?
Give some verses to support your answer.
5. Memorize the four point pattern for testing.

LESSON TWO

CATHOLICISM

ONE OF THE WORLD'S LARGEST RELIGIONS, it is safe to say that many of us have friends or family who are Catholic. That said, let us be reminded, that our intent in each of these lessons is not to be arrogantly cruel and insensitive to them. We are only seeking to fairly and honestly compare their beliefs to the standard of God's word. Truthfully, we can only hope that they would seek to do the same (Acts 17:11). If one's beliefs are consistent with the word of God, there should be no fear of honestly testing them.

History

We will begin our study of the Catholic church with a brief history of its beginning, and then examine some of its many doctrines.

The Catholic church arose out of an apostasy in the early New Testament church. When Christ's church was established, the worship and organization were simple. Worship consisted of a weekly observance of the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:20ff); singing without musical accompaniment (Eph. 5:19); giving financially for the work of the church and benevolent needs of the brethren (1 Cor. 16:1ff); and teaching the word (2 Tim. 2:2). In the same manner, the organization of the church was simple: Christ as the head (Eph. 1:20-22) and elders appointed in every congregation (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5).

For the church of the New Testament, there were no man-made creeds. They had the inspired scriptures (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:19-21). In addition to what we know as the Old Testament, the scriptures consisted of letters (sometimes called, *epistles*), from the apostles and other inspired writers (James, Jude), which were distributed to the various churches (cf. Col. 4:16; 1 Thess. 5:27). Jude urged the brethren of his day and time, and even us today, to, "contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). Paul warned the Galatians about turning to another (false) gospel (Gal. 1:6-9).

Over time, there was a gradual turning away from this pattern of simplicity and inspired truth. There were warnings given in scripture that this would occur. Paul wrote:

But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth.

1 Timothy 4:1-3

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.

2 Timothy 4:3-4

In the same way, the apostle Peter wrote:

But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

2 Peter 2:1-3

As we should expect, these warnings came true. Creeds were written and the simple organization of the church was complicated by man. The clear teachings of the scriptures were perverted with strange doctrines of men such as infant baptism and hereditary sin. Describing one of the outgrowths of this apostasy, O.C. Lambert wrote:

...Constantine looked upon himself as the *Pontifex Maximus*, or high priest of Christianity, and inasmuch as unity in a state religion is very desirable from a political standpoint, he called the Nicene Council for the purpose of devising some means of forcing unity. In order that they might have a measuring stick they formulated the Nicene Creed. After this, force began to be applied to those who did not readily subscribe to it.

Those who wrote this new creed thereby expressed themselves as dissatisfied with the Scriptures, which had been the only creed of the millions who had lived and died Christians up to this time. When this new creed was written a new party was born, requiring a new designating term. This is the origin of the name "Catholic."³

Through the years, this apostasy continued to grow evolving into the Catholic church of today. Gradually a move was made by some to get back to the simplicity of the New Testament church. The Reformation movement was the genesis of such a campaign; although it fell short, resulting in more error. Eventually the Restoration movement began, seeking a thorough and complete return to New Testament Christianity.

Despite the worthy aims of these movements, the Catholic church has remained strong in number, though still full of doctrinal errors.

Doctrines of the Catholic Church

The doctrines of the Catholic church are far too many to cover in this type of broad study; whole works have been dedicated to detailed examinations of their teachings. I have selected some of the more recognized doctrines for our testing.

The Pope

The head of the Catholic church on earth is the Pope. Catholics are taught that the Pope is infallible. This means the Pope is never wrong. Such a thought is in complete

³ O.C. Lambert, *Catholicism Against Itself* Vol. 1 (Winfield, Alabama, O.C. Lambert Publisher, 1956), 14-15.

conflict with the teachings of scripture (cf. Ecc. 7:20; Rom. 3:23). Essentially, the doctrine of infallibility ascribes to the Pope divine authority. Let us test this teaching with the divine standard, the Bible.

“But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. “Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. “Do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ.

Matthew 23:8-10

Jesus says in matters of religion, call no man “father.” In other words, call no man “Pope.” No man should be exalted to such an *exclusive* position or title.

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,

Ephesians 4:11

Paul mentions nothing about a “Pope.” In fact, Paul identifies Someone else as *the* (exclusive) Head of the church.

Which He [the Father] brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church,

Ephesians 1:20-22

Paul says Jesus is the head of the church. For a man to put himself in such a place is an act of great arrogance and foolishness.

Catholics believe Peter was the first Pope. Once again, there is no record in scripture of Peter ever claiming or being ascribed such a title. Peter identified himself as an apostle, not the head of the apostles (1 Pet. 1:1). In Gal. 2:11-14 we have record of Paul withstanding Peter to his face. If Peter was the first Pope (and infallible) this would have been a most grievous sin for Paul! The New Testament also informs us that Peter was married (Mk. 1:30; 1 Cor. 9:5). One wonders how this squares with the Catholic doctrine of celibacy?

The doctrine of the Pope fails our four-fold test in every area! *Authority*: The doctrine of the Pope diminishes the authority of the scriptures. *Doctrine*: This doctrine is not taught *anywhere* in the Bible. *Organization*: The Bible teaches that Christ is the head of the church, not the Pope. *Lordship of Christ*: This doctrine puts the glory on a man and not Christ. While the Pope may believe Jesus is the Christ, such an office usurps Christ’s right and God-given position as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Transubstantiation.

This is the Catholic belief that in the serving of communion, the bread and wine miraculously become the *literal* body and blood of Christ. Foy Wallace writes of the Catholic teaching on this subject:

The canons of the Council of Trent concerning “the Eucharist” declared, first, that “whosoever shall deny that in the sacrament of the most holy Eucharist are contained truly, really and substantially, the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore the entire Christ; but shall say that he is in it only as in a sign, or a figure of virtue; let him be accursed; second, that “whosoever shall deny” that the “whole substance of the bread” and the “whole substance of the wine” are converted into the body and the blood of Christ, “only the forms of the bread and wine remaining,” which doctrine “the Catholic church most aptly calls “transubstantiation” is accursed--“let him be accursed;” third, that “whosoever” (they are strong on these whosoever!) shall deny that the body and blood of the Lord “does not remain in the hosts, or consecrated morsels which are reserved or left after the communion,” is also “accursed;” fourth, “whosoever shall say that Christ, as exhibited in the Eucharist is eaten spiritually, and not also sacramentally and really,” is also to be “accursed”--yes, after each pronouncement comes that onus of Roman Catholic anathema, “let him be accursed.”⁴

The doctrine of transubstantiation is without any biblical support. When Jesus said, “This is my body” (Matt. 26:26), we are not to take those words *literally*. The context of the statement will not allow for a literal interpretation. When He said, “This is my body” He was holding the bread in His hand. It is clear, that the bread could not have been His *literal* body! When Jesus held the cup and said, “This is my blood”, it is clear it could not have been His literal blood for such had not yet been shed. In each case, Jesus was speaking symbolically. On another occasion, Jesus said, “I am the door.” Jesus was not a literal door. He meant, symbolically, He was the way. In this way, the bread was merely representative of His body. The fruit of the vine was merely representative of His blood.

By way of interest, it has been suggested that the familiar magician’s term “Hocus Pocus” is a corruption of the Latin words spoken by the Catholic priests during this process of transubstantiation. The Latin words are, *hoc est enim corpus meum*, “for this is my body.” Some have further suggested that the word “hoax” is derived from *hocus pocus* and their association with the Catholic ritual.

Confession

The Catholic practice of confessing sins to a priest in order to obtain forgiveness is also without Biblical support. Again from, Foy Wallace, some background on the history of the “confessional.”

It was unknown in the primitive days of Christianity and was an abomination to the medieval ages. It became a doctrine and practice of the Catholic church in 1215 after the Council of Lateran, and originated with Innocent III, known as the criminal pope of the inquisition. It is therefore a human invention, the continuance of which depends on the ignorance of its origin.⁵

Describing how this teaching is contrary to the scriptures, Wallace wrote the following:

⁴ Foy E. Wallace, *Bulwarks of Faith* (Fort Worth, TX: Foy E. Wallace Publications, 1951, revised, 1975), 185-186.

⁵ *Ibid.* 174.

The testimony of both the old Testament and the new Testament is against this institution of Rome.

(1) In the old Testament there is nothing said of auricular confessions and priestly absolutions. There was nothing of that descriptions in the tabernacle of Moses nor in the temple of Solomon. Even the proud Pharisees never presumed to forgive sins--and they charged Jesus in Mark 2:7 with "blasphemy," because none can forgive sins but "God only."

David said, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned" (Ps. 51:4), and "I will confess my transgressions unto thee" (Ps. 32:5). Isaiah said, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." (Isa. 1:18) Again, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." (Isa. 55:7)

These are the landmarks of mercy in the Old Testament, the words of God in the former dispensation. It means that not even in the old covenant did any priest, under a system of priests, dare to take the place of God.

(2) In the New Testament there is no command and no example for Christians confessing to and obtaining absolution from a priest, nor to or by an apostle or evangelist of Jesus Christ.

God's plan is that which is in the New Testament, and it is not the complex, complicated forms of Catholic catechisms. In the great commission, Matt. 28:18-20, Jesus Christ commanded the apostles to "teach them to observe all things" that he had commanded, but nowhere did the apostles teach anyone to "observe" the "confessional"; it was therefore not commanded by Christ and--was not included in the great commission. The divine constitution, of which the commission was but a summary, contains no confessional.

In Acts 2, the great commission was executed, and those who "received the word" and were baptized, continued in the "apostles doctrine"--but the apostles doctrine contained no reference to such a thing as the Roman Catholic confessional. In Acts 8, Simon Magus was commanded to "repent and pray God" to be forgiven, but he was not ordered to confess his sins to a priest.

In 1 John 2:1-2, the children of God are commanded to confess their sins in prayer to Jesus Christ, our "Advocate with the Father"--not to a Roman priest in a Catholic confessional box.

In Heb. 4:14-18, the apostle teaches that Christians have full and complete access to God through Jesus Christ, our high priest, and may come "boldly" without human mediation to the "throne of grace" through Him.

In the fourteen epistles of Paul--Romans to Hebrews--this "called" apostle, "not of man neither by man but by Jesus Christ," speaks of all the duties imposed upon the human conscience with minute instructions to all Christians individually and collectively--but not one word concerning an auricular confessional, nor anything from which a "sacrament" could be inferred or imagined.

In James 5:16, the command to “confess your sins one to another” cannot be stretched to mean a Catholic priest. It means members to each other as members-and applies to sins against each other, and to the duty of forgiveness, when we ask God to forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. The New Testament teaches two confessions of sin, first, to God; second, to anyone wronged. These two confessions are taught in the Bible, but for the Roman Catholic auricular confession there is not a command or an example, not a reference, or an inference; not an allusion or an intimation, in short, not one hint.⁶

The Language of the Catholic Church

The language of Catholicism, which it uses to describe its doctrine, organization and traditions, is a language unfamiliar to the New Testament. See how many of these words or practices you can find in your Bible.

| | | | | |
|----------|-----------|------------|------------|-----------------|
| Pope | Pontif | Cardinal | Archbishop | Mother Superior |
| Nun | Vicar | Monk | Archdeacon | Friar |
| Parish | Templars | Mass | God Father | God Mother |
| Limbo | Purgatory | Habit | Penance | Catechism |
| Laity | Prelate | Cleric | Rector | Subdeacon |
| Crucifix | Rosary | Mortal Sin | Holy Water | Confirmation |

Many more “religious” terms could be listed, but the point should be clear: Catholicism possesses a language which is not found in the inspired scriptures.

The Worship of Mary

The Catholic’s render to Mary, the mother of Jesus, an adoration and exaltation which is without scriptural justification. At one time, the Catholic church understood this was doctrinal error. As one person noted: “Roman Catholics are always surprised to learn that there was a time when the popes excommunicated members of the church for praying to the Virgin Mary.”⁷ In time, this abominable practice became accepted, and today is still practiced by the Catholic religion.

The following is taken from the Roman Catholic Church catechism about Mary: Is Mary truly the Mother of God? She is truly the Mother of God because Jesus Christ is the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, equal to the Father and the Holy Spirit, and truly God.

What are the principle doctrines of the Church concerning the Blessed Virgin Mary? Her Immaculate Conception; Her Perpetual Virginity; Her Assumption into heaven.

What is meant by the Immaculate Conception? We mean that from her conception by her mother, St. Anne, God gave her those graces which are lacking in all other descendants of Adam and Eve. She was conceived Immaculate, that is, her soul was freed from original sin.

⁶ Ibid. 176-178.

⁷ John Carrara, *Catholicism: Under the Searchlight of the Scriptures* (Grand Rapids: MI: Zondervan, 1941, 1951), 99.

What reasons have we for believing in the Immaculate Conception? It was due the infinite dignity of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, that the soul of His Mother should always have been in the friendship of God.

What is meant by the Perpetual Virginity of Mary? By the Perpetual Virginity of Mary is meant that both before and after the birth of Jesus Christ she preserved her virginity.

What do we mean by the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin? We mean that after her death the body of Mary was assumed, or taken into heaven, and she was crowned as its Queen.

What was the reason for the Blessed Virgin's Assumption into heaven? God wished to preserve her body from decay which follows death, because from her Jesus took his human nature. Her body was raised from the grave soon after her death.⁸

In Catholic doctrine, Mary is made a mediator for prayer. In contrast, the Bible tells us there is one mediator between God and men, Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 2:5). Praying to Mary is an abomination that exalts her to a position, for which she herself would strongly object!

Questions

1. How would you use the scriptures to refute the doctrine of having a pope?
2. Do scriptures teach us to confess our sins before a man called, a priest, in order to obtain forgiveness? How do we receive forgiveness?
3. What is meant by transubstantiation?
4. How would you refute the doctrine of transubstantiation?
5. What is meant by the Immaculate Conception? Is it taught in the Bible?
6. What do the following passages say about the "perpetual virginity" of Mary? (Mark 6:3; Luke 8:19-21)
7. Does the Catholic Church pass our four point test? In what areas does it fail?

⁸ Ibid. 99-100.

LESSON THREE

ISLAM (PART I)

A Christian Approach to Islam (Part 1)

Garry K. Brantley, M.A., M. Div.

IN 1990, U.S. PRESIDENT GEORGE BUSH was faced with an international crisis that he felt warranted an immediate and decisive military response. Under the direction of Saddam Hussein, Iraq invaded the small, bordering nation of Kuwait. Iraq's massive military, with its superior weaponry, experienced little difficulty occupying and controlling Kuwait. The threat of destabilization in this oil-rich region prompted President Bush to dispatch thousands of troops into Saudi Arabia, which began Operation Desert Shield. In early 1991, U.S. and allied troops successfully defeated Iraq's feared military in the now-famous Operation Desert Storm, and drove back the remnants of Hussein's tattered troops to Baghdad, the capital of Iraq.

During this conflict, which potentially threatened global peace, millions in the U.S. were glued to their television sets by anxiety over the fates of their fellow citizens. Technology and dauntless reporters kept us abreast of practically every frightening clash between Iraqi and allied forces. In the course of this continuous news coverage, Westerners not only were confronted with Saddam Hussein's dreaded military, but also were exposed to a culture that is dominated by an unfamiliar religion—Islam. With the increasing awareness of our global society, and with the worldwide proliferation of this religion, it is important for Christians to understand and respond to Islam.

ORIGIN OF ISLAM

Such a task must begin with Islam's origin and nature. The immensity of the subject and space restrictions precludes an exhaustive treatment of these points. Hence, only a broad survey of the origin and contours of Islamic thought and practices will be presented.

Muhammad, Founder of Islam

The origin of Islam can be traced back to Muhammad (var. sp.: Muhammad, Mohammed), who was born c. A.D. 570 at Mecca, the holy city in western Saudi Arabia. Muhammad's practically unknown father died before his birth, and his mother died when he was only six. The early orphaned Muhammad was reared by his grandfather and uncle who, though disputed by some Western scholars, appear to have been prominent members of the Qurayah tribe. This Arabian clan was the guardian of the Kaabah (var. sp.: Ka'bah), the great shrine at Mecca in whose walls the sacred black stone was embedded. According to Arabian tradition, the black stone fell from heaven in the time of Adam, a possible indication that it was a meteorite that landed in the sands of Arabia (Humble, 1980, 4:52). Muslims believe that, on his pilgrimage to Mecca with Ishmael, Abraham built the Kaabah and positioned the meteorite within its walls. This shrine,

which figures prominently in Muhammad's life and the establishment and development of Islam, was dedicated to the Arabs' pantheon of deities.

While Muhammad's early life is somewhat obscure, apparently he was employed by a rich widow, Khadija, who entrusted him with her caravans. Khadija was so impressed with his dependable and conscientious service that she married Muhammad, provided him with wealth and success, and encouraged his religious inclinations. With his wife's support, Muhammad increasingly withdrew from business affairs, and spent much of his time in the seclusion of the desert meditating and reflecting on life (Schmalfuss, 1982, p. 311). During this process, Muhammad developed a passionate monotheistic belief, and became extremely frustrated with the polytheism and superstitions of his fellow Arabs. Though it is difficult to determine the extent to which variant shades of Christianity and Judaism influenced the development of Muhammad's strict monotheism, it is clear that "at some period of his life he absorbed much teaching from Talmudic sources and had contact with some form of Christianity" (Anderson, 1975, p. 93).

Muhammad's Revelations and the Qur'an

According to Islamic tradition, Muhammad, at the age of forty, began to receive revelations from God through the angel Gabriel. His first alleged encounter with the heavenly messenger was quite violent. While Muhammad was in a deep trance, Gabriel appeared to him and, either by choking or some other life-threatening gesture, forced Muhammad into submission. "Read," Gabriel demanded, "in the name of thy Lord, who created man from clots of blood" (*sura* 96:1; cf., Schmalfuss, 1982, p. 311). Since the encounter was both violent and accompanied by convulsions that sent him into an unconscious trance, Muhammad at first was unsure of the source of his vision. He feared that he possessed one of the *jinn* (demons) commonly believed to inhabit Arab poets and soothsayers (Anderson, 1975, p. 94). Khadija and others, however, assured Muhammad of the divine source of his visions. Once convinced of his prophetic call, Muhammad's revelations occurred with increasing frequency.

Since, as many Muslims argue, Muhammad was illiterate, he did not record these revelations personally. During his lifetime, however, his followers transcribed and collected much of Muhammad's oral teachings into the Qur'an (var. sp.: Koran), though many passages were preserved only in the memory of his followers and were committed to writing after his death (Shorosh, 1988, p. 24). The word Qur'an derives from the Arabic word *qara'a* ("to recite"), a designation consistent with the recurring mandate for Muhammad to "proclaim" (i.e., "recite" or "read") the words of Allah. Consisting of 114 chapters (called *suras*), the Qur'an is a non-chronological collection of verses, reflecting various periods in Muhammad's life. Each *sura* of the Qur'an is subdivided into verses (*ayat*). Interestingly, the Arabic word *ayat* carries with it the meaning of "a miracle." For those seeking certification of his claims, Muhammad would appeal to the Qur'an itself as miraculous confirmation of his divine appointment to the prophetic office (Wilson, 1982, p. 315). All Muslims, regardless of their sectarian affiliation, continue to regard the Qur'an as their sacred and authoritative text.

