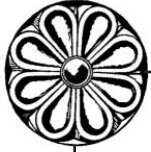


A Study Of False Doctrines Refuted By Scripture

By Charles Willis

PERVERSIONS OF THE GOSPEL

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Written By: Charles Willis

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Calvinism: Total Hereditary Depravity



John Calvin lived from 1509 to 1564. During the reformation period, his teaching was rejected by the Catholics and he had to flee for his life. Calvin developed a system of theology which has greatly influenced denominational doctrine and which continues to be popularly believed.

The first five lessons of this workbook will consider Calvin's teachings. Each of the five points must be taken together. If you fail to take one point, the whole system of his theology collapses. This means if one point can be proven false, then the other points will quickly follow.

Calvin taught a doctrine which has been called total hereditary depravity. He began at the fall of man in the garden (Genesis 3) and concluded that their sin has been handed down to all men. Calvin states: *"But lest the thing itself of which we speak be unknown or doubtful, it will be proper to define original sin (Calvin, in Conc. Trident. I., Dec. Sess. v.). I have no intention, however, to discuss all the definitions which different writers have adopted, but only to adduce the one which seems to me most accordant with truth. Original sin, then, may be defined a hereditary corruption and depravity of our nature, extending to all parts of the soul, which first makes us obnoxious to the wrath of God, and then produces in us works which in Scripture are termed works of the flesh. This corruption is repeatedly designated by Paul by the term sin (Gal. V. 19)...."* (Book II, Chap. I: 8: Institutes of Christian Religion).

Calvin and all those who hold to this doctrine believe and teach that we are born guilty (depraved) and that we are unable to choose spiritual good or evil. This doctrine has been accepted and taught by many denominations. Here are a few examples.

Orthodox Presbyterian Church: *"They 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."* (Confession of faith, chapter 6, point 3)

Catholicism: *"Adam's first sin has been transmitted*

to all his descendants". Questions of Catholics Answered by W. Hebst: "Yes, every child born into this world has the guilt of original sin upon his soul. Original sin is the sin that we inherit from our first parents. Original sin excludes us from heaven unless forgiven. It is forgiven only by baptism, hence when an unbaptized baby dies, it can not enter the kingdom of God." (Council of Trent 1545-1563)

Methodist Discipline: (Since) *"infants are guilty of original sin, then they are proper subjects of baptism, seeing in the ordinary way, they cannot be saved unless this be washed away by baptism. It has already been proved that this original sin cleaves to every child of man, and hereby they are children of wrath and liable to eternal damnation."*

Lutheran: *"It is also taught among us that since the fall of Adam all men who are born according to the course of nature are conceived and born in sin. That is, all men are full of evil lust and inclination from their mother's womb and are unable by nature to have true fear of God and true faith in God. Moreover, this inborn sickness and hereditary sin is truly sin and condemns to the eternal wrath of God all whose who are not born again through baptism and the Holy Spirit."* (Augsburg confession Article 2)

Baptist: *"Our first parents by this sin fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and we in them, whereby death came upon all, all becoming dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of the souls and body. The guilt of sin was imputed (and corrupt nature conveyed) to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation, being now conceived in sin, the subjects of death and all other spiritual miseries, temporal and eternal, unless the Lord Jesus set them free. From the 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."* (Philadelphia Confession of Faith)

A favorite passage cited in favor of this doctrine is Ephesians 2:1-3 which states, *"And you were dead in*



your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest." Their argument states since man is "dead in sin" he can do nothing to remedy his condition. Only God can do something in a miraculous way. The carnal nature of man (inherited from Adam) must be broken by a miracle which they believe comes by a direct operation of the Holy Spirit.



If Total Hereditary Depravity is a true doctrine, then every other point of Calvinism must be true. It would naturally follow if man was born in sin that God would have to miraculously do something to save man. It would make everything about salvation God's responsibility. He is to blame if someone is not saved. Many Bible truths are denied in these simple sentences. Many passages must be perverted to gain this understanding. The task for each one of us is to examine Scriptures for ourselves and know what is the truth of God.