Muhammad's Rejection and Flight from Mecca

Once convinced that his first revelatory experiences in the desert were from God, Muhammad began to denounce openly the polytheism of his people and to proclaim a

rigid monotheism. By emphasizing the resurrection of the dead, and the subsequent judgment of God, he challenged the populace to submit to the One (Allah) true God, and to show compassion to the poor. Consistent with this message of submission, the word “Islam” is the infinitive of the Arabic verb “to submit,” and “Muslim” (“one who submits”) is the present participle of the same verb.

Muhammad’s monotheistic message threatened the financial interests of many in Mecca who profited from the regular pilgrimages of polytheists to the Kaabah. As might be expected, Muhammad met with considerable opposition, and succeeded in making only a few converts. Due to the increasingly aggressive hostility directed against him by the traders at Mecca, Muhammad and his small band of followers fled from Mecca to Medina on July 16, 622. This “flight” from Mecca, which Muslims call the “*Hijra*,” marks the official beginning of the Islamic religion. Reflecting this point of origin, the Islamic calendar is calibrated to the *Hijra*. According to Islamic chronology, for example, A.D. 630 would be designated 8 A.H. (“in the year of the *Hijra*”).

Unlike his experience in Mecca, where he was rejected as an eccentric purveyor of an unpopular—and unprofitable—religion, Muhammad enjoyed greater success in Medina. There, he “soon became statesman, legislator and judge—the executive as well as the mouthpiece of the new theocracy” (Anderson, 1975, p. 95). Several *suras* in the Qur’an, which emphasize obedience to the Prophet and insist on his favorable treatment, reflect Muhammad’s influential position at Medina (cf., 3:29,126; 4:17-18; 24:63-64; 49:2-4; see Geisler and Saleeb, 1993, p. 57).

Though significantly greater than at Mecca, Muhammad’s success at Medina was not as extensive as he desired. He particularly was disappointed at his lack of reception among the Jewish population. Rather than embracing him for his monotheism, the Jews eventually rejected Muhammad’s prophetic claims, and criticized his inaccurate accounts of Old Testament events. It became obvious that there were serious discrepancies between Qur’anic and biblical details of the same incident. To maintain the divine origin of the Qur’an, Muhammad was compelled to charge the Jews with either corrupting, or misquoting, their own scriptures. This allegation further heightened the tension between Muhammad’s followers and the Jews, and eventually precipitated the banishment or massacre of Jewish tribes in that area (Anderson, 1975, p. 95).

The Return to Mecca

Once his relationship with the Jews was severed, Muhammad no longer looked to Jerusalem, but refocused on Mecca as the center of the Islamic religion. Muhammad’s renewed interest in Mecca necessitated his purging the town of its polytheism, thus bringing it into harmony with the monotheism of Islam. Enlisting the help of nomadic Arab tribes, Muhammad led a series of armed raids on Mecca, and in A.D. 630 he captured the city with no resistance. Mecca quickly was purged of all its polytheistic symbols, and the Kaabah became the focal point of the religion of the one true God. Before his death in A.D. 632 (11 A.H.), Muhammad had made great strides in unifying the Arab tribes throughout the Arabian peninsula under the banner of Islam (see Anderson, 1975, p. 96; Noss, as quoted in McDowell, 1983, p. 381).

MAJOR DIVISIONS OF ISLAM

Since Muhammad neither left a male heir nor named a successor, his death created an immediate leadership crisis in Islam. The nature of Islam, however, which encompassed both civil and religious concerns, demanded a successor (Caliph, or Khalifa) to guide its adherents in applying the principles of the Qur'an to contemporary circumstances. Naming such an individual proved to be a difficult and divisive task. Along with other issues of interpretation, the role of, and criteria for appointing, the Caliph eventually fragmented Islam into two major divisions that remain today: Sunni and Shi'a (see Kung, 1986).

The Sunni

The Sunni branch, claiming approximately 90% of all Muslims, argued that the Caliph should belong to Muhammad's tribe, the Qurayyah, and that the community should choose him by the process of consensus (*ijma*). Since Muhammad was the "Seal of the Prophets," the Sunnis considered the responsibilities of the Caliph merely to guard—not continue—the prophetic legacy, and to provide "for the administration of community affairs in obedience to the Qur'an and prophetic precedent" (Kerr, 1982, p. 330). Within thirty years of Muhammad's death, four Caliphs were appointed in succession: Abu Bakr (632-634), 'Umar (634-644), 'Uthman (644-656), and 'Ali (656-661). Sunnis regard these first Islamic leaders as "the four rightly guided Caliphs," since they lived so close to Muhammad. Because of their chronological proximity to Muhammad, Sunnis believe that the *sunna* (behavior or practice) of these four Caliphs, together with the Prophet's, is authoritative for all Muslims. The Sunnis derive their name from this emphasis on the *sunna*. While there are subdivisions of this group, distinguished by specific points of interpretation, they all call themselves Sunni.

The Shi'a

The other major branch of Islam, which claims about 10% of the Muslim population and exists primarily in Iraq and Iran, is the more militant Shi'a. The Shi'ites, as those comprising the Shi'a sect are called, splintered from the Sunnis primarily over the question of the Caliphate. Regarding this matter, there are specifically two points of disagreement between Shi'ites and Sunnis. First, the Shi'ites place more rigid genealogical restrictions on the Caliph than do the Sunnis. On the one hand, Sunnis believe that the Caliph should be a descendent of Muhammad's tribe. On the other hand, Shi'ites argue that the Caliph should descend specifically from 'Ali, Muhammad's son-in-law. In fact, the word Shi'ite means "partisan" and indicates that Shi'ites are "partisans of 'Ali" (Rood, 1994). Second, the Shi'ites differ with the Sunnis regarding the authority of the Caliph. Unlike the Sunnis, Shi'ite Muslims believe that the Islamic leader, whom they call the *imam*, is more than merely a guardian of Muhammad's prophetic legacy. Rather, Muhammad bequeathed 'Ali with his *wilaya* (i.e., his "spiritual abilities"), enabling him to interpret the Qur'an and to lead the Islamic community infallibly. Though there are various interpretations, Shi'ites generally believe that the *wilaya* has been passed down through the subsequent generations of 'Ali's descendants. They further believe that this "cycle of the *wilaya*" will continue until the last day when humankind will be resurrected and judged (see Kerr, 1982, p. 331).

The majority faction within the Shi'a branch, known as the Imamis (most of whom live in Iran), believes that the completion of the *wilaya* cycle will end with the messianic return of the twelfth *imam*. According to this sect, the twelfth *imam* has been in "occultation" (the state of hiding) since the third century of Islam. They believe, however, that the *ayatollahs* (senior experts in Islamic law) have access to the hidden *imam*, and thus, have the right to interpret Islamic law and make religious rulings (Kerr, 1982, p. 331). The late Ayatollah Khomeini, perhaps the most widely remembered Shi'ite leader among contemporary Westerners, was considered to be the spokesman for the hidden *imam*.

Sufis

Though more a movement within, rather than a sect of, Islam, a third identifiable group that should be mentioned is the Sufis. Reacting to the externally oriented, and legalistic disposition of the Islamic religious system, Sufis seek a mystical experience of God. The word Sufism usually is translated "mysticism," which reflects this emphasis on a personal religious experience. Since Sufis, who belong to either the Sunni or Shi'a sect, desire more than an intellectual knowledge of Allah, they are prone to a number of superstitious practices (Rood, 1994).

BASIC BELIEFS OF ISLAM

As might be expected, in light of the vast diversity in Islam, there are many variant beliefs among Muslims worldwide. Though there are differences of opinion surrounding their application, six articles of faith form the core of the Islamic religion.

1. Monotheism. As indicated earlier, pre-Islamic Arabs were polytheists. Due to Muhammad's successful monotheistic campaign, Muslims recognize and devote themselves to only one God, whom they call Allah. Worshiping or attributing deity to any other being is considered by Muslims to be *shirk*, or blasphemy.

2. Angels and jinn. Muslims believe in a well-structured organization of angelic beings. At the lowest level in the hierarchy of spirit beings in Islamic thought are the *jinn*, who are capable both of committing good and evil deeds, and of inhabiting human beings. After his first frightening encounter with Gabriel, Muhammad feared that he was possessed by one of these potentially fiendish beings. The angels of God are above the *jinn* in rank. In Islamic angelology, each Muslim is accompanied by two angels—one on the right, the other on the left. This angelic pair is responsible for recording the good and evil deeds of the Muslim, respectively.

3. God's holy books. The Qur'an refers to numerous other volumes that Muslims consider as God's holy books. Chief among these Islamic sacred texts are: the Mosaic Law; the Davidic Psalms; the Gospel (*Injil*) given to Jesus; and the Qur'an revealed to Muhammad. Muslims, following Muhammad's allegation, contend that the original Torah (Pentateuch), Psalms, and Gospels have been corrupted by Christian and Jewish writers, and essentially lost. As the final revelation from God, the Qur'an supersedes all previous revelations and truth claims (Shorosh, 1988, p. 30).

4. God's prophets. Muslims believe that there has been a long succession of prophets through whom Allah revealed his will. While there is no consensus regarding the exact number of prophets, Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus are considered the five

prophetic predecessors to Muhammad. There seems to be universal agreement among Muslims that Muhammad was God's supreme and final prophet—the "seal" of the prophets.

5. Resurrection and Judgment. Similar to elements of Christian eschatology, Muslims believe in a general resurrection of humankind, followed by a final judgment. In this connection, human works are central. How successful a Muslim was at keeping the mandates of Islamic law determines his or her eternal fate. Those who have accomplished more good deeds than bad will be admitted into paradise, a place abounding with sensual pleasures (e.g., luxury, physical comfort, abundant food, lovely maidens, etc., see *sura* 4:57-58; 37:45-48). Those who are deficient in good deeds will be consigned to hell in which, among other excruciating torments, they will be attired in fiery garments (*sura* 22:19-20; cf., 18:28-29).

6. Predestination. Though not a mandatory doctrine, most Muslims accept a rigid form of predestination reflected in the comment made by the devout: "If Allah wills it." This belief holds that all events, good or bad, are determined directly by Allah. It is thus the function of the dedicated Muslim to "submit to that divine determination with obedient thankfulness," though he or she still must face Allah's strict justice (Shorrosh, 1988, p. 32).

BASIC PRACTICES OF ISLAM

As already indicated, human works play a crucial role in Islam. The most important works or duties generally acknowledged by Muslims may be summarized in what are commonly called the "Five Pillars of Islam."

1. The creed (*kalima* or *shahada*). "*La ilaha il' Allah, Muhammadan Rasoulu Allah.*" These words, translated, "There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah," constitute the essential creed of Islam. This is the first duty of every Muslim, for it is necessary to recite this creed before at least two witnesses to become a Muslim. And, the faithful Muslim will repeat this creed constantly.

2. Prayers (*salat*). Muslims, regardless of their social or economic status, submit to a rigorous daily regimen of prayer. Five times a day (only three for Shi'ites), Muslims respond to the call to prayer by the *muezzin* (a Muslim crier) from a tower called a *minaret*, which is part of the *mosque* (the place of public worship). They recite prescribed prayers together with the appropriate action of placing the forehead to the ground. Regardless of their geographic location, the faithful Muslim will face toward Mecca and perform this prayer ritual at the appropriate intervals. It is further incumbent on all adult male Muslims to gather each Friday at noon for community prayer, and to hear a weekly sermon.

3. Almsgiving (*zakat* and *sadaqa*). Orphaned himself at a young age, Muhammad was very sensitive to the plight of the destitute. Though some do so more extensively than others, several Qur'anic *suras* emphasize the duty of Muslims to give alms (2,4,19,23,33,107). Almsgiving is divided into two broad categories. The *zakat* are the legal alms, which require that Muslims allocate 2.5% (one-fortieth) of their income and merchandise for this charitable purpose. Different percentages are assigned to agricultural produce and cattle. The *sadaqa* are free-will offerings that are above and beyond the legally binding proportion of almsgiving.

4. Fasting (*Ramadan*). During the month of *Ramadan* (the ninth lunar month of the Islamic year), all healthy, adult Muslims (except pregnant women, nursing mothers, and travelers) are required to abstain from food, liquids, and sexual intercourse during daylight hours. There are both historical and theological reasons for *Ramadan*. Historically, Muslims believe that during the ninth lunar month, Muhammad received the first revelations from God and that during this same month, he and his followers made their historic escape from Mecca to Medina. Theologically, the fast helps develop a Muslim's self-control, reliance on Allah, and sympathy for the poor.

5. The Pilgrimage (*Hajj*). Every Muslim is expected to make the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in his or her lifetime. Since the rituals involved in the pilgrimage are physically demanding, the old or infirm can perform this duty by proxy. The *Hajj* serves to solidify Islamic faith, and to promote the ideas of worldwide unity and equality among Muslims (Rood, 1994; McDowell, 1983, p. 392).

6. The Holy War (*jihad*). Though not a part of the Five Pillars, the *jihad* is a duty usually associated with them. The word means "exertion" or "struggle" on behalf of God. Muslims are divided regarding the Qur'an's call to *jihad*. Extremists interpret *jihad* as literal warfare against non-Muslims, and believe that Muslims who die in a holy war are assured of a place in paradise. More moderate interpreters suggest that the Qur'an's call to arms refers to a specific incident of Muhammad's armed conflict with his enemies, and should neither be applied universally nor pressed literally (Al-Ashmawy, 1995, p. 158). In addition to these basic beliefs and practices, Muslims are guided by numerous laws and traditions contained in the *hadith*. The *hadith*, which was compiled after the Qur'an was completed, reportedly contains Muhammad's examples and statements regarding various topics. The Qur'an and *hadith* address virtually every aspect of life, making Islam not just a religion, but an all-encompassing way of life.

CONCLUSION

In this installment, I have surveyed briefly the complex landscape of Islam. In the following article I will attempt to identify the points of tension between Christianity and Islam, and offer a response to the latter's core beliefs.

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Questions

1. Who was the founder of Islam?
2. What do Muslims call their God?
3. Who are the *jinn*?
4. Do Muslims believe in a resurrection and day of judgment?
5. What is a *jihad*?

LESSON FOUR

ISLAM (PART II)

A Christian Approach to Islam (Part 2)

Garry K. Brantley, M.A., M.Div.

UNLIKE THE POPULAR NOTION, Islam is not the exclusive religion of Arab countries in the Middle East, but has found prolific expression around the globe. It is the fastest-growing religion in the world, claiming up to one billion adherents worldwide. To put that in perspective, this figure indicates that one out of every five people is a Muslim. In the United States, there are now up to five million Muslims, and over 1,100 mosques or Islamic centers (see Rood, 1994; Ahmad, 1995). Muslims, therefore, no longer are the vague features of geographically detached people, but could be among those whom we encounter in our daily routines. In light of these considerations, properly understanding, and responding to, Islam become increasingly apparent and personal.

The Persian Gulf War, and other such conflicts involving the U.S. and Islamic nations, have created within Westerners largely negative images of Muslims. Often they are associated with the stubbled faces and cold stares of fanatical terrorists who, to advance their political agenda, bomb public facilities, snuffing out hundreds of innocent lives. While some militant Islamic sects have conducted terrorist activity in the U.S. and other Western nations, they are not necessarily representative of all Muslims (see Al-Ashmawy, 1996; Sial, 1995). Simply exposing the radical views held by violent sects would not be a responsible critique of Islam. As Islamic writer Mubashar Ahmad correctly has objected, such an approach “would be as if someone tries to understand Christianity by reading the news of what is happening politically and religiously in Northern Ireland or of apartheid in South Africa” (1995).

PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

In light of Ahmad’s legitimate caveat, at least two observations need to guide an analysis of, and response to, Islam. First, as indicated in part one of this series, Islam is not a monolithic system, but contains several identifiable sects and movements (Brantley, 1996; see Rood, 1994). It is “a religious movement that has experienced constant change over the centuries and has acquired a high degree of inner diversity, a faith shared by concrete men and women with a broad spectrum of attitudes and feelings” (Kung, 1986, p. 22). Not all Muslims engage in, or support, the terrorist activity of fundamentalist Islamic sects. In fact, nonextremist Muslims decry the intolerant Islam preached by militant fanatics whose messages, they contend, are “a cover for advancing their political agenda and their lust for power, and ideology more akin to fascism and Marxism than to the Islamic faith” (Al-Ashmawy, 1996, p. 157). Thus, a Christian response to Islam must guard against stereotyping Muslims as blood-thirsty rogues with no regard for human life.

Second, we need to be sensitive to, and try to appreciate, the anti-west/anti-U.S. sentiment among many Middle Eastern Muslims. Historically, Muslims have equated,

and continue to equate, the West with Christianity. From this perspective, “Christian” and “Muslim” nations have had a long history of conflict, leaving both with animosity toward one another. While Islamic countries have committed their share of atrocities against Christian nations, the former do have some legitimate grievances against the latter. The Crusades (c. 1050-1291), for example, are etched indelibly into Muslim minds. In the Colonial period (c. 1450-1970), Western nations subjugated about ninety percent of the Muslim world, which instilled in many Muslims a deep desire to avenge such shame and humiliation. Perhaps the greatest blow to the Islamic ego was when, after thirteen hundred years of occupation, they lost possession of Jerusalem to the Jews in 1967. Muslims blame this turn of events on the “Christian” West for creating the state of Israel in 1948 (see McCurry, 1994). Though we might reasonably object that they have skewed history to a certain extent (see van Ess, 1986, pp. 37-38), Muslims nonetheless view the West, and particularly the U.S., through lenses colored by this history of Muslim casualties. If we are to have any success in reaching Muslims with the gospel of Jesus Christ, we must approach them with sensitivities toward their, and our, past.

CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM: POINTS OF TENSION

While we recognize the vast diversity of thought and attitudes within Islam, our response to this world religion must be limited to its core beliefs. Before offering such a critique, it will be both helpful and crucial to clarify the points of tension between Christianity and Islam. While on a superficial level it appears that Christianity and Islam share common theological ground in some particulars (e.g., monotheism), a closer scrutiny of the two religions exposes several fundamental differences that can be reconciled only by a costly compromise by either the Christian, the Muslim, or both.

Monotheism of Islam

At first glance, it appears that the rigid monotheism of Islam largely is compatible with Christian thought. The idea expressed in the Qur’an that God is “the one, the most unique,” and the “immanently indispensable” to Whom “no one is comparable” (*sura* 112:1-2,4), generally agrees with biblical concepts of God (cf. Deuteronomy 6:4; Psalm 86:8; Isaiah 40:18; 44:6). Yet, the monotheism of Islam is so rigid and inflexible that it repudiates two crucial, and inextricably linked, doctrines of historic Christianity.

1. The Trinity. Though questioned by some groups within the pale of Christianity, the concept of the trinity has strong biblical support (see Bromling, 1991). This doctrine does not suggest, as is alleged by non-Trinitarians, a tri-theistic construct of God. It simply affirms that there are three distinct persons (i.e., the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), yet all are one in **essence**. In other words, while the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sustain distinct relationships to one another, they share the same divine nature (see Geisler and Saleeb, 1993, p. 266). In this regard, Christianity and Islam are firmly opposed to one another. Unlike the monotheism of Christianity that allows for a plurality within the divine essence, Islam condemns such a pluralistic concept of God (see Kaleem, 1994). The Qur’an cautions the “people of the book” (i.e., Christians) against calling God “Trinity” for “God is only one God” (*sura* 4:171).