The context in which the phrase is embedded must be considered as a whole. Being "dead in sins" was a result of "walking according to the course of this world". By "nature" they were the "children of wrath" because of their "indulging the desires of the flesh and mind". Their "nature" and the fact they are called "children" had nothing to do with an inherited sin. *"Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious"* (1 John 3:7-10). Being "by nature the children of wrath" is not teaching inherited sin, but a willing choice to indulge the flesh and mind even as the rest of the world.



Another passage which is purported as teaching hereditary depravity is Romans 5:12-19. Verse 12 states, "so death spread to all men, because all sinned". It does not say: death spread to all men because of Adam's sin. Verse 14 goes on to teach death reigned over those "who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam". This is not teaching inherited depravity, but that folks are not guilty of Adam's sin. If we all sinned as Adam sinned we would be in the likeness of his sin. Adam's sin made it possible for all men to be subjected to temptation. Christ's resurrection made it possible for all men to be subjected to righteousness. No inheritance is taught in this passage, merely choice.




What The Bible Says...


 Calvin's doctrine says we are unable to choose good for we have a depraved nature. What do these passages indicate?

- Ezekiel 18:25-32
- 2 Corinthians 5:10
- Isaiah 7:16
- James 1:13-15
- Isaiah 59:1-2
- Acts 17:30
- Joshua 24:15
- Romans 6:17-18

Implications & Errors...

- 
- If children are born depraved and lost, explain the birth of Christ in light of these passages (Galatians 4:4; Philippians 2:7; Hebrews 2:14-18; 1 Peter 2:22; 2 Cor. 5:21).
 - "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity and in sin my mother conceived me" (Psalm 51:5). Again, if this supposedly teaches inherited depravity, what does this say of Christ (Galatians 4:4-5)?
 - "The wicked are estranged from the womb; these who speak lies go astray from birth" (Psalm 58:3). How does this deny inherited sin?

How To Teach The Truth...

- 
- If we are by "nature children of wrath" (Eph. 2:3) signifying an inherited depraved state, what does Romans 2:14-15 teach?
 - Why must we all give an account before God (Rom. 14:12) if we cannot choose any spiritual good? What does this say of God to call us into account?
 - Into what spiritual state are children born (Ezekiel 18:20; Matthew 19:14; Matthew 18:3)?
 - Adam was totally hereditarily righteous, yet he still sinned. If Adam became depraved after he sinned, then why did he sin before he was depraved?



Calvinism: Unconditional Election



If a person accepts the doctrine of Total Hereditary Depravity (lesson #1) and believes he is therefore unable to help himself, the remaining four points of Calvinism must logically follow. When the error of inherited sin is exposed, the whole system of theology collapses. Unconditional Election is all about God's predestination of man. What is needed is a clear understanding from Scripture about who will be saved. Calvin says those who will be saved are unconditionally chosen by God and all others will be lost. What follows are a few samples of this doctrine.

"God has predestined and foreordained some men and angels out of his free grace and love without any foresight of faith in either of them, and others are foreordained to everlasting death and the number of either is so certain and definite that it cannot be increased or diminished." (Westminster Confession of faith, Article 3, 4, 5; Chapter 3; Article 2, Chapter 10)

"God from all eternity did by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass ... By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto life, and others foreordained to everlasting death. These angels and men, thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed; and their number is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished." (The Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., from chapter 111, entitled "Of God's Eternal Decree")

"God, before the foundation of the world, from pure grace, because of the redemption of Christ, has chosen for His own a definite number of persons out of the corrupt mass and has determined to bring them through Word and Sacrament, to faith and salvation." (Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod, Belief & Practice, point 39)

This doctrine is similar in thought to that of the Jehovah's Witnesses who believe God has chosen 144,000 to live in heaven with Him. The number of the saved has been predestined before the foundation of the world (supposedly), and therefore

salvation is not dependant upon anything man might do. The Westminster Confession plainly states God has foreordained some men "without any foresight of faith" and that number is "certain and definite and cannot be increased or diminished". In other words, it does not matter how we live, God has already determined who is going to be saved. It is solely God's predestination.

Unconditional Election (salvation) is nowhere supported in Scripture. The elect of God are everywhere presented as those who are obedient. The condition of obedience is seen and taught for those who are His elect. King Saul was "chosen" by the Lord (1 Sam. 10:24). He was God's elect, His anointed (1 Sam. 10:1) and was even given the spirit of prophecy (1 Sam. 10:10). The Lord was faithful to him and prospered him in battle as long as he was faithful. It was when Saul disobeyed that the prophet Samuel was sent with this message: "Has the Lord as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He has also rejected you from being King" (1 Sam. 15:22-23). God had not unchangeably foreordained his rejection, Saul rejected the word of the Lord. Saul was not unconditionally assured of God's blessings but was expected to live obediently. We also can be the elect of God, those who are saved, if we will not rebel against His word, but obey Him.

Several New Testament passages use the concepts and wording of predestination and foreordination. Therefore, the point of our study is to determine if God has predetermined the individuals who would be saved, or predetermined a plan by which any man can be saved.



What The Bible Says...

- What particulars are mentioned that God has chosen to be predestined "in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3-14)?
- How are we chosen according to the foreknowledge of God (1 Peter 1:2)?
- How does God call us? How do we become one of the elect? (2 Thess. 2:14)

Implications & Errors...

Be prepared to demonstrate from the included passages how each point is refuted by Scripture.

- Unconditional Election makes God a respecter of persons (Rom. 2:11; Eph. 6:9; Acts 10:34).
- Unconditional Election makes God responsible for the eternal punishment of the wicked (Ezekiel 18:21-32).
- Unconditional Election denies that God wants to save all men (Mk. 16:15-16; 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9; Acts 10:34-35).
- Unconditional Election makes every call in Scripture for repentance a hypocritical statement (Matt. 11:28; Acts 17:30; Acts 2:38).
- Unconditional Election rejects the free will of man (Rom. 6:16; 14:12; Josh. 24:15; Rev. 22:17).

How To Teach The Truth...

- Romans 9:6-21 is often cited as a "proof text" for Unconditional Election. Demonstrate how to teach the passage is not speaking of individuals who will be saved.
- How would you teach the truth of Romans 8:28-30 to one who believes it proves Unconditional Election?
- How can Jeremiah 7:30-31 be used to teach about God's foreknowledge and man's free will?



Calvinism: Limited Atonement



The Limited Atonement doctrine maintains that Jesus did not die for all mankind. The atonement provided by His sacrifice on the cross was limited to a select number of individuals. It is a necessary development if the false doctrine of Unconditional Election is accepted.

“Christ’s redeeming work was intended to save the elect only and actually secured salvation for them ... In addition to putting away the sins of His people, Christ’s redemption secured everything necessary for their salvation, including faith, which united them to Him. The gift of faith is infallibly applied by the Spirit to all for whom Christ died, thereby guaranteeing their salvation.” (David N. Steele, Curtis C. Thomas; *The Five Points of Calvinism, Defined, Defended, Documented: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1975, p. 17*)

“There is atonement, and therefore removal of guilt and forgiveness of sins and righteousness and all the benefits of salvation and eternal life, for the elect only in the cross. For all the rest, for the reprobate, there is nothing positive, there is no benefit, in that cross. Christ did not die for them; He did not represent them and take their place. Moreover, and this is a beautiful truth which we should never overlook, - that definite atonement is personal. Christ did not die indefinitely. And Christ did not die merely for a number of men, so that He provided salvation indefinitely for a certain total number of men, whoever they might turn out to be. But Christ died for all the elect and for each of them personally. God chose them. He chose them individually. From eternity He called them by name. And all of the elect personally God gave to Christ. Christ knew them all, even as they had been given to Him by the Father from all eternity. And He laid down His life for them, for all of them, for each of them, and for them only.” (The Five Points of Calvinism by Hanks, Hoeksema, and Van Baren, Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1976, www.prc.org/fivepoints/chapter3.html)

Scripture nowhere supports this doctrine which must be built upon previous false understandings of Scripture. This will be made clear in the questions

that follow.