2. The Deity of Jesus. Consistent with Islam’s repudiation of the Trinitarian idea of God, the Qur’an, though it exalts Jesus in many particulars, explicitly denies the deity of Jesus. While the Qur’an acknowledges that Jesus was a miraculous “sign” and divine “blessing” (19:21), Islamic Christology is totally devoid of divine content (see Kuitse, 1992, 20:357). Since God’s transcendent glory prohibits His begetting a son, the Qur’an presents Jesus only as the “son of Mary,” not the Son of God (4:171). Rather than possessing the divine nature as in biblical Christology (Philippians 2:8-12; Colossians 1:18), the Qur’anic Jesus “was only a creature” (43:59) brought into existence by God’s creative word (3:42-52). Islam’s view of Jesus demonstrates the vast difference between it and Christianity. And, far from being a peripheral issue, the deity of Jesus is an essential tenet of Christianity. Thus, while Christianity and Islam share a common monotheistic belief, there is no resolving their Christological differences as they stand.

The Atonement of Jesus Christ

Another cardinal doctrine of Christianity—the atonement—is discarded by the Qur’an. That Jesus died **for our sins**, was buried, and rose again from the grave according to the Scriptures is the thrust of the gospel message (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). Contrary to the conclusion of some modern theologians, Paul argued that Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection were actual events of history. Following Paul’s line of reasoning to its logical conclusion, if Christ did not actually rise from the dead there is no gospel, and the entire Christian system is annulled (1 Corinthians 15:12-19). A denial of these core events is tantamount to rejecting the veracity of Christianity.

Yet, Islam does deny these central Christian events, charging that Jesus actually did not die on the cross (see Ijaz, n.d.). In a context in which the Jews are excoriated for repeatedly breaking God’s covenant, the Qur’an reads:

And for saying [in boast]: “We killed the Christ, Jesus, son of Mary, who was an apostle of God;” but they neither killed nor crucified him, though it so appeared to them. Those who disagree in the matter are only lost in doubt. They have no knowledge about it other than conjecture, for surely they did not kill him, but God raised him up (in position) and closer to Himself; and God is all-mighty and all wise (*sura* 4:157-158).

This one reading has generated considerable debate among Islamic commentators. The phrase, “so it appeared to them,” particularly has been problematic. Generally, orthodox Muslims have interpreted this to mean that in some mysterious manner, God made another person so resemble Jesus that he was crucified by mistake. By this means God intervened and frustrated the Jews’ evil purpose, and subsequently transported Jesus into heaven (see Geisler and Saleeb, 1992, pp. 64-65). According to Norman Anderson, Muhammad’s aversion to Jesus’ death as reflected in the Qur’an could have been motivated by several factors. Perhaps it was due, Anderson suggests, to the influence of Gnostic views, to his disdain for the “superstitious veneration” of the symbol of the cross in seventh-century Asia, or to his disbelief that God would allow one of His prophets to die in such a disgraceful manner (1975, p. 101). Of these possibilities, the latter is the most likely candidate.

Regardless of the rationale behind Islam’s denial of Jesus’ crucifixion, one fact remains: Islam rejects the idea of Jesus’ crucifixion and, by implication, His vicarious

suffering for sinful humanity. As already indicated, such a denial strikes at the very heart of the Christian system. Once again, any points of contact between Islam and Christianity are eclipsed by this fundamental difference.

Means of Salvation

As a corollary to its denial of Jesus' death, Islam differs significantly with Christianity regarding the means of humankind's salvation. In the Christian system, all responsible human beings without Christ are powerless slaves to a ruthless taskmaster—sin (Romans 5:6-11; 6:15-18; Ephesians 2:14-18). Since there is no means of liberating ourselves from the bondage of sin, human beings desperately are in need of a savior. In response to this critical condition, God, motivated by His love, entered into human history as a man, and offered His sinless life for humanity. The New Testament writers employed several images (financial, military, sacrificial, and legal) to convey in a concrete way the soteriological purpose of Christ's death. Through the cross, sinners are purchased (1 Corinthians 6:20; 7:23), victorious (Colossians 1:12; 2:15; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28), atoned for (Romans 3:25; 1 Corinthians 5:7), and acquitted and reconciled (2 Corinthians 5:16-19; Colossians 1:19-20; see Guthrie, 1994, pp. 251-256). While scholars continue to debate the theological details of these images, it is clear from the New Testament that God took the initiative in the salvation of humanity. It further emphasizes that salvation is not by human works of merit, but by God's grace through an expressive faith in the redemptive act of Christ on the cross (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Islam, however, has no place for a suffering savior in its redemptive system. It does not view human beings as enslaved by sin without the ability of self-emancipation. Though it emphasizes the role of God's mercy and forgiveness in salvation, Islam teaches that God's pleasure, and thus one's place in Heaven, are earned (cf. *suras* 2:207; 39:69). On the Day of Judgment, according to Islam, those who have fulfilled their religious duties, and compensated for their altruistic deficiencies by performing additional good deeds, will attain salvation. Those whose good deeds are insufficient, however, "shall forfeit their souls and abide in Hell forever" (*sura* 23:102-103). In the final analysis, according to Islam, humankind's spiritual need is not for a divine savior, but simply for divine guidance.

A BRIEF EVALUATION OF ISLAM

The points of tension between Islam and Christianity demonstrate the theological incompatibility of these two world views. To embrace Islam is to deny the essentials of the Christian faith; likewise, to espouse Christianity is to compromise seriously the core beliefs of Islam. Having laid out the basic practices and duties of Islam, and having highlighted the distinctions between Islam and Christianity, a Christian evaluation of Islam now is in order. Due to space restrictions, we will devote our attention to two crucial points of Islam: the nature of God, and the Qur'an.

The Nature of God

As already indicated, the stringent monotheism of Islam categorizes the Trinitarian concept of deity espoused by Christians as tri-theism. This is due to a misunderstanding of the Father/Son relationship between God and Jesus as mentioned in the Bible (see John 10:29-33). For Jesus to sustain such a filial kinship to God, "often in the Muslim mind

implies some kind of sexual generation” (Geisler and Saleeb, 1993, pp. 134-135). Of course, the term “Father” or “Son” does not necessitate physical procreation any more than Saddam Hussein’s description of the Gulf War as the “Mother of all Battles” demands that the conflict had a physical womb. The description of Jesus as the “only begotten Son” of God (John 3:16) refers, not to a physical act of procreation, but to His unique relationship to God the Father.

The idea expressed in the Qur’an that God’s glory prohibits Him from begetting a son (in the carnal sense; *sura* 4:171) provides further insight into the theology of Islam. God is so transcendent and unified to Himself that He is dissociated totally from creation and, thus, acts impersonally (McDowell, 1983, p. 393). To many Muslims, this implies that God is so detached from our human existence that He has no (knowable) essence; He is absolute Will. A God with no essence means a God with no essential characteristics. From this perspective, though the Qur’an extols God as “the Compassionate, the Merciful,” such characteristics are not rooted in His essence but are the results of His capricious will. As the Qur’an indicates, God is merciful simply because “He has **decreed** mercy for Himself” (*sura* 6:12). In short, in Islamic theology what God **does** determines who God **is**. Since God’s actions are contingent on His arbitrary will, then who God is ultimately is an act of His volition.

Such a concept of God, however, involves a serious moral difficulty. It implies the possibility that, had God willed it, He might as easily have been “The Merciless” rather than “The Merciful.” For, as Geisler and Saleeb have observed, “if God is Will, without any real essence, then he does not do things because they are right; rather, they are right because he does them” (1993, pp. 136-137). In the final analysis, the God of Islam has no nature by which He is inherently prohibited from, or motivated toward, certain actions. The God of Christianity, however, has such a nature that self-limits His actions (e.g., He cannot lie, Titus 1:2). In addition, rather than being the products of His volition, the benevolent attributes of the Christian God (e.g., goodness, mercy, love, grace) are part of His essence.

These divergent concepts of God find practical expression in profoundly different ways. Consistent with Islamic theology, the concern of orthodox Muslims is not to know God in an intimate fashion, but simply to obey Him. The God of Islam does not reveal Himself; rather, He reveals only His will, to which Muslims are to submit in an external fashion. On the contrary, the God of Christianity has revealed not only His propositional truth in the Bible, but also His essence in the person of Jesus Christ. Thus, Christians seek not only to do God’s will, but to be in a covenant relationship with Him. Due to the Islamic concept of God, together with its works-oriented means of salvation, Muslims cannot have the sense of security that Christians enjoy through God’s grace as taught in the Bible.

The Qur’an

To Muslims, the Qur’an is not merely the counterpart of the Christian Bible, but is the Islamic equivalent of Christ. According to Muslim scholar, Yusuf K. Ibish, “If you want to compare it with anything in Christianity, you must compare it with Christ Himself” (as quoted in Geisler and Saleeb, 1993, p. 179). Consistent with Ibish’s observation, Muslims assign to the Qur’an the same attributes that Christians apply to Christ. For example, just as Jesus is the human manifestation of the eternal God in biblical

Christology (John 1:1-3,14; Hebrews 1:1-3), the Qur'an is the linguistic representation of God's eternal Word. In short, while in Christianity the divine Word became a human being, in Islam the eternal Word became a book. Muslims further argue that the Qur'an not only is the inspired, inerrant, eternal, and final revelation of God that supersedes all others, but is also the ultimate divine miracle. In fact, as stated in part one of this series, it was the only miracle Muhammad offered when asked to display his prophetic credentials. Muslims employ several arguments to support the claim of the Qur'an's miraculous status. Consider two of the most popular arguments, and a brief response.

1. *Unique literary style.* To many Muslims the strongest evidence supporting the miraculous nature of the Qur'an is its impressive literary style. The Arabic in which the Qur'an was written has rhyming, rhythmic qualities that delight the Arab's ears (Shorrosh, 1988, p. 25). Muslims further hold that the Qur'an's rhetoric, clarity of expression, and concepts are unparalleled in the world of literature. To Muslim apologists, these literary qualities indicate the divine origin of the Qur'an.

To question the literary quality of the Qur'an, as many attempt to do, is an inadequate response to this argument because the Muslim simply would point out that only those who understand the nuances of the Arabic language can appreciate this aspect of the Qur'an. Further, determining the quality of a production introduces the dimension of subjectivity. Hence, the question is: Does eloquence indicate divine inspiration? At best, the eloquence of the Qur'an only suggests that Muhammad was a gifted orator. If eloquence is strong evidence for divine inspiration, the works of Homer and Shakespeare are candidates for this exalted status as well. In short, the argument from eloquence is not a sufficient proof of inspiration.

2. *Muhammad's illiteracy.* A controversial verse in the Qur'an forms the basis for the belief in Muhammad's illiteracy. In that passage, Allah promises to bestow mercy on those who, among other duties, "follow the Apostle—the Unlettered Prophet..." (*sura* 7:157). The phrase "the Unlettered Prophet," often is interpreted to indicate Muhammad's illiteracy. If so, Muslims contend, this is further confirmation of the Qur'an's divine origin, since it would have been highly improbable, if not impossible, for a formally-uneducated prophet to produce such a quality work.

There are at least two points to make in response to this claim. First, it is questionable whether Muhammad actually was illiterate. Some Arabic scholars contend that the words *al umni* "the unlettered," actually mean "the heathen," or "the gentile," which is reflected in more recent translations (see Ali, 1993, p. 148). Second, if Muhammad actually were illiterate, that fact alone would not necessitate that the Qur'an was dictated to him by God. One's level of formal training does not necessarily enhance one's intelligence or creative abilities. Even if he could neither read nor write, Muhammad could have dictated his messages to a scribe who subsequently wrote them down. In the final analysis, it is plausible that someone with no formal training could have produced the Qur'an. Hence, the question of Muhammad's illiteracy is a peripheral issue when it comes to establishing the divine origin of the Qur'an.

Islamic apologists offer other arguments to support the Qur'an's claim of divine authorship. Among them are the alleged perfect preservation of the Qur'anic text, fulfilled prophecies, its unity, and scientific accuracy. These evidences, however,

similarly prove to be unconvincing (see Geisler and Saleeb, 1993, pp. 204; Lawson, 1991).

CONCLUSION

Of course, Muslims, as do other non-believers, challenge the evidences for biblical inspiration. Since, generally speaking, Islamic countries protect the Qur'an from criticism, it has not been subjected to the same intensity of critical analysis as has the Bible. Despite the centuries-long attacks against biblical credibility, the Bible has fared quite well. And, though it is not within the purview of this brief article to enumerate each of them, there are impressive evidences for the integrity of the Christian system (see Geisler, 1976; Wharton, 1977)

While we can, and should, discuss the differences between Islam and Christianity, and debate with Muslims regarding the inspiration of the Qur'an, encountering Muslims at this level most likely will produce little evangelistic progress. First we must extend the love of Christ to Muslims in concrete ways. Once they have seen tangible evidence of the risen Lord within our lives, we will be in a better position to discuss these more technical, yet vital, issues.

Questions

1. What does Islam teach about the nature of God and how is it different than what the Bible teaches?
2. What does Islam teach about the death of Jesus Christ?
3. According to the teaching of Islam, how is one saved?
4. What is the Qur'an (Koran)?
5. Can one accept the teachings of Islam and still be a Christian?
6. Does Islam pass the four point test? In what areas does it fail?

LESSON FIVE

THE JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

ONE OF THE FASTEST GROWING and most deceptive cults today, without any doubt, is the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. The followers of this organization are known as *the Jehovah's Witnesses*. Who has not had the experience of a Jehovah's Witness knocking at their front door—usually at a most inconvenient time? What do you say when they knock? Do you tell them you are not interested and send them on their way? Do you, or should you, try to engage them in a Bible study? Do you even know what they believe? In this lesson, we want to examine many of their beliefs. This will give you some direction for knowing how to approach the situation when they arrive at your door.

History

The Watchtower Society was founded by Charles Taze Russell. One author noted that Russell was “charismatic, bold, self-assured, striking in appearance, and imbued with an air of authority.”⁹ His followers soon became known as Russellites. In 1884, he founded and installed himself as president of *Zion's Watchtower Tract Society*. In time, this organization evolved into the *Watchtower Bible and Tract Society*. Summarizing some of the Watchtower's doctrinal positions and the strong hold it has over its members, Richard Abanes wrote:



Charles Taze Russell

Distinct to the Watchtower... is its ban on activities not normally associated with religious activity. The organization does not allow members to observe holidays (e.g. Christmas, Thanksgiving, or Easter), nor can they celebrate birthdays, Mother's Day, Father's Day, or Valentine's Day. Members cannot vote in elections, salute their country's flag, or sing any national anthem. More devastating is the group's ban on blood transfusions, which has led to countless Witness deaths, including many children.

Since its inception in the late 1800's, the group's hierarchy has kept rank-and-file members in line with a series of false prophecies, doctrinal flip-flops, scholastic dishonesty, and psychological manipulation via peer pressure, verbal intimidation, and threats of excommunication. Despite countless warnings about the WTBS that have been issued by numerous counter-cult organizations, the Witnesses continue to thrive worldwide.¹⁰

It is amazing that people would still fall victim to the Watchtower's false teaching. Yet, nearly everyday in this world, a Jehovah's Witness, knocking on someone's front door, is sure to find an unsuspecting soul who will buy into their lies and deceit. When they knock on your door, will you be prepared?

⁹ Richard Abanes, *End-Time Visions* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 232.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 229-230.

Jehovah's False Witness

The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society has long been known for its date setting failures. Their “prophetic” errors have been cataloged in various writings, clearly exposing the truth that they are anything but Jehovah’s Witness. The utter failure of their end-time predictions is compounded by their claim to be God’s prophet. Describing how God did not leave the people without a prophet of God to warn them, the Witnesses own literature identifies how *they* are His prophet.

This “prophet” was not one man, but was a body of men and women.... Today they are known as Jehovah’s Christian witnesses.... Of course, it is easy to say that this group acts as a “prophet” of God. It is another to prove it. The only way that this can be done is to review the record. What does it show?¹¹

In this particular instance, the Witnesses are right. The only way to tell a prophet of God is by the record—the accuracy of his prophesies. Let’s take a brief look at their record. We begin with the January 1886 issue of *Zion’s Watchtower*, which stated, “...the marshalling of the hosts for the battle of the great day of God Almighty is in progress while the skirmishing is commencing.”¹² Obviously, this proved to be a false prediction.

In 1897, they stated the battle of the great day of God would end in 1915. Wrong again! In 1914, they predicted the battle of Armageddon could begin in the early months of 1915.¹³ Once again, they were wrong. In 1973, the Witnesses stated:

We can be equally sure that, of the generation alive in 1914, some will see the major fulfillment of Christ’s prophecy and the destruction with which it culminates. This means that mankind is now in the most crucial time of its history, when the rule of this earth and of all human affairs will pass from the hands of imperfect political rulers and come to rest with a righteous government of God’s own making.¹⁴

If God is going to do as the Witnesses claimed, He had better hurry; most of the generation which saw the events of 1914 has passed away! In 1968, they were suggesting 1975 as the possible start of Christ’s thousand-year kingdom on earth. Some Witnesses were so certain of the Watchtower calculations leading to 1975, they were selling their homes and property in great expectation of the Lord’s soon return. The October 8, 1968 issue of *Awake* said this:

“True, there have been those in times past who predicted an “end to the world,” even announcing a specific date. Some have gathered groups of people with them and fled to the hills or withdrawn into their houses waiting for the end. Yet nothing happened. The “end” did not come. They were guilty of false

¹¹ *The Watchtower*, April 1, 1972, p. 197. The copy of this issue appeared in Robert Morey’s *How to Answer a Jehovah’s Witness* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1980), 35. Morey’s book is an excellent resource for refuting the teachings of the Watchtower Society. Every Bible study library should have a copy of this book. This book will help in being prepared to give an answer when the Witnesses knock on your door.

¹² *Zion’s Watchtower*, January 1886, Vol. VII. No. 5, p. 817. Source: Robert Morey, 41.

¹³ *The Watchtower*, September 1, 1914, p. 261-263. Source: Robert Morey, 53.

¹⁴ *Awake*, October 8, 1973, 19.

prophesying. Why? What was missing? Missing was the full measure of evidence required in fulfillment of Bible prophecy. Missing from such people were God's truths and the evidence that he was guiding and using them. But what about today? Today we have the evidence required, *all of it*. And it is overwhelming! All the many, many parts of the great sign of the "last days" are here, together with verifying Bible chronology."¹⁵

In their own words, the Witnesses were guilty of false prophesying! Their many false prophecies clearly demonstrate that God is not with them. Repeatedly the Watchtower Society has set dates and repeatedly they have been wrong. What does the evidence show? They are a false prophet (Deut. 18:20-22). Prophetic words spoken by God's true prophets never failed (Isa. 55:11; 2 Pet. 1:19-21).

Watchtower Doctrine

Having seen that the Watchtower Society is a false prophet, it should not be too surprising to learn that many of their doctrines are contrary to the inspired scriptures. We will briefly examine some of their teachings.