Calvin Refuted The Limited Atonement

Mark 14:24 states in English (KJV): “And He said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, WHICH IS SHED FOR MANY.” (Mark 14:24). Here is the comment that John Calvin wrote on Mark 14:24, as translated and published in the *Harmony of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Volume III, p. 139* [as published by Eerdmans in Grand Rapids, 1972]: “The word many DOES NOT MEAN A PART OF THE WORLD ONLY, BUT THE WHOLE HUMAN RACE: he contrasts many with one as if to say that he would not be the Redeemer of one man, but would meet death to deliver many of their cursed guilt. No doubt that in speaking to a few Christ wished to make His teaching available to a larger number... So when we come to the holy table not only should the general idea come to our mind that THE WORLD IS REDEEMED BY THE BLOOD OF CHRIST but also each should reckon to himself that his own sins are covered.”

Romans 5:18 states in English (KJV): “Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.” (Romans 5:18) Calvin’s comment on Romans 5:18, as translated and published in the *COMMENTARY ON ROMANS AND THESSALONIANS, 1973, pp. 117-18* [as published by Eerdmans in Grand Rapids] was: “Paul makes grace COMMON TO ALL MEN, not because it in fact EXTENDS TO ALL, but because IT IS OFFERED TO ALL. Although CHRIST SUFFERED FOR THE SINS OF THE WORLD. AND IS OFFERED BY THE GOODNESS OF GOD WITHOUT DISTINCTION TO ALL MEN, yet not all receive him.”

This doctrine continues to be taught as truth, though refuted by many. We must know how to refute it as well.



What The Bible Says...

- 1 John 2:1
- Luke 19:10
- 2 Corinthians 5:14-15
- Hebrews 2:9
- 2 Peter 3:9
- Titus 2:11-14

Implications & Errors...

Most who call themselves “Christians” admit the Limited Atonement is a false doctrine; however, the doctrine of salvation by faith only is merely a product of this doctrine. Calvinism depends on the assumption that sin is transferred (imputed) from Adam to all men. Romans 4:1-11 is examined to supposedly prove A) a transfer of God’s goodness to the sinner (once saved, always saved), and B) that righteousness is attained by belief and no actions of obedience (faith only).

- How is righteousness imputed (put to one’s account) (Rom. 4:5)?
- How does the biblical concept of “walking in the light” refute the idea of salvation by faith only? (1 John 1:7)
- Are we saved by faith or by works? (James 2:20-24; Romans 3:28; Romans 4:1-11; 1 Thess. 1:3; Romans 1:5; 16:26)

How To Teach The Truth...

For each passage, explain 1) how it is not “a limited atonement”, and/or 2) how it is not “saved by faith only.” In other words explain the truth revealed in each passage.

- John 3:16-18
- 1 John 3:7-10
- 1 Timothy 2:6

Explain how the “Limited Atonement” denies the plan of God in Christ Jesus.



Calvinism: Irresistible Grace



Since Calvinists see man as totally corrupt, they believe man could do nothing that is good in and of himself. Therefore they cannot believe faith involves anything man does since that would make faith a “work”. They insist it must be a “gift” from God. They believe man has no part in Salvation.

“The Holy Spirit, in order to bring God’s elect to salvation, extends to them a special inward call in addition to the outward call contained in the gospel message. Through this special call the Holy Spirit performs a work of grace within the sinner which inevitably brings him to faith in Christ. The inward change wrought in the elect sinner enables him to understand and believe spiritual truth; in the spiritual realm he is given the seeing eye and the hearing ear. The Spirit creates within him a new heart or a new nature.” (The Five Points of Calvinism, Steele & Thomas, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., p.48).

“Although the general outward call of the gospel can be, and often is, rejected, the special inward call of the Spirit never fails to result in the conversion of those to whom it is made. This special call is not made to all sinners but is issued to the elect only. The Spirit is in no way dependent upon their help or cooperation for success in His work of bringing them to Christ. It is for this reason that Calvinists speak of the Spirit’s call and of God’s grace in saving sinners as being ‘efficacious,’ ‘invincible,’ or ‘irresistible.’ For the grace which the Holy Spirit extends to the elect cannot be thwarted or refused, it never fails to bring them to true faith in Christ.” (Ibid., p.49)

To be clear, the doctrine of irresistible grace teaches a person comes to have faith because of something God does within them. He does this to those who are unconditionally elected (chosen by God), which is of course a limited group (limited atonement). As I’ve stated before, these doctrines build upon one another and if one were to fail, the whole house of cards collapses.

A favorite passage for those who adhere to this doctrine is Ephesians 2:8-9 which says, “For by grace

you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.” When the false doctrine operates as a template to our thinking, we begin to see this apparent “truth” running through much of the teaching in Ephesians and Romans . However, it is a contradiction of many other passages in the New Testament which must be IGNORED in order to maintain belief in “irresistible grace.” Even from this passage we are saved “through faith”. God’s rich grace and kindness toward us is seen “in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:7), a theme well developed in the first chapter indicating we must be in this relationship to receive “every spiritual blessing” (Eph. 1:3).

The question of this doctrine is how do we come to be in this relationship? Calvinists say God does it to us, without our permission or knowledge, and that we cannot resist it. This happens to the limited number of the elect (according to prior doctrines we’ve studied). While Scripture NOWHERE says it, Calvinists teach we are saved by grace only.

There are many problems with the false doctrine of “irresistible grace” which is created by an examination of Scripture. We hope to examine some of those passages as the basis of this lesson. Many religious groups deny many of the points of Calvinism, but most have accepted (at least in part) the idea of “irresistible grace.” Many groups contend the Holy Spirit needs to “move us” or “operate within us” to bring about salvation. Salvation, to many, is solely and completely done by God and has nothing to do with us or our actions. Faith is seen as a *result* of God’s operation within us. Take a good look at the following passages and let us be ready to defend the truth of God’s word.



What The Bible Says... (for each passage indicate how "irresistible grace" is refuted)

- Romans 3:21-30
- Romans 5:6-11
- Titus 2:11-14
- 2 Peter 3:9
- 1 Timothy 2:6
- 2 Timothy 1:9-10

Implications & Errors...

- If salvation is by grace "only", what implication must be understood from Romans 2:11?
- Is faith a result of God's Spirit coming upon us? (Rom. 10:17; Titus 2:11-12; Gal. 5:6)
- Men proclaim God has "called" them, "drawn" them, "brought" them, and more. They point to an inward feeling of the Spirit of God within them. How does God operate within people today? (2 Thess. 2:14; Acts 8:5; 8:35; 9:6; 10:33)
- Examine Romans 8:14. State how the Calvinist would explain the passage, and state the truth of Scripture. (see also 1 Thess. 2:13; Acts 17:11; 2:41; Eph. 3:3-5)

How To Teach The Truth...

Examine the following "proof texts" of those who believe in "irresistible grace" and tell what truth should be learned from each.

- Acts 16:14
- Romans 8:7
- John 6:44

How is the word "faith" used in the New Testament in regards to our salvation? What would be the definition and understanding? (Rom. 4:16; 6:17-18; 1:5; 16:26)

Explain how Scripture unites the concepts of grace and faith in salvation. (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3-4; Acts 22:16)



Calvinism:

Perseverance Of The Saints



This last point of Calvinism has found widespread acceptance, and many do not even know they believe in Calvinism. This doctrine has spread through much of the denominational world, particularly many who call themselves a Baptist. "Once saved, always saved" is a necessary conclusion to the preceding four points of Calvinism. God's election and salvation came to men who were depraved and helpless, so they cannot refuse His election and so live as to be lost.