The Deity of Jesus Christ

The Jehovah's Witnesses believe Jesus was the Son of God, but they do not believe that He was God. According to Watchtower teaching, Jesus was merely a manifestation of the archangel Michael in human form. Those familiar with the Bible will immediately call to mind John 1:1

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and **the Word was God.**

John 1:1 Emp. mine

This verse is clear, to the point, and should settle the issue. Unfortunately, in order to support their *false* doctrine, the Watchtower has published their own Bible, which they call, *The New World Translation*. Notice the subtle, but dangerous change to the text in this abomination of a translation.

In [the] beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was **a god.**

John 1:1 (NWT) Emp. mine

Here the Watchtower Society has deliberately changed the text to fit their doctrine by adding the indefinite article 'a'. There is no support for this addition in the Greek manuscripts. This addition completely changes the meaning of the passage. Rather than indicating that the Word was *God*, the idea becomes the Word was merely *a god* (Note the lower case "g" in the last "god").

The Watchtower Society presents the *New World Translation* as the anonymous work of the New Bible Translation Committee. They say they do this in order that all *credit* for the work will go to God. But an unbiased observer will

¹⁵ Robert Morey, *How to Answer a Jehovah's Witness*, p. 88.

quickly note that such anonymity also shields the translators from any *blame* for errors or distortions in their renderings. And it prevents scholars from checking their credentials. In fact, defectors who have quit Watchtower headquarters in recent years have identified the alleged members of the committee, revealing that none of them was expert in Hebrew, Greek, or Aramaic—the original languages from which the Bible must be translated.¹⁶

Despite their efforts to deny the deity of Christ, the Bible is clear: He was God (Jn. 1:1; 20:28; Rom. 9:5; 2 Cor. 4:4; Phil. 2:5ff; Col. 1:15-16; 2:9; Titus 2:13; Heb. 12, 8-9).

In establishing the truth that Christ is God, you might try the following when the Witnesses knock on your door. Have them turn to the following passages in the exact order shown and ask them the questions as illustrated:

Passage #1

“Who has performed and accomplished it, Calling forth the generations from the beginning? ‘I, the Lord, am the **first**, and with the **last**. I am He.’ ”

Isaiah 41:4

Question #1: Who is the “first and last” that this verse is describing? They should respond, “Jehovah God.”

Passage #2

“Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: ‘I am the **first** and I am the **last**, And there is no God besides Me.

Isaiah 44:6

Question #2: Who is the “first and last” that this verse is describing? They should respond, “Jehovah God.”

Passage #3

“Listen to Me, O Jacob, even Israel whom I called; I am He, I am the **first**, I am also the **last**.

Isaiah 48:12

Question #3: Who is the “first and last” that this verse is describing? Once again, they should respond, “Jehovah God.”

Passage #4

“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

Revelation 1:8

¹⁶ David A. Reed, *Jehovah's Witnesses Answered Verse by Verse* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1986), 71-72.

Question #4: This time the question is a little different, but it should have the same response. The question is: Who is the “Alpha and Omega” that this verse is describing? Once again, they should respond, “Jehovah God.”

Passage #5

When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, “Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last,
Revelation 1:17

Question #5: Again, you ask, Who is the “Alpha and Omega” that this verse is describing? And once again, they should respond, “Jehovah God.”

Passage #6

“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”
Revelation 22:13

Question #6: Once again, Who is the “Alpha and Omega” that this verse is describing? And again, they should respond, “Jehovah God.”

Passage #7 The final question! Remember, it must be done in this exact order. As you read this verse, you will understand why the order is so important.

“And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life, says this:

Revelation 2:8

Question #7: Now you ask the all-important question, Who is the “first and last” that this verse is describing? Remember, God alone is the first and last, the Alpha and Omega. However, we notice here that the first and last was dead and came back to life. How can God die? This is a picture not only of the resurrection, but of the deity of Christ as well. By the way, you can have the Witnesses use their own distorted version of the Bible for this exercise.

The Cross

The Jehovah’s Witnesses believe the cross is a pagan symbol adopted by the church.¹⁷ The cross is so despised by this evil organization that new converts are asked to destroy any crosses they have in their possession rather than simply disposing of them.

The Witnesses believe Jesus was nailed to an upright stake or pole. If you ask a Witness how such a death was done, they will tell you that the hands of Jesus were placed above His head with a single nail binding them to the stake. If you can get them to make this statement in regards to a single nail you can then have them read the following passage. Here it is from their own *New World Translation*:

¹⁷ Ibid. 13.

“Unless I see in his hands the print of the **nails** and stick my hand into his side, I will certainly not believe.”

John 20:25 (NWT) Emp. mine

Notice that Thomas asked to see the print of the nails (plural). Ask the Witness how this would be if only one nail was used. How could more than one nail be used on a wooden stake?

This false doctrine about the cross has resulted in more deliberate changes in the *New World Translation* (cf. Jn. 19:17, 25; Acts 2:23). Compare this version of 1 Corinthians 1:18 with your Bible:

For the speech about **the torture stake** is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is God’s power.

1 Corinthians 1:18 (NWT) Emp. mine

As you can see from the various passages we have referenced from the Witnesses “translation” of the scriptures, you will want to get them out of their “Bible” for any type of serious study. If a study is arranged, see if they will agree to use the American Standard Bible. This used to be the Bible they would exclusively use.

The 144,000

Witnesses believe that the number of individuals who will be able to enter heaven is limited to 144,000 (cf. Rev. 7:4). They are taught that this number reached its fullness in 1935. New believers after 1935 are not allowed to take the communion and have no hope of heaven. For them, they will one day live on a restored paradise earth. They form what is called the “great crowd” or “great multitude” on earth (cf. Rev. 7:9).

If you follow the context of Revelation chapter seven, you will notice that the 144,000 are all Jews! There are 12,000 from each tribe of Israel. The Witness will respond that such references to Israel are symbolic. If this is true, then the number must also be symbolic! However, Witnesses teach the number to be literal.

It is also interesting to take the Witness to Revelation chapter fourteen, where the 144,000 are again mentioned. There we see that they were male virgins who had never lied (Rev. 14:4). Again, if the number is to be taken literally, what about these elements of the vision? Challenge the Witness with these questions.

As to the great crowd on earth that the Witnesses say *will not be in* heaven, notice (In Revelation) *they are shown in* heaven standing before the throne of God (cf. Rev. 19:1).

A word of warning... you will debate the scriptures endlessly with the Witnesses—often to no avail. I have found it best to attack the head, the Watchtower Society. Familiarize yourself with some of their *many* false prophecies. There are some great resources available to assist you in this work. I would highly recommend Robert Morey’s, *How to Answer a Jehovah’s Witness* (Bethany House Publishers) or David Reed’s, *Jehovah’s Witnesses Answered Verse by Verse*. Reed is a former Witness who is well acquainted with their many false teachings.

It is hoped, that this lesson has helped you to feel more prepared the next time you get that knock on your front door. Don’t just send them away. Reach out in a spirit of love to rescue these people from the evils of the Watchtower Society. Remember, the ones

standing on your front porch are in all likelihood, very sincere—unfortunately, sincerely unaware of the truth. Help them know the truth so they can be set free (cf. Jn. 8:32).

Questions:

1. In what ways does the Watchtower Society fail the four-part pattern for testing?

2. Where do the scriptures teach the deity of Jesus Christ?

3. What was the test for a prophet outlined in Deut. 18:20?

4. Why have the Witnesses created their own translation of the scriptures?

5. Is there any scriptural evidence that Jesus was crucified on a cross? If so, what?

6. Why do you think someone would want to believe Jesus was put to death on a stake?

7. Who are the 144,000 of Revelation 7:4?

LESSON SIX

MORMONISM

GOING BY THE NAME, “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints,” Mormonism is currently one of the largest religions in the United States. The Mormon church today is divided into two major groups, one with headquarters in Salt Lake City, Utah; the other (The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints) with headquarters in Independence, Missouri.

Those who have friends or neighbors who are Mormon know that they are good people. The Mormon Church emphasizes strong family values and living a good moral life. And this image is appealing to many in our morally-challenged world. It would certainly appear a strong contributor (along with their dedicated missionary work) to the rapid growth of the Mormon Church.

However, appearances can be deceiving. Jesus told the Pharisees they were like whitewashed tombs, which on the outside appeared beautiful, but inside they were full of dead men’s bones (Matt. 23:27). What the people saw was not the real story—so it is with Mormonism. What most do not realize (including many Mormons) are the number of serious doctrinal errors and embarrassing contradictions found in trusted Mormon writings. *The Book of Mormon*, *Doctrines and Covenants*, and *The Pearl of Great Price* are full of such problems. When these writings are *honestly* examined, Mormonism is clearly found to be a false religion. In this lesson, we will examine some of these errors and contradictions, but first we need to learn a little about the history of the Mormon Church.

History

The founder of the Mormon Church was Joseph Smith, Junior. Smith is considered by Mormons to have been a prophet of God. In this way, he is sometimes called, “the Prophet.” However, Smith’s background, writings, and false prophecies reveal he was far from being any true prophet of God.



Joseph Smith Jr.

Joseph Smith, Jr., in 1820, claimed a heavenly vision which, he said, singled him out as the Lord’s anointed prophet for this dispensation, though it was not until 1823, with the appearance of the angel Moroni at the quaking Smith’s bedside, that Joe began his relationship to the fabulous “golden plates,” or what was to become the *Book of Mormon*.

In 1827 Smith claimed to receive the golden plates upon which the *Book of Mormon* is alleged to have been written. Shortly after this historical find, unearthed in the hill Cumorah near Palmyra, New York, Smith began to “translate” the “reformed Egyptian” hieroglyphics inscribed thereupon by means

of the “Urim and Thummin,” a type of miraculous spectacles which the always thoughtful angel Moroni had the foresight to provide for the budding seer.

During the period when Joseph was translating the plates (1827-29) one Oliver Cowdery, an itinerant school teacher, visited Smith at the home of his father-in-law (who after some months, for the sake of his daughter, had received Smith into his home) where he was duly “converted” to the prophet’s religion and soon after became the “scribe” who wrote down what Joseph said the plates read, in spite of the fact that he never actually saw them. In the course of time, Smith and Cowdery became fast friends; and the progression of their “translation” and spiritual zeal allegedly attained such heights that, on May 15, 1829, heaven could no longer restrain its joy; and so John the Baptist in person was speedily dispatched by Peter, James, and John to the humble state of Pennsylvania with orders to confer the “Aaronic Priesthood” on Joe and Oliver.¹⁸

Sometime later, it is claimed that the apostles Peter, James, and John appeared to Smith and Cowdery and ordained upon them the higher Melchizedek Priesthood.

This association between Smith and Cowdery eventually led to the founding of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. In 1830 Smith published the first edition of the *Book of Mormon*. Since its first publication, the *Book of Mormon* has been corrected and revised thousands of times to correct numerous grammatical, historical and doctrinal errors; some of these will be discussed later in this lesson.

The Character of Joseph Smith

It is important that some insights into the character of Joseph Smith, “the prophet,” be brought forth. Mormons need to be told the truth about the man upon whom they have invested a great deal of faith. There is a history here that the Mormon people today are not being told.

One of the most interesting statements concerning the early life of the Smith family and of Joseph, Jr., was obtained by E.D. Howe, a contemporary of Smith’s, who did tremendous research during the lifetime of Joseph which has never been successfully impugned by any Mormon historians. Smith himself never dared to answer Howe’s charges, though they were well known to him, so great was the weight of contemporary evidence.

Mr. Howe obtained a statement signed by sixty-two residents of Palmyra, New York, one that cannot be ignored by any serious student of Mormonism:

“We, the undersigned, have been acquainted with the Smith family, for a number of years, while they resided near this place, and we have no hesitation in saying, that we consider them destitute of that moral character, which ought to entitle them to the confidence of any community. They were particularly famous for visionary projects, spent much of their time in diggings for money which they pretended was hid in the earth; and to this day, large excavations may be seen in the earth, not far from their residence, where they used to spend their time digging for hidden treasures. Joseph Smith, Senior, and his son Joseph, were in

¹⁸ Walter Martin, *Kingdom of the Cults* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, Inc. Publishers, 24th Printing, Revised Edition, 1977), 152. Martin points out that there is no ancient language known as “reformed Egyptian” such as Smith claims.

particular, considered entirely destitute of *moral character*, and *addicted to vicious habits.*” (Mormonism Unveiled, Zanesville, Ohio, 1834, pg. 261).

Some persons reading this may feel that it is unfair to quote only one side of the story; what about those who are favorable to the Mormons, they will ask. In answer to this, the amazing fact is that *there exists no contemporary proMormon statements from reliable sources who knew the Smith family and Joseph intimately.*¹⁹

In the same way, another writes of Smith and his family:

The current history of the times says that the Smith family bore an unsavory reputation. “He was a lazy, drinking, fellow; loose in his habits in every way,” the family were a pack of liars, too low to associate with. Joseph and his father - wandered over the country with... a witch hazel rod, pretending to find waterways and lost treasures, buried gold, and finally Joseph claimed to find the gold plates of the Book of Mormon...²⁰

This same author recounts the following testimonies about Smith:

- Dr. McIntyre, family physician of the Smiths in Manchester, N.Y., declared that the house of Joseph Smith, Sen., was a perfect brothel.
- Eza Pierce, Samantha Payne and other school-mates of the Smiths testify that Smith was lewd, and so were the family.
- Levi Lewis testifies that while Smith was pretending to translate the plates, he tried to seduce Liza Winters, declaring that adultery was no sin.
- Fanny Brewer testifies that Smith had serious trouble in Kirtland arising from his seducing an orphan girl.
- Dr. John Stafford testified he was a school-mate of Smith’s and that he (Smith) was a great admirer of Mohammed and the Koran, and that polygamy was right and that nature and the Bible taught it.²¹

Another insight into the character of Joseph Smith is seen in some of his *supposed* revelations. For example, Smith is recorded as revealing the following:

The inhabitants of the moon are more of a uniform size than the inhabitants of the earth, being about 6 feet in height. They dress very much like the Quaker style and are quite general in style, or fashion of dress. They live to be very old; coming generally, near a thousand years. This is the description of them as given by Joseph Smith the Seer, and he could “see” whatever he asked the father in the

¹⁹ Ibid. 154-155.

²⁰ R.C. Evens, *Forty Years in the Mormon Church: Why I Left It* (Shreveport, LA: Lambert Book House, 1976), 30.

²¹ Ibid. 32.

name of Jesus to see. (Journal of Oliver B. Huntington, Vol. 3, p. 166 of typed copy at Utah State Historical Society).²²

How could a true prophet of God declare any such nonsense about people living on the moon dressed like Quakers? This man was a fraud! More about the questionable character traits of Smith could be offered, but such will become even more evident as we examine some of the contradictions and doctrines of the Mormon church.

The Book of Mormon vs. The Bible (Contradictions between the Two)

When the Mormon missionaries come to your door, they will always have a Bible with them. They will state that the Bible and the Mormon are consistent; even some of their writings make this claim:

“Take up the Bible, compare the religion of the Latter-day Saints with it, and see if it will stand the test.”

—Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 17, p. 46.

“Bible doctrine is Mormon doctrine, and Mormon doctrine is Bible doctrine. They are one and the same.”

—*What the Mormons Think of Christ*, 1972, p. 2.

Despite claims such as these, a comparison of the two books will reveal that they are not one and the same. There are some major differences between the two. Both cannot be the word of God. One is an obvious fraud. In fact, various Mormon writings state that the Bible is incomplete and cannot be trusted (1 Nephi 13:26-28; 2 Nephi 29:3, 6, 10). The Mormon church’s *Articles of Faith*, No. 8, states: “We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.”

Interestingly, in stark contrast to their claims of the Bible’s unreliability, the book of Mormon contains numerous quotations from the inspired scriptures. In fact, 26 complete chapters are copied word for word from the KJV of the Bible (Isaiah 2-14; 18; 19; 21; 48-52; 54; Matt. 5-7; 1 Cor. 13). It is also interesting to note that the book of Mormon was supposedly written only a few centuries after the time of Christ; yet it contains the King James language of 1611. This is a serious problem for any Mormon apologist!

After considering the following contradictions, which will you chose to follow: The Bible or the book of Mormon?

Where was Jesus born? The Bible tells us Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea (Matt. 2:1). However, according to the book of Mormon, Jesus born in Jerusalem (Alma 7:10). Which is correct? These are two *different* cities!

How Long was there Darkness at the Death of Christ? The Bible tells us there were three *hours* of darkness at the time of Christ’s death (Matt. 27:45; Mk. 15:33; Lk. 23:44).

²² Jerald & Sandra Tanner, *Mormonism: Shadow or Reality?* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Modern Microfilm Company, 1972 Enlarged Edition), 2.

However, according to the book of Mormon there were three *days* of darkness (1 Nephi 19:10; Helaman 14:20; 3 Nephi 8:3).

When was Christ called, Jesus? The Bible tells us that when the angel Gabriel visited Mary, he told her, "...you shall call His name Jesus." The name Jesus is not used in scripture anytime prior to this moment (about 4 B.C.). However, the book of Mormon has the Christ being called, Jesus, in about 559-545 B.C.

When were the Disciples First Called, Christians? The Bible tells us the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch (Acts 11:26). However, the book of Mormon has the disciples called Christians over a hundred years earlier! (Alma 46:13-14; 48:10). According to the book of Mormon, we cannot trust Luke's historical record!

When was Christ's church Established? In approximately A.D. 30, Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build My church" (Matt. 16:18). However, according to the book of Mormon, His church existed long before. They have the church of Christ existing and people being added to it by virtue of their being baptized in around 147 B.C. (Mosiah 18:17). How could the church exist and baptism have any power prior to Christ's death, burial and resurrection?

Which is Greater, a Seer or a Prophet? In the Bible, a seer is another word for a prophet. They are one and the same (1 Sam. 9:9). However, according to the book of Mormon, a seer is greater than a prophet (Mosiah 8:15).

Did the Lord make any Covenants with Joseph? The Bible records no direct covenants between God and Joseph. However, according to the book of Mormon, there were great covenants made between the two (2 Nephi 3:4). Let the Mormon's show us just one of these covenants.

Did God confound the Language of All the Earth at the Tower of Babel? The Bible says, "There the Lord confused the language of the whole earth..." (Gen. 11:9). According to the book of Mormon, this was not true, for it states,

And it came to pass that the brother of Jared did cry unto the Lord, and the Lord had compassion upon Jared; therefore he did not confound the language of Jared; and Jared and his brother were not confounded (Ether 1:25, 37).

Did the Nephites Keep the Law of Moses? According to the book of Mormon, these ancestors of theirs, kept the Law of Moses.

And now, behold, two hundred years had passed away, and the people of Nephi had waxed strong in the land. They observed to keep the law of Moses and the sabbath day holy unto the Lord. And they profaned not; neither did they blaspheme. And the laws of the land were exceedingly strict. (Jarom 5).

However, we also read of the Nephites,

And it came to pass that I, Nephi, did consecrate Jacob and Joseph, that they should be priests and teachers over the land of my people (2 Nephi 5:26).