"They, whom God hath accepted in His Beloved, effectually called, and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved." (Westminster Confession of Faith, 17:1)

"The elect are not only redeemed by Christ and renewed by the Spirit; they are also KEPT in faith by the almighty power of God. All those who are spiritually united to Christ through regeneration are eternally secure in Him. Nothing can separate them from the eternal and unchangeable love of God. They have been predestined unto eternal glory and are therefore assured of heaven." (The Five Points Of Calvinism, Steele & Thomas, Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., p.56)

"Sam Morris, Baptist preacher in Stamford, TX wrote an article entitled, "Do A Christian's sins damn his souls"? Here is a quote from the article: "We take the position that a Christian's sins do not damn his soul. The way a Christian lives, what he says, his character, his conduct, or his attitude toward other people have nothing whatever to do with the salvation of his soul... And all the sins he may commit from murder to idolatry will not make his soul in any more danger." (www.bible.ca/cal-P-creeds.htm)

While some will attest to the belief in "once saved, always saved," they do not believe Calvin's premise which claims man does not have the ability to choose good or evil. They will claim man has free will but they hold to a doctrine which has roots in a theology that denies God's plan of salvation.

Those who hold to this doctrine will agree that a person who appears to be elect can sin and be lost. They reason this person had never truly received God's grace and were not in fact one of the elect. Even those who ARE supposedly of the elect receive some earthly consequences for their sin, but they are not and cannot be eternally lost.

The doctrine is undeniably false if a person adheres to Scripture. For example, the Bible demands faithfulness of the believer. We are to be steadfast and immovable (1 Cor 15:58), but there is no purpose to it if we cannot fall away. We will reap "if we do not grow weary" (Gal. 6:9) makes no sense according to this false doctrine, for if we grow weary we still will not fall. If the saints cannot be lost, then God has lied in saying "be faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life" (Rev. 2:10). There would be no reason to be faithful. There would be no purpose in abstaining from every form of evil (1 Thess. 5:22). Paul's admonition to "practice these things and the God of peace will be with you" (Phil. 4:9) should be ignored if we hold to this false doctrine. Just a brief examination is enough to disprove this doctrine, yet a deeper examination is needed that we might be able to help friends who hold this doctrine to be true.



What The Bible Says... (for each passage indicate how "perseverance of the saints" is refuted)

- Gal. 5:1-4,13
- 2 Pet. 3:17
- James 5:19-20
- 1 Cor. 8:11
- James 5:12
- Col. 1:21-23
- 2 Pet. 2:1
- Heb. 3:12
- 1 Cor. 9:27
- 2 Pet. 2:14

Implications & Errors...

- Discuss how this doctrine undermines, ignores and contradicts the many passages that include an "if." (Examples: Heb. 3:6; 1 John 1:9; 2:23; 2 Peter 1:10; Col. 1:22-23)
- Does this false doctrine contradict Romans 6:1-2?

Try to explain each passage from the point of view that "perseverance of the saints" is a true doctrine.

- Revelation 2:4-5
- Revelation 3:5
- Revelation 3:16-17
- Ezekiel 18:24-26

How To Teach The Truth...

Examine the following "proof texts" of those who believe in "perseverance of the saints" and tell what truth should be learned from each.

- John 10:27-29 and Romans 8:38-39
- 1 John 3:9
- John 3:16; 3:36; 5:24
- 1 John 2:19 (weren't really saved initially)

How should we use the following passages to positively teach a believe can fall away and be eternally lost?

- 2 Peter 2:4
- 2 Peter 2:20
- Hebrews 6:4-6
- Parable of the sower (Matthew 13)



Premillennialism



Premillennialism arose as an accepted doctrine in the 1950s-1960s. Some of the concepts date from the late 1800's. The word means "pre" (before) "millennial" (1,000 year reign). The basic concepts of this doctrine are taken from Revelation 20 and many Old Testament prophecies.