If these people were so strict about keeping the Law of Moses they would have known that priests came from the tribe of Levi (Ex. 28:1ff; Num. 3:1-10). To appoint priests from another tribe while under the Law would have been a sin (cf. 1 Kings 12:31ff).

Contradictions and Changes in the Book of Mormon

According to Joseph Smith himself, there should have been no reason whatsoever to make any changes to the book of Mormon. Smith wrote:

Upon this, our second failure, Martin Harris proposed that he should withdraw himself from us, believing, as he expressed himself, that his presence was the cause of our not obtaining what we wished for. He accordingly withdrew from us, and we knelt down again, and had not been many minutes engaged in prayer, when presently we beheld a light above us in the air, of exceeding brightness; and behold, an angel stood before us. In his hands he held the plates which we had been praying for these to have a view of. He turned over the leaves one by one, so that we could see them, and discern the engravings thereon distinctly. He addressed himself to David Whitmer, and said, "David, blessed is the Lord, and he that keeps His commandments;" when, immediately afterwards, we heard a voice from out of the bright light above us, saying, "These plates have been revealed by the power of God, and they have been translated by the power of God. the translation of them is correct, and I command you to bear record of what you now see and hear."²³

Smith also wrote,

"I told the brethren that the book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth..."²⁴

Despite the claims of Smith in regards to the book of Mormon, here are some interesting problems and contradictions.

Which King? In the original 1830 edition of the book of Mormon, Mosiah 21:28 reads: "...king Benjamin had a gift from God..." However, according to the Mormon timing king Benjamin would have been dead at this time (cf. Mosiah 6:3-7; 7:1). Hence, in the later editions of the book of Mormon the text is changed to read, "...king Mosiah had a gift from God..." The names of the kings are corrected.

The same change is seen in the book of Ether. The original 1830 edition reads, "...for this cause did king Benjamin keep them..." However, the corrected version reads, "...for this cause did king Mosiah keep them..." (Ether 4:1).

²³ Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, Vol. 1 (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 1967), 54-55.

²⁴ *Ibid.* Vol. 4, 461.

An Addition? In the 1830 edition 1 Nephi 20:1 reads as follows (note: cf. with Isa. 48:1):

“Harken and hear this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah, which swear by the name of the Lord...”

In newer versions the text reads:

“Harken and hear this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah, **or out of the waters of baptism**, which swear by the name of the Lord...”

Why the change?

Peter or Jesus? In 3 Nephi 20:23-26 the book of Mormon has Jesus appearing to the Nephites after His crucifixion. There Jesus supposedly is quoting to them from Moses about the qualifications for a prophet. The words Jesus should have quoted are found in Deuteronomy 18:15, 18-19. However, the Mormons have Jesus quoting Peter’s paraphrase of the passage, practically word for word from the KJV (cf. Acts 3:24-26). These are words that had (at this time) not even been spoken by Peter!

Multiple examples of grammar and the changing of names could be offered, but the point should be clear. The most correct book on earth was not so perfect!

The Book Mormon vs. Doctrines and Covenants

Does the Father have a Body of Flesh and Bones, or is He a Spirit

Doctrines and Covenants:

The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us.

D & C 130:22

The Book of Mormon:

And then Ammon said: Believest thou that there is a Great Spirit? And he said, Yea. And Ammon said: This is God.

Alma 18:26-28

Lectures of Faith: (Omitted from Modern versions of D & C)

They are the Father and the Son: The Father being a personage of spirit, glory and power.... The Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, a personage of tabernacle, made, or fashioned like unto man...

Lectures of Faith Section 5:2

Can We Be Saved After we Pass from this Life?

Doctrines and Covenants sections 127-128 describes the Mormon doctrine of being baptized for the dead. There, in regards to a person being judged you will read:

...for out of the books shall your dead be judged, according to their own works, whether they themselves attended to the ordinances in their own persona, or by the means of their own agents, according to the ordinance which God has prepared for their salvation...

D & C 128:8

The Book of Mormon:

For behold, this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God; yea, behold the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors.

Alma34:32

Ye cannot say, when ye are brought to that awful crisis, that I will repent, that I will return to my God. Nay, ye cannot say this; for that same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life, that same spirit will the power to possess your body in that eternal world.

Alma 34:34

And, in fine, wo unto all those who die in their sins; for they shall return to God, and behold his face, and remain in their sins.

2 Nephi 9:38

Is Polygamy a Sin?

Doctrines and Covenants:

David also received many wives and concubines, and also Solomon and Moses my servants, as also many others of my servants from the beginning of creation until this time; and in nothing did they sin save in those things which they received not of me.

D & C 132:38

David's wives and concubines were given unto him of me...

D & C 132:39

The Book Mormon:

Behold, David and Solomon truly had many wives and concubines, which thing was abominable before me, saith the Lord.

Jacob 2:24

False Doctrines of the Mormon Church

Jesus a Polygamist? According to Orson Pratt (one of the original 12 Mormon Apostles) in his book, *The Seer*, Jesus was guilty of polygamy. Here is what is written:

One thing is certain, that there were several holy women that greatly loved Jesus—such as Mary, and Martha her sister, and Mary Magdalene; and Jesus greatly loved them; and associated with them much; and when He arose from the dead, instead of first showing Himself to His chosen witnesses, the Apostles, He appeared first to these women, or at least to one of them—namely, Mary Magdalene. Now it would be very natural for a husband in the resurrection to appear first to his own dear wives, and afterwards show himself to his other friends. If all the acts of Jesus were written, we no doubt should learn that these beloved women were his wives.²⁵

Adam to be Baptized in the Name of Jesus Christ? In *The Pearl of Great Price*, Adam is instructed about the need for being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost! Isn't this a little early? From this Mormon writing of Joseph Smith we have these words:

And it came to pass, when the Lord had spoken with Adam, our father, that Adam cried unto the Lord, and he was caught away by the Spirit of the Lord, and was carried down into the water, and was laid under the water, and was brought forth out of the water. And thus he was baptized...²⁶

This same book has Noah preaching repentance and baptism in the name of Jesus Christ!

God is Flesh? According to Mormon teaching, God possesses a body of flesh and bone (cf. Ether 3:6, 8). In the Mormon work, *Doctrines and Covenants* we read: “The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit” (D of C 130:22).

Interestingly, the book of Mormon states, “Do ye not suppose that such things are abominable unto him who created all flesh? And the one being is as precious in his sight as the other. And all flesh is of the dust...” (Jacob 2:20). If all flesh is of the dust, and the Father and Son are of the dust, who created them?

In a sermon on this particular subject, Brigham Young made the following statements:

When our Father Adam came into the garden of Eden, he came into it with a celestial body, and brought Eve, one of his wives with him. He helped make and organize this world. He is Michael, the archangel, the Ancient of Days....



Brigham Young

²⁵ Orson Pratt, *The Seer* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Republished by Eugene Wagner), 159.

²⁶ Joseph Smith, Jr. *The Pearl of Great Price*, 22.

When Adam and Eve had eaten of the forbidden fruit, their bodies became mortal from its effects, and therefore their offspring were mortal. When the virgin Mary conceived the child Jesus, the Father had begotten him in his own likeness. He was not begotten by the Holy Ghost.²⁷

Homer Hailey makes the following accurate assessment of this teaching:

Adam

- (1) Was Created (Gen. 5:1-2).
- (2) Sinned (Rom. 5:12, 14).
- (3) Died (Gen 5:5).
- (4) Brought Death to the Human Family (1 Cor. 15:21-22).

Therefore, the Father and God of Mormonism is dead! Besides, he is responsible for sin and death in the world.²⁸

Man was in the Beginning with God? According to the Mormon book *Doctrines and Covenants*: “Man was also in the beginning with God” (D & C 93:29). This is clearly contradictory to the Bible, which tells us that God formed man from the dust of the ground (Gen. 2:7). John tells us, “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (Jn. 1:1). No mention of man in the beginning with God.

Misplaced Humility? *Doctrines and Covenants* makes the following statement: “And again I say unto you, let every man esteem his brother as himself” (38:25). Compare this to what the Bible teaches: “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as **more important than yourselves.**” (Phil. 2:3).

Elias and Elijah: *Doctrines and Covenants* has Elias and Elijah as two different people (D & C 110:12-15). In the Bible Elias is another rendering of Elijah, they are the same person (cf. KJV the following passages: I Kings 18; Mk. 4:5; Lk. 1:16-17; Matt. 17:11-12; Js. 5:17).

What is the New Covenant? According to *Doctrines and Covenants*: “...remember the new covenant, even the book of Mormon...” (D & C 84:15). Compare this to the New Testament:

For this reason He [Jesus Christ, not Moroni or Joseph Smith) is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance (Hebrews 9:15).

Head or Heads of the Church? D & C makes reference to “the heads of the church.” The Bible refers to *the head*, Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:20ff).

²⁷ Brigham Young, *The Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star*, No. 48. Vol. XV. Saturday, November 26, 1853. Excerpts taken from Homer Hailey's, *Mormonism*, 33-34.

²⁸ Homer Hailey, *Mormonism*, 35.

Through Whose Seed Will the Earth be Blessed? Once again, compare D & C with the Bible.

Doctrines and Covenants:

“And as I said unto Abraham concerning the kindreds of the earth, even so I say unto my servant Joseph [Smith], in thee and in thy seed shall the kindred of the earth blessed” (D & C 124:58).

The Bible:

Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as referring to many, but rather to one, “And to your seed,” that is, Christ (Galatians 3:16).

Joseph Smith or the Apostle Paul? According to D & C: “Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived” (D & C 135:3). However, according to the apostle Paul:

Are they servants of Christ?—I speak as if insane—I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death (2 Corinthians 11:23).

Another Gospel?

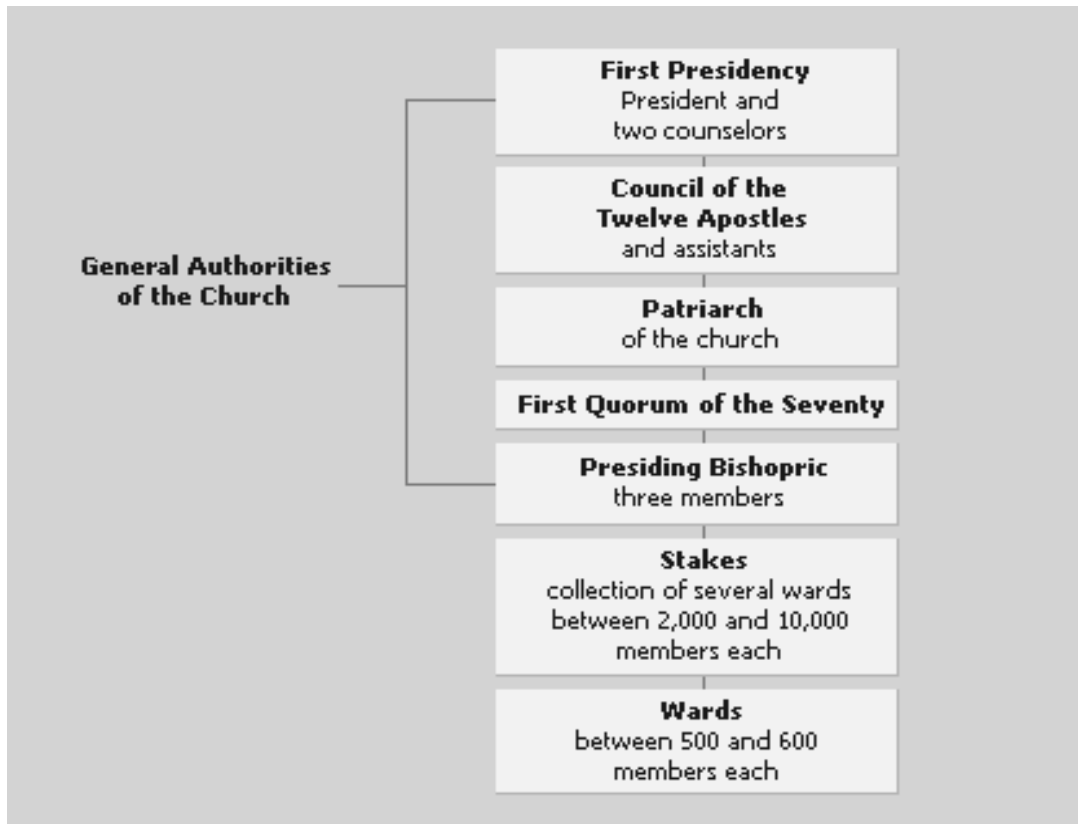
Mormonism is clearly not consistent with the Bible. They might argue that they are indeed the other gospel of Jesus Christ, but the Bible says:

I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, **if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!** (Galatians 1:6-9).

There is much more that could be offered in refutation of Mormonism, but hopefully what we have only briefly presented will be enough for any and all to see the errors of this popular and fast-growing religion.

Organization of the Mormon Church

The chart on the following pages outlines the present organization of the Mormon church. Compare this to the chart on page 49.



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Hierarchy of the Mormon Church

The Mormon church has no professional clergy. A hierarchy of officials, as shown in this chart, oversees the operations of the church. Those who serve as bishops or council members, for example, continue to work in their lay jobs and are not paid for the work they perform for the church. The church dictates that the primary role of women is in the home; however, women can serve in the Relief Society, a women’s organization that parallels the priesthood in the hierarchy.²⁹

Questions:

1. What do history and eyewitness accounts reveal as to the nature of Joseph Smith Jr.?
2. Why do you think Mormonism has such a strong appeal to so many people?
3. In what ways are the book of Mormon and the Bible different? List some examples:
4. In what ways does Mormonism fail our four-part test?
5. What do Mormons believe about Adam? How is it different that the Bible?
6. Does the Bible indicate that Jesus was a polygamist? Which Mormon teacher advocated this idea?

²⁹ Microsoft ® Encarta ® Encyclopedia 2002. © 1993-2001 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

LESSON SEVEN

SEVENTH DAY ADVENTISM

THE SEVENTH DAY ADVENTISTS history begins with a man named, William Miller. Miller formed a small group of followers known as the Second Adventists. At this point, the idea of the Seventh Day or Sabbath Day observance had not originated among this group of people. Miller's popularity arose because of a prediction he had made in regards to Christ's Second Advent. Miller said,

I am fully convinced that sometime between March 21st, 1843 and March 21st, 1844, according to the Jewish mode of computation of time, Christ will come, and bring all His saints with Him; and then He will reward every man as his work shall be.³⁰

When the predicated date arrived, Miller's followers dressed in "ascension robes" eager and ready to meet the Lord. They climbed to the tops of hills, trees or housetops; anywhere to be closer to the Lord as He made His descent. At the time, it was reported that some Millerites were actually jumping from roofs and treetops, hoping to time their leaps with Christ's return. To the disappointment of Miller and his followers, Christ did not return at the predicted time.

Miller's failure in setting a date for the Lord's return only led him to conclude that his calculations were off by one year. According to Miller, the Lord would come the next year at the same date. However, once again, Jesus did not return at the predicated date. "Humiliated over his second failure, Mr. Miller stepped off the stage of date setting, and disappeared from the scene."³¹

In the wake of Miller's prophetic failures stepped a young woman named, Ellen G. White. White was a follower of Miller's who took the reigns of the "Millerites." "She first tried to repair the broken down places in Miller's prophetic fences, but that was a somewhat hopeless effort, since the whole fence was out. She conceived the idea of adding the Seventh Day sabbath to the second advent doctrine, and Seventh Day Adventism emerged from the prophetic debacle of Miller's career, with Ellen's re-organized party."³²

The Adventists claim that Ellen G. White was an inspired prophetess of God. Commenting on the foolishness of this belief, Foy Wallace noted:



Ellen G. White

³⁰ William Millar, *Signs of the Times*, quoted in *End Time Visions* by Richard Abanes, 221.

³¹ Foy E. Wallace, *God's Prophetic Word* (Fort Worth, TX: Foy E. Wallace Jr. Publications, Eighth Printing, 1960), 305.

³² *Ibid.* 305-306.

The publisher's preface to the Great Controversy, Ellen White's own work, will serve as evidence to any who may be disposed to deny it, that Adventists believe and teach that Ellen White was an inspired prophetess of God. Later editions of this work deleted some damaging sentences, but here is the statement of the publishers bearing on the inspiration of prophetess Ellen in the original preface: "We believe she has been empowered by a divine illumination to speak of past events which have been brought to her attention with a greater minuteness than is set forth in any existing records, and to read the future with more than human foresight."—Publisher's preface, page (a), Great Controversy, by Ellen G. White.

The official statement of the Adventist publishing house claims, first, that Ellen White had a divine illumination in reference to events of the past greater than authors of any existing records; second, that she had more than human foresight in reference to events of the future. The books of the Old Testament prophets are existing records. The epistles of the New Testament apostles are existing records. But the Adventist publishers of Ellen White's writings claim for her a degree of direct inspiration and a measure of divine illumination greater than that of any existing record.

So say the Mormons of Joseph Smith; so say the Christian Scientists of Mary Baker Eddy; so say the Adventists of Ellen White. Their claims are the same and they all fall together.³³

A close examination of White's "revelations" reveal only one thing: She was NO prophetess of God! Again from the pen of Foy Wallace:

Here is the young woman's statement about her visions, from "The Early Writings of Mrs. White," page 26:

"In the holiest I saw an ark . . . in the ark was the golden pot of manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of stone which folded together like a book. Jesus opened them and I saw the ten commandments written on them with the finger of God. . . the holy sabbath looked glorious--a halo of glory was all around it. I saw that the sabbath was not nailed to the cross."

This statement from the book of visions of Adventism's prophetess reveals the source of their sabbath doctrine. Ellen claims that she was caught up into heaven, where she saw that the sabbath was not nailed to the cross! Reading Paul's language in Col. 2:14-16, anyone here on earth, who can read, can "see" that the sabbath was mentioned among the things Paul said were "nailed to the cross"—and Ellen evidently "saw" what Paul said. So she took a trip to heaven and "saw" what she could not see in the Bible.

Borrowing language from the Bible, she saw the "manna"; "Aaron's rod that budded"; and the "tables of stone" with ten commandments "written on them" by the "finger of God." Like imposter Joe Smith, of Mormonism, she borrows Bible language for effect. And she said, "The holy sabbath looked glorious." The rest of the decalogue was faded and dimmed, but the "holy" sabbath looked glorious! A "halo" of glory all around "the holy sabbath" over-shadowed everything else in the decalogue. Only the sabbath was so holy. Here is the all-important part of it,-

³³ Ibid. 306.

“The holy sabbath looked glorious and I saw the sabbath was not nailed to the cross.” In Col 2:14-16, Paul said that God abolished the law, “nailing it to the cross,” and added, “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days.”

The word days in this passage is in italics to indicate that it was not in the original text. So the text reads “or of the sabbath day”--the new moon, monthly, the sabbath day weekly. Paul said the sabbath was nailed to the cross. Prophetess Ellen took a trip to heaven and saw that the sabbath was not nailed to the cross.... The truth of the whole thing is, as a matter of record, Ellen had been hit in the head with a brick. Addled Ellen saw stars and thought they were visions! Silly, simple Ellen thought she went to heaven; thought she had a vision; thought she saw Jesus; thought she saw a “halo” around the holy sabbath, and Adventist preachers go all over the country prating about the spirit of prophecy in “Sister Ellen,” the “only infallible interpreter of the Bible.” It reduces itself to the ridiculous...³⁴

This presents a shaky foundation upon which Seventh Adventism is built... two false prophets, Miller and White. The apostle Paul was clear, “For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:11).

Adventist Doctrine Regarding the Sabbath

As their name implies the Seventh-day Adventists believe in the continued observance of the Sabbath. It is their belief that the Lord’s day and the Sabbath day are one and the same. They make this connection by combining to completely unrelated passages of scripture (Mk. 2:27-28; Rev. 1:10).

Jesus said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. “So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27-28).

I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet (Revelation 1:10).

Adventists reason, that since Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath, then the Lord’s day must be the Sabbath. This is poor hermeneutical reasoning. The fact that Jesus claimed to be Lord of the Sabbath did not mean it was His *personal* day. In the same way, the expression “the Lord’s day” is not expressive of personal possession.

In the Bible, the day of the Lord, or the Lord’s Day, was not a reference to Sunday. Referring to Sunday as the Lord’s Day is a tradition of the church that has no scriptural support. Let someone produce the verse where the first day of the week is given such a description.³⁵

A careful examination of the scriptures will reveal that the Lord’s day was a day of God’s wrath being poured out on the disobedient (Isa. 13:6, 9; Eze. 13:5; Joel 1:15; Zep. 1:7, 14; Mal. 4:5; 2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 1:10). The Adventists are wrong in associating the

³⁴ Ibid. 310-311.

³⁵ John Buttrey II, *Let No One Mislead You* (Lincoln, NE: iUniverse Inc., 2004), 86.

Lord's day with the Sabbath day, and we as the church are wrong in calling Sunday, "the Lord's day."

As far as a continued observance of the Sabbath is concerned, let us remember that the Old Law was a covenant *only* with Israel (Ex. 19:5ff). As Christians, we were *never* under the Law of Moses. The Bible tells us the Old Law was nailed to the cross; therefore it is no longer binding (Col. 2:14; Heb. 10:9). Dealing with those who were seeking to bind the requirements of the Old Law on Christians, Jew and Gentile, the apostle Paul wrote:

Therefore **no one is to act as your judge** in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon **or a Sabbath day**— things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ (Colossians 2:16-17).

To the Galatians, Paul was just as clear with respect to the deadness of the Law on those in Christ.

It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and **do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery**. Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace (Galatians 5:1-4).

Attempting to get around this clear teaching of scripture, Adventists make a distinction between the Ten Commandments and the Law of Moses. They say the Law of Moses was taken away, but the Ten Commandments (or Decalogue) was never removed; hence we are still under obligation to keep the Sabbath. This is incorrect.

The argument is made that the law of Moses is the ceremonial law, which Adventists say is the law that was abolished. But the decalogue, they aver, is not the law of Moses but is the law of God, and the decalogue is the law or covenant which was not abrogated. They attempt to make a distinction between the law of Moses and the law of God. Anyone who has ever heard them talk knows their line. The "ceremonial law" they say, was the law of Moses, and the law of Moses was done away, but the decalogue is "the law of God," and the law of God, or the law of the Lord, was not done away. A few scriptures on this point will show that they make a distinction where there is no difference.

In Ezra 7:6 we have this reading: "This Ezra went up from Babylon; and he was a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the Lord God of Israel had given." There we find that God gave the law of Moses. Then what did Moses give? I read from 2 Chron. 34:14: "And when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of the Lord, Hilkiah the priest, found the book of the law of the Lord, given by Moses." So God gave the law of Moses, and Moses gave the law of God. Now read 2 Chron. 31:3 "He appointed also the king's portion of his substance for the burnt offering, to wit, for the morning, and evening burnt offerings, and the burnt offerings for the sabbaths, and for the new moons, and for the set feasts, as it is written in the law of the Lord."

Adventists insist that the Ten Commandments are not the law of Moses, but the law of the Lord. But 2 Chron. 31:3 mentions "burnt offerings," "new moons,"

and “set feasts” along with “sabbaths” as being in the “law of the Lord.” Where does the decalogue mention such? These are things which they say belong to “the ceremonial law” but Chronicles put them in God’s law. It proves that Adventists made a false distinction.

Corollary to the claim that the decalogue is the law of the Lord, and not the law of Moses, is the resultant contention that the ceremonial law is the law of Moses, and not the law of the Lord. Hence, the attempted distinction between the law of God (the Lord) and the law of Moses. The passages cited prove that there is no such distinction in reference to the decalogue, and we shall now prove that there is no such distinction in reference to the ceremonial law. Turn to Mark 7, verse 10: “Moses said, honor thy father and thy mother.” That is one of the Ten Commandments. Mark said it was the law of Moses. Now read the second chapter of Luke:

1. Verses 22-23 : “And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord.” That refers to Mary bringing the child Jesus to Jerusalem, “according to the law of Moses.” Now note verse 23: “As it is written in the law of the Lord, every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord.” Where is there anything like that in the Ten Commandments? What is called “the law of Moses” in verse 22, is called “the law of the Lord” in verse 23.

2. Verses 24, 27, 39: “And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.” Which one of the Ten Commandments is that--about doves and pigeons? Now note verse 27 “And when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law.” Then in verse 39, “And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth.” Here the “custom” of the law and the law of the Lord are the same. Hence, “the law of Moses,” and “the law of the Lord,” and “the law” are used in these five verses interchangeably; they refer to the same thing. The Adventist argument is, therefore, a distinction without a difference.³⁶

If the complete Old Law was removed, and if we were never actually under the Old Law, then there is no reason to suppose that we today should be observing the sabbath as required of Israel.

Adventist View of the Millennium

The Adventist view of the so-called “millennium” is quite different than what is more popularly presented by premillennial advocates, and even from our own eschatological beliefs. According to Adventist doctrine the millennium is the thousand-year reign of Christ with His saints *in heaven* (not on earth as in premillennial teaching). During these thousand years in heaven the earth will have no human inhabitants but will be occupied by Satan and his angels. After the thousand years, Christ, with His saints, will descend from heaven in the holy city. At this time, the unrighteous dead will be raised and will join the devil and his angels as they surround the holy city in an attempt to destroy it. However, fire will come down out of heaven and consume them; thus, the world will be cleansed of sinners forever. The saints will then live with Christ on a restored *paradise earth* (not heaven) for all eternity.

³⁶ Foy E. Wallace, *God’s Prophetic Word*, 319-320.

LESSON EIGHT

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE

THUS FAR IN OUR STUDY we have discussed the religious followings of Joseph Smith, Ellen G. White, William Miller and Charles Taze Russell. In this lesson, we will be introduced to yet another false teacher, Mary Baker Eddy. It was Mary Baker Eddy who founded the religion known as Christian Science. Various authors have demonstrated that many of her writings in regards to the science of the mind are plagiarisms of the work of others. Walter Martin, in his book, *Kingdom of the Cults*, included the following examples:³⁷

THE METAPHYSICAL RELIGION OF
HEGEL
By Francis Lieber

1. "For Hegel and his true disciples there is no truth, substance, life or intelligence in matter; all is Infinite Mind. Thus matter has no reality; it is only the manifestation of spirit ... therefore science is spiritual, for God is Spirit" (page 85).
2. "Hegel science brings to light truth and its supremacy, universal harmony, God's entirety, and matter's nothingness. For him there are but two realities, God and the ideas of God, in other words spirit and what it shadows forth. Properly, there is no physical science. The principle of science is God, intelligence and not matter. Therefore science is spiritual, for God is Spirit and the Principle of the universe is (man). We learn from Hegel that mind is universal the first and only cause of all that really is. Embryology affords no instance of one species producing another, the serpent germinating a bird, or a lion a lamb. The difference is not as great between the opposite species as between matter and spirit, so utterly unlike in substance and intelligence. That spirit propagates matter or matter spirit, is morally impossible. Hegel repudiates the thought" (pages 85, 86).

SCIENCE AND HEALTH WITH
KEY TO THE SCRIPTURES
By Mary Baker Eddy

1. "There is no life, truth, intelligence nor substance in matter. All is Infinite Mind and its infinite manifestation, for God is all in all ... Spirit is God, and man is His image and likeness. Therefore man is not material; he is spiritual" (page 468, paragraphs 9-15).
2. "Christian science brings to light Truth and its supremacy, universal mind, the entirety of God, good, and the nothingness of evil" (page 293, paragraphs 28-31).

"There is no physical science, the principle of science is God, intelligence and not matter; therefore science is spiritual, for God is Spirit and the Principle of the universe and man. We learn from science mind is universal, the first and only cause of all that really is."

"Embryology affords no instance of one species producing another, the serpent germinating a bird, or a lion a lamb ... The difference is not as great between the opposite species as between matter and spirit, so utterly unlike in substance and intelligence. That spirit propagates matter or matter spirit, is morally impossible; science repudiates the thought" (pages 10, 264).

³⁷ Walter Martin, *Kingdom of the Cults*, 113.

Martin cited numerous other examples of Eddy's plagiarisms. Those interested in a further expose of such can research them in Martin's referenced work.

Christian Science Teachings *Versus* The Bible

Mary Baker Eddy is quoted as saying, "The Bible has been my only authority. I have had no other guide in the 'straight and narrow' way of truth."³⁸ However, a brief survey of some of the teachings of Christian Science will show that it is contradictory to the basic teachings of the Bible; a fact which should lead people to reject this false religion. Consider some of these examples:



Mary Baker Eddy

The Inspiration and Authority of the Scriptures

The Bible is the inspired word of God (2 Tim. 3:15-16). Its historical accuracy, scientific foreknowledge, fulfilled prophecies, and unity of message have confirmed that "God's word" is not the work of men. However, Christian Scientists are told the Bible is full of textual errors. Walter Martin notes:

To the average Christian Scientist the Bible is a compilation of ancient writings "full of hundreds of thousands of textual errors... its divinity is... uncertain, its inspiration... questionable... It is made up of metaphors, allegories, myths and fables... It cannot be read and interpreted literally..."³⁹

Because the Bible (according to Christian Science) cannot be understood "literally," a qualified interpreter is needed. For them, the qualified authority for interpretation is Mary Baker Eddy. How convenient!

Belief in the Trinity

The inspired scriptures teach the truth of One God in three persons. This belief is called the doctrine of the trinity. Though the word "trinity" is not found in the Bible, the concept is seen in the word of God. Contrary to this teaching are the beliefs of Mary Baker Eddy who wrote, "The theory of three persons in one God (that is, a personal trinity or triunity) suggests heathen gods, rather than the one everlasting I Am."⁴⁰ For Mary Baker Eddy, the following sums-up her false system belief, she stated, "Life, Truth, Love constitute the triune God." While these are certainly *some* characteristics of God they are not the *whole* of the Almighty (Rom. 11:33-36).

In Christian Science theology, if it be properly understood, the term "God" is merely a relative one and bears no resemblance whatsoever to the Deity so clearly revealed in the Bible... Mrs. Eddy interchanges the terms "Life," "Truth," "Love," "Principle," "Mind," "Substance," "Intelligence," "Spirit," "Mother," etc. with that of God; thus Christian Science contends that God is *impersonal*, devoid of any personality at all. Biblically speaking, of course, this is

³⁸ Science and Health, 126. As quoted by Walter Martin in *Kingdom of the Cults*. 125.

³⁹ Walter Martin, *Kingdom of the Cults*, 125. Note: Martin was in part quoting from I.M. Haldeman, *Christian Science in the Light of the Holy Scriptures*, 377.

⁴⁰ Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health*, 152.

a theological and historical absurdity since the core of Jehovah's uniqueness was His personal nature—I Am...⁴¹

The Deity of Jesus Christ

The fact that the Jesus Christ was, and is, God, is well-established in the scriptures (cf. Jn. 1:1-3, 14; Rom. 9:5; 2 Cor. 4:4; Phil. 2:5ff; Col. 1:16-17; Titus 2:13; Heb. 1:3, 8-9). In contrast to this clear teaching regarding Christ's deity, Mary Baker told her Christian Scientist followers, "Jesus Christ is not God as Jesus Himself declared but is the son of God."⁴² This statement would assert that Jesus was either a liar or confused! While Jesus rightfully made claim to being the Son of God, He also (truthfully) claimed equality with God, a fact Mrs. Eddy neglects to tell her followers (cf. Matthew 22:42-46; John 8:24-28; 58; 14:8-9).

The Miracles of Jesus

If one is to accept the teachings of the Bible as divine truth, they must also accept the miracles performed by Jesus as being real. Scripture records a number of miracles performed by Jesus:

1. Water turned to wine. John 2:6-10.
2. Nobleman's son healed. John 4:46-53.
3. Centurion's servant healed. Matt. 9:5-13.
4. Draughts of fish. Lk. 5:4-6; John 21:6.
5. Devils cast out. Matt. 8:28-32; 9:32, 33; 15:22-28; 17:14-18; Mk. 1:23-27.
6. Peter's wife's mother healed. Matt. 8:14, 15.
7. Lepers cleansed. Matt. 8:3; Lk. 17:14.
8. Paralytic healed. Mat. 2:3-12.
9. Withered hand restored. Matt. 12:10-13.
10. Impotent man healed. John 5:5-9.
11. The dead raised to life. Matt. 9:18; 19:23-25; Lk. 7:12-15; John 11:11-44.
12. Issue of blood stopped. Matt. 9:20-22.
13. The blind restored to sight. Matt. 9:27-30; Mk. 8:22-25; John 9:1-7.
14. The deaf and dumb cured. Mk. 7:32-35.
15. The multitude fed. Matt. 14:15-21; 15:32-38.
16. His walking on the sea. Matt. 14:25-27.
17. Peter walking on the sea. Matt. 14:29.
18. Tempest stilled. Matt. 8:23-26; 14:32.
19. Sudden arrival of the ship. John 6:21.
20. Tribute money. Matt. 17:27.
21. Woman healed of infirmity. Lk. 13:11-13.
22. Dropsy cured. Lk. 14:2-4.
23. Fig tree blighted. Matt. 21:19.
24. Malchus healed. Lk. 22:50, 51.
25. Performed before the messengers of John. Lk. 7:21, 22.
26. Many divers diseases healed. Matt. 4:23, 24; 14:14; 15:30; Mk. 1:34; Lk. 6:17-19.⁴³

⁴¹ Martin, 128.

⁴² Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health*. 361.

⁴³ Torrey, R.A. *The New Topical Text Book : A Scriptural Text Book for the Use of Ministers, Teachers, and All Christian Workers*. Oak Harbor, WA: Logos research Systems, Inc., 1995, c1897.

All of these were miracles in that they seemed to defy natural law. They were events which required Divine power to perform. Once again, quoting from Walter Martin:

Respecting the miracles performed by Christ during His earthly ministry, Christian Scientists, whether they admit it or not, must logically deny that they were miracles in the first place and discount them as merely “illusions of mortal mind.” Mrs. Eddy states that disease, sin, sickness and death are all illusions; they are not “real” since only Mind (God) is real and Mind is spiritual not material. Therefore following Christian Science theology to its “logical” conclusions—since the “illusion of disease” can exist only in the “illusion called matter,” that is itself existent only in the illusion called “mortal mind” which Mrs. Eddy denies exists anyway—there are no miracles at all because there was no corporeal body to be diseased, hence no need for a cure. Mrs. Eddy wrote, “The sick are not healed merely by declaring there is no sickness, but by *knowing* there is *none*.”⁴⁴

No Evil, No Sin

According to Christian Science teaching there is no such thing as evil. The logical conclusion then is that there is no sin. Mrs. Eddy wrote:

Evil has no reality. It is neither person, place nor thing but is simply a belief, an illusion of material sense.⁴⁵

[Evil] never originated or existed as an entity. It is but a false belief...⁴⁶

There was never a moment in which evil was real.⁴⁷

The belief of sin... is an unconscious error in the beginning.⁴⁸

There is no sin... Man is incapable of sin...⁴⁹

If God is Mind and fills all space, is everywhere, matter is nowhere and sin is obsolete.⁵⁰

All of these statements are completely contradictory to the teachings of the Bible. The Bible is unmistakably clear, Satan is real and sin is a deadly reality which separates man from God (cf. Rom. 3:23; 6:23; 1 Pet. 5:8).

⁴⁴ Martin, 131.

⁴⁵ Eddy, *Science and Health*, 237.

⁴⁶ Eddy, *Miscellaneous Writings*, 45.

⁴⁷ Eddy, *Yes and No*, 33.

⁴⁸ Eddy, *Science and Health*, 81.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* 447-475.

⁵⁰ Eddy, *Miscellaneous Writings*, 173.

No Need for Medicine to aid in the Healing of the Body.

When asked about using medicine to aid in the healing of one who is suffering from a sickness, Mrs. Eddy had this to say:

You only weaken your power to heal through Mind, by any compromise with matter; which is virtually acknowledging that under difficulties the former is not equal to the latter. He that resorts to physics, seeks what is below instead of above the standard of metaphysics; showing his ignorance of the meaning of the term and of Christian Science.⁵¹

Move Over Doctor Atkins, it's All in the Mind!

Mrs. Eddy was asked, "How can I believe that there is no such thing as matter, when I weigh over two hundred pounds and carry about weight daily?" She responded, "By learning that matter is but manifest mortal mind."⁵² In other words, once one gains better control of their mind, they can envision themselves as they would much rather appear. If true, this might prove much easier than dieting! After all, if there is no "matter," there are no "fats." What a relief! *Krispy Kreme* here we come!

Questions:

1. Who was Mary Baker Eddy?
2. In what ways was she like Joseph Smith and Ellen G. White?
3. How original were her writings?
4. What are some ways that Christian Science teaching contradicts the Bible? List two examples.
5. In what ways does Christian Science fail our four part test?

⁵¹ Eddy, *Miscellaneous Writings*, 53.

⁵² *Ibid.* 47.

LESSON NINE

TELEVANGELISM

JUST ABOUT ANY NIGHT OF THE WEEK, one can turn on their television to find, either a man or a woman, *supposedly* preaching a message from the Bible. The *Trinity Broadcasting Network*, which airs a number of television “preachers” claims to be reaching the world with the good news of Jesus Christ. But are the messages being delivered through the television airwaves consistent with the Bible? Will those tuned-in to the broadcast learn what it *really* takes to be saved? In this lesson, we will investigate some of the claims made by various televangelists.

Please understand, there is nothing wrong with using the medium of television to preach the gospel. Without a doubt, it is one way to go into all the world. Television has become so much a part of our current culture that it is a very effective means of reaching a wide and diverse audience of people. If television were not an effective means of reaching a large audience, advertisers would cease running commercials.

Various religious groups have learned what advertisers already know, television is an effective way to reach people. Some have sincerely made efforts through the broadcast medium to teach the world about Jesus Christ. However, there are those who use television seemingly to *sell the gospel*. Various television preachers have often presented their viewing audiences with guilt-rendering “sermons” designed to trigger a large financial “love gift” for their “ministry.” For example, one person noted:

Oral Roberts has used both television and the mail to raise millions of dollars.... On January 4, 1987, Roberts launched his most notorious campaign to date. Roberts told his followers that if he did not raise a total of 8 million dollars by March, God was going to take his life....

Comparing himself to the apostle Paul, Roberts begged people not to let Satan defeat him. “God,” he says, “clearly told me he needs me here on earth. And here’s why—because of all the ministries, this ministry is the only one God has on earth that owns a medical school.”

Then comes the inevitable punch line: By sending a “seed” of 50 dollars, Oral’s partners can spare Robert’s life, save the school, sabotage Satan, and secure lots of money to boot.

Some time later, Oral’s son, Richard, took pen in hand to warn of his father’s impending doom. Without “the additional \$4,500,000,” explains Richard, “God will not extend Dad’s life.” He then pleads, “Partner, we cannot let this man of God die...”⁵³



Oral Roberts

“Fundraising schemes” are common among various televangelists. “Have a need, sow a seed” they tell their audience. Of course, the seed to sow is a financial “gift” to their

⁵³ Hank Hanegraaff, *Christianity in Crisis* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1993), 196.

respective ministry. God alone knows their heart and He alone will be the final Judge; however, we are told to test the spirits. As stated earlier, in this lesson we will “test” some of the teachings of the popular televangelists to see if they find consistency with the word of God.

Kenneth Copeland

One of the most recognized television preachers of our time has to be Kenneth Copeland. His program is aired daily at various times across this nation. Consider some of these quotes from Copeland and compare them to the Bible:

“Pray to yourself, because I’m in your self and you’re in myself. We are one Spirit, saith the Lord.”⁵⁴
(cf. Matt. 6:9ff; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 4:15)

“You need to realize that you are not a spiritual schizophrenic—half-God and half-Satan—you are all-God.”⁵⁵
(cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 2:7; Ps. 8:4; Heb. 9:27)

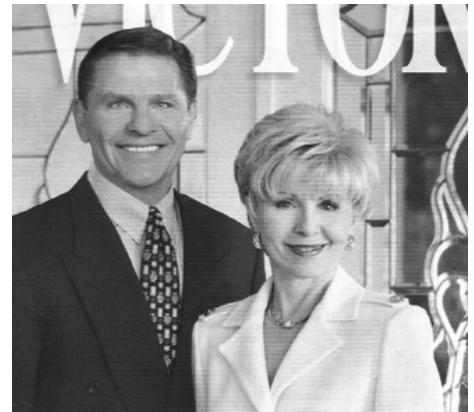
“You don’t have a god *in* you. You *are* one!”⁵⁶

“When I read in my Bible where he [Jesus] says, ‘I Am,’ I say, ‘Yes, I Am too!’”⁵⁷

“Satan conquered Jesus on the Cross.”⁵⁸
(cf. Col. 2:14-15; Heb. 2:14)

[God] is “not some creature that stands 28 feet tall, and He’s got hands, you know, as big as basketballs. That’s not the kind of creature He is.... A being that is very uncanny the way He’s very much like you and me. A being that stands around 6’-2”, 6’-3”, that weighs somewhere in the neighborhood of a couple of hundred pounds, little better, [and] has a [hand] span of nine inches across.”⁵⁹
(cf. Ps. 139; Jn. 4:24)

I was shocked when I found out who the biggest failure in the Bible actually is.... The biggest one in the whole Bible is God.... Now, the reason you don’t think of God as a failure is He has never said He’s a failure. And you’re not a failure till you say you’re one.⁶⁰



Kenneth and Gloria Copeland

⁵⁴ Kenneth Copeland, *Believers Voice of Victory*, February 1987, 9. As quoted by Michael Horton, *The Agony of Deceit: What Some TV Preachers are Really Saying* (Chicago, ILL: Moody, 1990), 268.

⁵⁵ Kenneth Copeland, *Believers Voice of Victory*, February 1987, 2. Source: Ibid.

⁵⁶ Kenneth Copeland, “*The Force of Love*,” tape BCC-56 (Fort Worth, Texas, Kenneth Copeland). Source: Ibid.

⁵⁷ Kenneth Copeland, Tape of crusade, July 19, 1987. Source: Ibid.

⁵⁸ Kenneth Copeland, as quoted by Hank Hanegraaf, *Christianity in Crisis*, 11.

⁵⁹ Kenneth Copeland, as quoted by Hank Hanegraaff, 121.

⁶⁰ Kenneth Copeland, Praise-a-thon program on TBN (April 1988). As quoted by Hank Hanegraaff, 125.

When statements such as these are compared to the Bible, the fallacy of Copeland's teachings are clearly revealed. Man is not equal with God! Man is not the "I Am"! Does Copeland *really* believe God stands 6'-2"? Does he *really* believe God is the biggest failure in the Bible? This is a man to whom trusting people are sending their "love gifts"?

Copeland's wife, Gloria, also shares in the teaching of this ministry. In her book *God's Will is Prosperity*, she wrote of the hundredfold blessing described by Jesus for those in the kingdom (Mk. 10:30):

"Give \$10 and receive \$1,000; give \$1,000 and receive \$100,000. I know that you can multiply, but I want you to see in black and white how tremendous the hundredfold return is."⁶¹

Not surprisingly, Copeland neglects to mention the part of this referenced verse where Jesus talked about (hundredfold) persecutions for those who choose life in the kingdom. Nor does she make mention of what Jesus had earlier (in the same context) said about riches.

And Jesus, looking around, said to His disciples, "How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!"

Mark 10:23

"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

Mark 10:25

While Jesus spoke of the difficulty of riches, the Copelands make appeal to their loyal, yet gullible, followers on the basis of becoming rich through faith. Clearly they are offering those who will listen (and who will send in a check) another gospel (Gal. 1:6-9).

Fred Price

Another well-recognized televangelist is Fredrick Price. Like many of the TV preachers, Price is a dynamic speaker, but this alone does not make his words truth. When compared to the teaching of the Bible, Price is offering another gospel. One person has noted of Price, "Despite telling his followers that he doesn't allow sickness in his home, Price's wife has been treated for cancer in her pelvic area. Referring to his wealth, Price says the reason he drives a Rolls Royce is that he is following in Jesus' steps."⁶² Consider some of these statements from Price:

God has to be given permission to work in this earth realm on behalf of man...
Yes! *You are in control!* So, if man has control, who no longer has it? God.⁶³

Man is the only creation of God that is in God's class... I believe that through these scriptures we can very clearly see that God made man a god.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Gloria Copeland, *God's Will is Prosperity* (Tulsa, OK: Harrison House, 1978), 54. As quoted by Hank Hanegraaff in *Christianity in Crisis*, 199.

⁶² Hanegraaff, 34.

⁶³ Fredrick K. Price, As quoted by Hank Hanegraaff, 11.

If you have to say, “if it be Thy will” or “Thy will be done”—if you have to say that, then you’re calling God a fool.⁶⁵

According to Price, in faith, one can, “name it and claim it.” Whatever you want, name it in faith and it is yours—as he himself declares: “If you have a bicycle faith, all you’re gonna get is a bicycle.”⁶⁶

This “faith” themed message preached regularly by many TV preachers is that the individual believer (because he is a god) has the power, through faith, to obtain or overcome whatever they wish: sickness, poverty, loneliness. Just speak a word of faith and you can overcome. This is “sold” to listeners through various gimmicks and clever slogans: “*Have a need? Plant (in faith) a seed!*” “*Name and Claim it!*”

Pat Robertson states, “Most people ask God for a miracle but many omit a key requirement—the spoken word. God has given us authority over disease, over demons, over sickness, over storms, over finances. We are to declare that authority in Jesus’ name.” “We are,” says Robertson, “to command the money to come to us...”⁶⁷

This is a complete misrepresentation of what the Bible teaches about faith. God is not an errand boy forced to respond every time a believer speaks a word of faith. This “gospel” is nothing more than the lust of flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (cf. 1 Jn. 2:16). Who do you think is behind such a perverted teaching? (cf. 1 Cor. 11:14).

Benny Hinn

Without a doubt, the most popular television “faith-healer” of our time is Benny Hinn. We will discuss his *supposed* healing ability in our next lesson. For now, we want to notice some of Hinn’s outlandish statements. These clearly show his lack of understanding about the scriptures and his false message of hope. Hinn is quoted as saying the following:



Benny Hinn

...never, ever, ever go to the Lord and say, “If it be thy will...” Don’t allow such faith-destroying words to be spoken from your mouth.⁶⁸

Man, I feel revelation knowledge already coming on me here. Lift your hands. Something new is going to happen here today. I felt it just as I walked down here. Holy Spirit, take over in the name of Jesus... God the Father, ladies and

⁶⁴ Fredrick K. Price, correspondence on file with Christians United for Reformation (CURE), August 25, 1982. Source: Michael Horton, *What Some TV Preachers are really Saying*, 268.

⁶⁵ Price, “Ever Increasing Faith” program on TBN (November 23, 1990). Source: Hanegraaff, 346.

⁶⁶ Price, program on TBN (November 3, 1990). Source: Hanegraaff, 95.

⁶⁷ Horton, 128.

⁶⁸ Benny Hinn, *Rise and Be Healed!* (Orlando, FL: Celebration Publishers, 1991), 47-48. As quoted by Hanegraaff, 271.

gentlemen, is a person; and He is a triune being by Himself separate from the Son and the Holy Ghost. Say, what did you say? Hear it, hear it, hear it. See, God the Father is a person, God the Son is a person, God the Holy Ghost is a person. But each one of them is a triune being by Himself. If I can shock you—and maybe I should—there’s nine of them. Huh, what did you say? Let me explain: God the Father, ladies and gentlemen, is a person with his own personal spirit, with his own personal soul, and his own personal body. You say, Huh, I never heard that. Well you think you’re in this church to hear things you’ve heard for the last 50 years? You can’t argue with the Word, can you? It’s all in the Word.⁶⁹

Adam was a super being when God created him. I don’t know whether people know this, but he was the first Superman that really ever lived. First of all, the Scriptures declare clearly that he had dominion over the fowls of the air, the fish of the sea—which means he used to fly. Of course, how can he have dominion over the birds and not be able to do what they do? The word “dominion” in the Hebrew clearly declares that if you have dominion over a subject, that you can do everything that subject does. In other words, that subject, if it does something you cannot do, you don’t have dominion over it. I’ll prove it further. Adam not only flew, he flew to space. He was—with one thought he would be on the moon.⁷⁰

Statements such as these are so clearly unbiblical that Hinn is exposed for what he is: a false teacher. Should men like this be exposed? Of course! Is it biblical to do so? Yes! This is exactly what John instructed us to do in his inspired words, “test the spirits.” Paul warned Timothy:

As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines, nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith.

1 Timothy 1:3-4

There are many other televangelists whose teachings could (and should) be examined; however, the point should be clear. Considering what we have seen, one must be very careful to what they are listening, reading and watching. Because a television broadcast or a book claims to be “Christian” in its teaching, does not make it so. Examine what is said or written in light of the inspired scriptures—always, test the spirits.

But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.

2 Peter 2:1

⁶⁹ Hinn, Program on TBN (October 3, 1990). Source: Hanegraaff, 123-124. Hanegraaff, noted that when Hinn was later confronted about this statement, he admitted it was wrong. So much for the Holy Ghost giving him a word of knowledge!

⁷⁰ Hinn, Program on TBN (December 26, 1991). Source: Hanegraaff, 119.

Questions:

1. How is the following statement from Kenneth Copeland contradictory to the teachings of the Bible? (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 2:7; Ps. 8:4; 90:10; Heb. 9:27)

“You need to realize that you are not a spiritual schizophrenic—half-God and half-Satan—you are all-God.”

2. How would you respond to this statement, again from Copeland?

I was shocked when I found out who the biggest failure in the Bible actually is.... The biggest one in the whole Bible is God.... Now, the reason you don't think of God as a failure is He has never said He's a failure. And you're not a failure till you say you're one.

3. How is this statement from Fredrick Price unbiblical?

If you have to say, “if it be Thy will” or “Thy will be done”—if you have to say that, then you're calling God a fool.

4. Benny Hinn said that because Adam was given dominion over the birds of the air that he could fly. Does the dominion given Adam mean he (at one time) had the ability to fly?

5. Does faith give man the ability to “name it claim it”?

6. What did Jesus mean when He spoke of a hundredfold blessing for those in the kingdom? (Mk. 10:30)

7. Which areas of our four-part test do these “teachers” fail?

LESSON TEN

FAITH HEALERS

THERE IS A GREAT TRAGEDY taking place in the religious world today. And although in actuality it has been occurring for years, it is (I believe) much worse today—this in light of the communication mediums available right now, specifically the medium of television. The tragedy is that through this medium, millions of people, in the name of Jesus Christ, are being sold a counterfeit gospel. It is sold through financial love gifts and praise-a-thon donations. It is sold through a theology (if it can be called that) whose main ideal is: “*Have a need? Plant a Seed!*” A seed of course being a sizable financial contribution to the respective ministry.

Perhaps one of the most appealing aspects of these television broadcasts (for many people) are the “so-called” miracle services, sometimes called, Healing Crusades. On any given night one can turn on their television to the local “Christian” broadcasting station and see sports arenas and stadiums packed full of people, all in hope of being miraculously healed, or at least seeing someone else receive a “miracle.”

Typically, there is a wonderful choir singing beautiful hymns. The message sounds appealing, often with *some* truth spoken. There are smiling faces. Positive words. It looks so right! It looks so wonderful! The speakers are seemingly very articulate, charismatic, and extremely positive in the power of God. Tuning to these broadcasts people can watch as supposedly all kinds of people are healed in the name of Jesus. People who are in wheel chairs are suddenly able to walk and are seen running up the aisles. Empty wheel chairs and crutches are strewn across the stage. People with cancer claim to be healed. Tumors are said to have disappeared. Addictions are declared overcome. And thousands of people give praise to God! The choir sings! And the announcer tells us when the faith healer will be coming to our town and to make plans to be there.

Perhaps, on occasion, you have seen some of these broadcasts. What are we to make of scenes such as this? Are these miracles really happening? The faith healers would claim such. Their broadcasts offer all kinds of proof on their behalf. But what does the Bible say? What proof is there in scripture to confirm or refute the power these faith healers claim to possess?

In this lesson, we want to look at the truth of God’s word and demonstrate that the power to heal that these men and women claim to possess, is not from God. In fact, there is NO miraculous healing taking place at these crusades... none. When asked by organizations such as *The Christian Research Institute* and others, to offer medical proof that would confirm their healing ability, all of the popular faith healers are unable to offer any real and substantiated testimony of an actual healing.

The Christian Research Institute (CRI) asked for medical proof from one of the most popular faith healers today, Benny Hinn. Of all the thousands and thousands, perhaps millions of people over the years who have attended his healing crusades and have supposedly been healed, Hinn sent them three (so-called) documented healings. Three! Of these three examples, Hank Hanegraaff in his book, *Christianity in Crisis*, writes:

One of the cases involved a man who was supposedly healed of colon cancer. A medically naive person reading the pathological report may well see the notion “No evidence of malignancy” and be duped into thinking that a bonafide healing had indeed taken place. The Christian Research Institute’s Medical Consultant, however, noted that the colon tumor in question was surgically removed rather than miraculously healed! The other two cases had comparably serious problems.⁷¹

Is there miraculous healing today? What does the Bible say about such things? We know that the Bible itself records many miraculous events. The events of creation, lepers cleansed of leprosy, blind receiving sight, demons being cast out, Jesus walking on water, lame being able to walk, people being raised from the dead. As those who believe the Bible to be the inspired word of God, we accept the fact that these miraculous events actually occurred. We do not deny their authenticity. But do such things occur today?

What is a Miracle?

We should take a moment to define: What is a miracle? Today we use the word “miracle” rather carelessly at times. Someone recovers from a serious disease after weeks in the hospital; after surgery and all kinds of medication; and upon their recovery we say, “*It was a miracle!*” But was it, really? No. We may have been praying for the person’s recovery; it may have been an answer to our prayers; but it was no miracle. By definition, the response of one to medicine and surgery is not a miracle; even though God, through His providence may have very well had a hand in the positive outcome and recovery. And without a doubt, the glory should be given to God, but it is not a miracle. And we essentially lessen the majesty and grandeur of God’s true miracles by claiming such “natural” experiences as “miracles.”

From the Biblical perspective, when talking about a miracle we are talking about something that is completely contrary to the course of nature. It is something that occurs through Divine intervention directly upon an object or person; or through another person upon an object or another person. The outcome of the intervention is something which could not have been accomplished through natural means.

As an example, when the Red Sea was parted so Israel could safely cross, a miracle occurred—it was far beyond any natural means. When Jesus healed the sick, blind or lame, they were instantly made whole with no medical involvement whatsoever, those were miracles.

Understanding what a miracle is we need to understand better the reason behind the miracles we see in the New Testament. The word most often translated “miracle” or “sign” in the Bible is the Greek word, *semeion* {say-mi'-on}. Depending upon the translation this word is rendered either miracle, sign or wonder. It comes from another Greek word which means to signify. The base of the word, “sema,” spoke of a mark, a sign, an indicator. The miracles of which we read in the New Testament were used to identify (mark) those who would perform them as being from God. They were to confirm the message and the messenger. We will see later in this lesson that they were used in the

⁷¹ Hank Hanegraaf *Christianity in Crisis*, Harvest House Publishers, 1993, p. 34.

early church for some other means, but primarily, they were used as a means of confirmation. In this regard, notice these words of instruction from Jesus to His apostles.

And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. “He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned. “And these signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues; they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly *poison*, it shall not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.” So then, when the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them, and **confirmed** the word by the signs that followed.

Mark 16:15-20 (emp. mine)

According to Jesus, the signs (miracles) would be used to confirm (establish) that the message and the messenger were God.

The early Christians did not have Bibles like we do today. They could not turn to book, chapter and verse and see through the things that are written what people must do in order to be saved. They could and did use the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Christ to establish Jesus as the same. But to give the people proof positive that their message of belief, repentance and baptism was from God, they had, through the power of the Holy Spirit, the ability to perform certain miraculous signs. The Hebrew writer confirms the same purpose of the miracles:

How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also **bearing witness** with them, both by signs (*semeion*) and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.

Hebrews 2:3-4 (emp. mine)

At this point, it is important for us to discuss some words of Jesus in a passage we noted earlier (Mark 16:17-18). Notice again what He said.

“And these signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues; they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly *poison*, it shall not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.”

Mark 16:17-18

I believed and I was baptized, yet I have not been able to perform any of these signs. How about you? When was the last time you spoke in an unknown tongue or miraculously healed someone from a sickness? Have you ever cast out a demon? Didn't Jesus say, “These signs will accompany those who have believed”? So where are the signs? In the same way, Peter, quoting from the prophet Joel, stated:

And it shall be in the last days, God says, ‘That I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all mankind; And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, And your young men shall see visions, And your old men shall dream dreams.

Acts 2:17

How many of you have been prophesying? Anyone seeing any prophetic visions? How come we as believers today are not performing these signs? Is our faith weak? Do we actually have the ability to perform these signs, but do not realize it?

I ask those question, almost from a “devil’s advocate” point of view, because those who claim to have the miraculous gifts today will use these very same passages as proof of their “right” to possess the gifts. They point to these verses and say, “*Jesus promised them to those who believe... and we have believed!*”

With a little bit of Bible study it can be shown that the miracle performing powers promised in these verses were not for you and I today, despite the fact that we are believers. It can easily be shown that these signs DID accompany those who believed in the first century.

We know the apostles performed these signs. The book of Acts is full of cases we could examine. We also read of believers, those who were not apostles, performing miracles. In Acts chapter eight, we have the case of Philip the Evangelist going to Samaria and performing wonderful miracles; casting out demons and healing the lame. The signs accompanied him to confirm his message. In addition to Philip, we find Paul, in his first letter to the church at Corinth, dealing with the proper use of the various gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12-14). Believers in the New Testament times (just as Jesus promised) had these signs following them.

If believers in the first century had the gifts, how come believers today do not? The answer to this question is seen in the fact that the means to pass-on the gifts no longer exists. In Acts chapter eight, we find that as a result of Philip’s teaching and the confirmation of the teaching through the miracles, many believed and were baptized. Yet, because Philip was not an apostle, he could not pass on the miraculous gifts to them:

Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they *began* laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit. Now when Simon saw **that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles’ hands**, he offered them money,

Acts 8:14-18

These verses answer a lot of questions. They tell us exactly how believers in *those* days received the miraculous gifts: “Through the laying on of the apostles hands.” The apostles have all been dead for almost two-thousand years. If the gifts came through the laying on of their hands, then there can be no miraculous gifts today. That includes, tongue speaking, the interpretation of tongues, the gift of prophecy, and of course, the gift of effecting miracles—all of the gifts outlined by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10.

The argument is sometimes offered, that if we had the gifts today more people would believe. Perhaps. However, it should be pointed out that even in New Testament times

the spiritual gifts did not always lead to belief and repentance. The same would no doubt be true today. God in His infinite wisdom deemed that the gifts would only be temporary (cf. 1 Cor. 13:8-10). It is certain that He knew what He was (and is) doing.

It is obvious from a scriptural point of view, God's word being the truth of the matter, that the claim of some today to have the power to heal others through the Holy Spirit is a false claim.

The falseness of their claim is seen not only in the scriptures, but in the supposed miracles they perform. These so-called "miracles" are nothing in comparison to those we read of in the New Testament. The scriptures describe lepers being cleansed in a moment; blind having their sight instantly restored. There were no partial healings... no "in time" you're going to get better type of healings. They were real and genuine miracles. Where are the dead being raised today? Where are those with terminal diseases walking out of hospital beds in full health?

The falseness of their claim of miraculous power is seen in their conduct. Those we read about in the New Testament who had the power to heal never went about seeking their own glory. They never charged money to heal one who was in need. They asked for no "love gifts."

If the gifts today are real, then why aren't the faith healers in the ICU rooms of hospitals? Why aren't they visiting the AIDS clinics and cancer treatment centers? Why aren't they attending funerals of loved ones and raising the deceased? The answer seems painfully obvious. And I say painfully because what these people do is a tragedy!

A Great Tragedy

The tragedy of it all is seen when one stops and thinks about the numbers of people who leave so-called "healing services" unhealed. They leave the same way they arrived, only now, greatly disappointed—either in God (for not healing them) or in themselves (for a lack of faith). Hank Hanegraaff writes:

"Over the past few years I have received hundreds of letters from people who have fled the faith movement. In many cases these letters tell heartrending stories of sick people who were told that their sickness is a direct result of sin.

One of these letters is a personal testimony from a woman who had been blind from birth. After coming to faith in Christ, she joined a church that had been infiltrated by the faith movement, it wasn't long before they were instructing her to confess perfect sight and commanding God to honor His word.

When nothing happened, they began to denounce this woman for her lack of faith. They told her that there was "Something in my life that hindered God's will," She wrote. "God," they said, "was held up because of some point of sin or disobedience that He just couldn't get around until I straightened up."

This dear lady write, "I spent hours, sleepless nights, agonizing over the issue. I became depressed and began to lose my joy. I even quit praying. Some Sundays I simply couldn't stand church because I felt like an outsider in God's family, watching his pet children get blessed because of their "faith" ... If I was doing or not doing something that hindered God, I was at a loss trying to discern what it was. "God" I said in utter despair, "What do you want me to do?"⁷²

⁷² Hank Hanegraaf *Christianity in Crisis*, Harvest House Publishers, 1993, pp. 261-262.

How convenient to say a person was not healed because of a lack of faith.. that certainly was not the case in the New Testament. How much faith did Lazarus have when he was raised from the dead?

Do you see the tragedy? Think of the hearts that are broken; the hope that is lost; the doubting in God; that these “faith healers” have created.

When it comes to those, who would, in the name of Jesus, deceive people and sell them another gospel, I am reminded of these words of the apostle Paul:

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their deeds.

2 Corinthians 11:13-15

Questions

1. What is a miracle?
2. Why were the miracles in the New Testament performed?
3. Explain Mark 16:17-18. Does this apply today? Why or why not?
4. How was the ability to perform miraculous gifts acquired? (Acts 8:18) What does this tell us about the possibility of the gifts being operational today?
5. Do you believe more people would obey the gospel if we had the miraculous gifts today? Explain your answer.

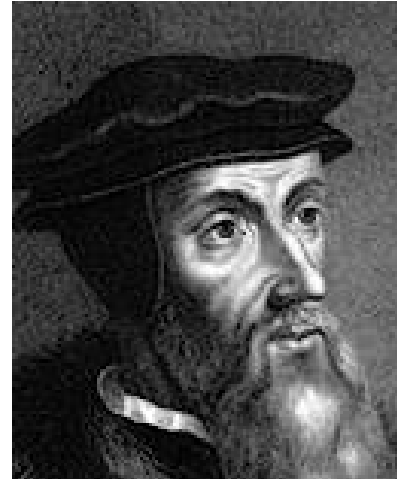
LESSON ELEVEN

CALVINISM

The doctrine known as Calvinism is accepted by a number of religious denominations today. Its name is derived from the man, John Calvin (1509-1564). According to one source, “Calvin’s name was given to a religious system of which he was truly the champion, but not the founder.”⁷³ The essence of Calvinism rests upon the very familiar acrostic T-U-L-I-P, which represents the following:

Total Depravity
Unconditional Election
Limited Atonement
Irresistible Grace
Perseverance of the Saints.

Commenting on the words making up this acrostic one author noted: “...*none* of them appears anywhere from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation! We have, therefore, good cause to be at least cautious in approaching these key Calvinist concepts. The burden is upon their promoters to show these ideas, in spite of their absence from Scripture, are indeed taught there.”⁷⁴ As we have done throughout this study, we want to examine each of the five elements of this popular doctrine and compare them to the truths of God’s inspired word. When examined in such a light Calvinism is exposed as an unbiblical doctrine.



John Calvin

Total Depravity

The doctrine of total depravity (sometimes called, Total *Hereditary* Depravity) is the belief that all mankind has inherited a corrupted sin nature from the fall of Adam and Eve. The *Presbyterian Confession of Faith* describes it as follows:

“They [Adam and Eve} being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed, and the same death in sin and corrupted nature conveyed to all their posterity, descending from them by ordinary generation.

⁷³ Franklin T. Puckett, *The Christian and the New Calvinism*. As quoted by Larry Ray Hafley, *Calvinism: Total Hereditary Depravity*, Guardian of Truth Magazine, July 7, 1983.

⁷⁴ Dave Hunt, *What Love is This? Calvin’s Misrepresentation of God* (Sisters, OR: Loyal Publishing, 2002), 93.

“From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions.”⁷⁵

This erroneous, yet widely-practiced system of belief has led many to conclude that infants must be baptized in order to have their *inherited* sins washed away. No record of any infant being baptized is found in the scriptures. Baptism was for those who were able to believe (Mk. 16:16; Acts 8:37).

The doctrine of Total Depravity not only deals with man’s (supposed) inherited sin nature, it also states that man is unable, on his own to come to God. Man has no good in him at all that would seek such a relationship. According to Calvin:

Let it stand, therefore, as an indubitable truth, which no engines can shake, that the mind of man is so entirely alienated from the righteousness of God that he cannot conceive, desire, or design any thing but what is wicked, distorted, foul, impure, and iniquitous; that his heart is so thoroughly envenomed by sin that it can breathe out nothing but corruption and rottenness; that if some men occasionally make a show of goodness, their mind is ever interwoven with hypocrisy and deceit, their soul inwardly bound with the fetters of wickedness.⁷⁶

Commenting on this aspect of Total Depravity, one person rightly noted:

By Total Depravity Calvin means total *inability*: if left to themselves, all men not only do not seek God but are totally *unable* to seek Him, much less to believe in Jesus Christ to the saving of their souls. He then declares that as a consequence of this total inability on man’s part (some Calvinists define inability not as incapacity but as unwillingness), God *causes some* men to believe just as He cause *all* to sin. We must then conclude that God, who *is love*, doesn’t love all men enough to rescue them from eternal punishment but reserves His love for a select few called the elect.

If men inherit Adam’s sin and depraved sinful nature, thus having no ability to do good, what made Adam sin? He was created in the image of God and according to His likeness (Gen. 1:26-27)? God saw all that He created and it was “very good” (Gen. 1:31). When Adam was created he had no *inherited* sin nature!

There are a number of passages from the Bible that are used to teach the concept of Total Depravity. However, when these passages are intelligently considered the first pillar of Calvin’s TULIP falls with a loud crash. We will briefly examine some of these texts and respond accordingly to demonstrate the fallacy of Total Depravity.

In Genesis chapter six we are told “that every intent of the thoughts of [man’s] heart was only evil continually” (Gen. 6:5). Later, in the same chapter, “God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way” (Gen. 6:12). Are we to conclude from this that “every thought” of an infant’s mind is evil? Of course not!

⁷⁵ *The Presbyterian Confession of Faith*, as quoted by Larry Ray Hafley.

⁷⁶ Calvin, Jean, and Henry Beveridge. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Translation of: Institution Christianae Religionis.; Reprint, With New Introd. Originally Published: Edinburgh : Calvin Translation Society, 1845-1846., II, v, 19. Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997.

However, Calvinism would suggest the possibility. There is nothing in these texts that infers that mankind was *born* in this condition. If such were the case, what about Noah who was “*blameless* (without blemish) in his time” (Gen. 6:9)?

In the book of Job we find these words used in support of Total Depravity: “What is man, that he should be pure, Or he who is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?” (Job 15:14). Does this mean every man born of woman is not “pure”? The Bible tells us Jesus was born of woman (Gal. 4:4). Was Jesus born in sin? If so, how was He able to be without sin (1 Pet. 1:19)? If the children of the unrighteous inherit the unrighteousness of their parents, why don’t the children of the righteous inherit the righteousness of their parents?

The words of David in Psalm 51 are used to support Calvin’s Total Depravity concept. David writes:

Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.
Psalm 51:5

Notice the “Totally Depraved” Calvinistic rendering the *New International Version* uses for this same passage:

Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.
Psalm 51:5 (NIV)

Was David saying he *personally* was a born a sinner? No! David was describing his parents as being sinful. The fact that his parents were sinful did not mean David was born *with* sin. The Bible clearly teaches each one sins *of their own choosing*.

“Fathers shall not be put to death for their sons, nor shall sons be put to death for their fathers; everyone shall be put to death **for his own sin**.
Deuteronomy 24:16

However, he did not put their children to death, but did as it is written in the law in the book of Moses, which the Lord commanded, saying, “Fathers shall not be put to death for sons, nor sons be put to death for fathers, but **each shall be put to death for his own sin**.”

2 Chronicles 25:4

“Behold, all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine. **The soul who sins will die**.”

Ezekiel 18:4

“The person who sins will die. The son will not bear the punishment for the father’s iniquity, nor will the father bear the punishment for the son’s iniquity; the righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself, and **the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself**.”

Ezekiel 18:20

Each of these texts clearly refute any idea that sin is inherited and passed down from generation to generation.

Another popular text used in support of Total Depravity is Romans 5:12 where the apostle Paul writes: “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.” Calvinists insist this text says the death from Adam’s sin was passed on to all men. However, the key to understanding what Paul is saying is in the final words of the verse. Death spread to all men, “because all sinned.” Men receive the penalty of death from sin as a result of *their own sin*. Again, Paul is clear, “ALL have sinned (on their own) and fall short (on their own) of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23).

Another text from Paul used in support of Total Depravity is Ephesians 2:1-3ff. Calvinists camp on the phrase “by *nature* children of wrath” (Eph. 2:3). However, Paul says we were dead in *our* (own personal) “trespasses and sins,” not in our *inherited* trespasses and sins. They were of our own doing.

Unconditional Election

The next aspect of Calvin’s tulip we need to discuss is the concept of “Unconditional Election.” This is the Calvinistic belief that God, before the foundation of the world, only chose a certain number of people (called, the elect), apart from their own choosing of Him, and in spite of their supposed depraved sinful condition, to be saved. Simply put, God will only save those whom He has preselected (predestined) to save. Men do not chose God, God chooses them. Those whom God has not chosen to save will be eternal condemned in hell. One person summed it up like this:

Calvinistic Election says to the unregenerate elect, “Don’t worry, your Depravity is no obstacle to salvation,” and to the unelect, “Too bad, you have not been predestined for salvation but [to] damnation.”⁷⁷

The consequences to this aspect of Calvinism are great indeed as they relate to God and His word. To accept such a doctrine makes God a respecter of persons and the Bible clearly says He is not (Acts 10:34, 35). To accept this doctrine is to deny the words of Jesus that “*whoever* believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life” (Jn. 3:16). In this same way it denies the Bible truth that salvation is available to ALL who choose to obtain it. Notice these passages:

“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.
Matthew 11:28

“Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.”
Romans 10:13

The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, **not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.**
2 Peter 3:9

⁷⁷ George L. Bryson, *The Five Points of Calvinism “Weighed and Found Wanting”* (The Word for Today, 1996), 36. As quoted by Hunt, p. 191.

Unconditional Election denies the clear inspired teaching of these passages. It chooses to limit salvation to a select (of God's choosing) few; who, in spite of their Total Depravity (inability to come to God on their own) are able to obtain eternal life.

The Bible does speak of various individuals who were chosen by God, but in each case, obedience to God was still required. In other words, the choosing was not "unconditional." For example, Jesus was God's chosen (Isa. 42:1; 1 Pet. 2:6). Still, Jesus had to obey the Father. His "election" was not unconditional (cf. Matt. 26:36-42; Heb. 5:8-9). The apostle Paul was chosen by God to preach the gospel to the gentiles (Acts 9:15; Gal. 1:15-16). However, Paul's election was not unconditional, he still had to obey the gospel (Acts 26:19).

We as Christians, were "predestined" in Christ. The apostle Paul is very clear in his letter to the Ephesians:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

Ephesians 1:3-6

What does Paul mean when he tells us God "predestined" us? Does this passage justify Calvinism's TULIP? No!

Notice that nothing is said in this verse as to whether or not the predestination is conditional or unconditional. Calvinism speaks of "unconditional election." This passage does not teach such a concept.

There is no doubt but there is a certain foreordination taught in the Bible. In the passage before us it is clearly taught, as well as in others. Jesus said: "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and they shall become one flock, one shepherd." (John 10:16) In this he recognizes that he had a flock that were not then following him as the Shepherd. At Corinth the Lord said unto Paul: "Be not afraid, but speak and hold thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to harm thee: for I have much people in this city." (Acts 18:9, 10) They had not yet believed, but God calls them his people. The meaning of both passages is that there were a number of persons of that frame of mind and disposition of heart that when they heard the gospel they would believe and obey it.⁷⁸

We were predestined in that God had a plan before the foundation of the world as to how one could be saved. Having obeyed that predetermined plan, we are considered predestined. However, it is of our own choosing that we come to God. Our "election" is conditional. We must obey the plan.

⁷⁸ David Lipscomb, *Commentary on Ephesians*, 18.

Limited Atonement

The false concept of “Limited Atonement” is a direct result of the false concept of “Unconditional Election.” If God only chose certain “elect” individuals to be saved, then of necessity Christ only died for them, and not all. Once again, this is in direct conflict with the inspired scriptures.

Jesus was very clear, “God so loved *the world* that He gave His only begotten Son” (Jn. 3:16). The world that God loved was not the physical planet earth, but mankind... ALL of mankind. Again Jesus said.

“And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, **will draw all men** to Myself.”
John 12:32

The apostle Paul is just as clear in his second letter to the church at Corinth where he wrote:

For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, **that one died for all**, therefore all died;
2 Corinthians 5:14

These words of the Hebrew writer are just as clear in refuting the concept of limited atonement:

But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might **taste death for everyone**.
Hebrews 2:9

We should add to this discussion these words of the apostle John:

And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of **the whole world**.
1 John 2:2

In each of these texts Christ’s sacrifice is said to have been for ALL, not a *limited elect number*. God’s love is for all. To accept Calvinism’s Limited Atonement is to *limit God’s love* and the saving power of Christ’s sacrifice.

Irresistible Grace

This aspect of the TULIP is again a result of the previous three. If man is born Totally Depraved, he cannot on his own doing (since no good dwells in him) come to God. Yet, if he is of that special group known as the elect, chosen for salvation, and among the limited number for whom Christ died, then God must operate on this individual in such a way that he can come to God and be saved.

Calvinists ascribe this work to the Holy Spirit, who apart from the person’s own free will leads them to God; hence “irresistible (that which cannot refused) grace (God’s good pleasure to save the individual).

As with the other aspects of Calvinism we have discussed this too has serious consequences to God's nature. What does it say about His love? Essentially, this doctrine makes God responsible for all the lost since He has only chosen to bless *some* through "irresistible grace." This aspect of the infamous TULIP also denies the power of the gospel to save *whoever believes* (Rom. 1:16). If only *some* are to be benefactors of God's saving grace, why go into all the world with the gospel (Mk. 16:15-16)?

Perseverance of the Saints

This last area of TULIP is the belief that *if* a person is among the elect, they can *never* lose their salvation. No doubt, you have heard the expression, "Once saved, always saved." Turning to the inspired scriptures, we find no support for this doctrine. The Bible is clear, one's saved condition, can be lost.

Keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered **shipwreck** in regard to their faith.

1 Timothy 1:19

For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not **drift away from it**.

Hebrews 2:1

For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, **it is impossible to renew them again to repentance**, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame.

Hebrews 6:4-6

One of the real problems Calvinists face is that they can never *really* be certain of their salvation. After all, if one is born depraved and wholly dedicated to sin with no good in them, how can they know for certain they are among the elect? They may think they are saved and actually be lost! If God only chooses *some* through "irresistible grace" how can they know *they* are among that *elect* group?

As you can see, when tested against the truths of scripture Calvinism is a *Totally Depraved* false doctrine with no biblical support. And doctrines with no biblical support should be *Unconditionally* and *unLimitedly Resisted*. They should be rejected and not *Persevered*.

Questions

1. What do the letters T-U-L-I-P mean in regards to Calvinism?
2. Explain Total Depravity.
What Bible verses refute this doctrine and why?
3. What is Unconditional Election?
What Bible verses refute this doctrine and why?
4. What is Limited Atonement?
What Bible verses refute this doctrine and why?
5. What is Irresistible Grace?
What Bible verses refute this doctrine and why?
6. What is Perseverance of the Saints?
What Bible verses refute this doctrine and why?