This doctrine affirms Christ came to establish His kingdom, but the world was too wicked and put Him to death. The church was established as a temporary measure until He comes again. A rapture of the saints will occur at His coming followed by seven years of tribulation on the earth caused by the antichrist. The battle of Armageddon will occur at the end of this seven years and will be the time when Christ puts down all evil. He will then establish His kingdom and reign for 1,000 years. Finally, there will be judgment followed by heaven and hell. (see chart below) There is much disagreement about the facts between those who adhere to this doctrine.

The word "rapture" is not found in the Bible, but is used by adherents to describe a secret carrying away of the church and the living saints when Christ returns. They suggest this is taught in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 where those who are living will be caught up with Him in the clouds. Many things must be accepted to believe this doctrine which are not biblical.

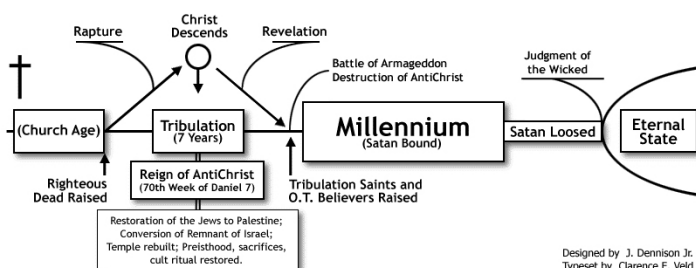
Premillennialists are looking for an earthly kingdom to be established where the glory of Israel will be restored. Jesus will supposedly sit on the throne of David ruling the world from Jerusalem. Often believers in the doctrine will point to the prophecies of Daniel and others claiming fulfillment

in modern times pointing to the soon to be established Kingdom. This has given rise to hundreds of false predictions of the end of the world.

A primary problem with this doctrine is that it demands the Kingdom be different than the Church. This demands that Christ is not currently reigning, and denies the prophecies of Daniel which they often claim supports their beliefs.

The thousand year reign of Christ, taken from Revelation 20, must be kept in the context of the chapter and in the context of the entire letter. We cannot add to the word of God, specifically in the Revelation of John (Rev. 22:18-19), yet that is exactly what is done in this chapter. There is nothing in Revelation 20 about the second coming, a bodily resurrection, the reign of Christ on earth, the literal throne of David, no mention of Jerusalem or Palestine or even Christ on earth. Premillennialists include all of these things when teaching from Revelation 20. Beyond these obvious problems is the simple fact the Revelation is a highly figurative letter and cannot be taken literally, as they are doing, for only false understandings will result.

Our study of this subject will only be cursory, but much value is gained from a deeper study of the truth on these issues. Many denominations have accepted premillennial views, and many denominations have branches within their organization that are more premillennial than others. It seems the majority of folks who claim to be "christian" have accepted this doctrine to one degree or another. The biblical evidence which denies this doctrine is abundant and easily seen if we will prepare ourselves through study. It is hopeful this material will prepare you to teach a friend the truth by lovingly and gently pointing out Scripture.



What The Bible Says...

- How is the “rapture” denied in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17?
- When will the resurrection occur? (John 6:39, 44; John 12:48; 1 Cor. 15:23-26)
- Where is Christ reigning? (John 18:36; Luke 17:20-21; John 3:3-5; Eph. 1:20-23; Rev. 17:14)
- Does Matthew 24 teach about modern signs of Christ’s return? If not, what is this teaching about?

Implications & Errors...

- How many resurrections will there be according to Scripture and this false doctrine?
- How does premillennialism deny prophecy (Dan. 2:31-45; Is. 2:2-4)?
- How does premillennialism limit God’s power? (Mark 1:14-15)
- What has not been fulfilled regarding the nation of Israel (Jer. 19:1,10-11; Rom. 11:20-28)
- What’s wrong with the concept of the 1,000 year reign of Christ? (2 Sam. 7:12-16; Dan. 2:40-44; Mark 1:14-15; Col. 1:13; Heb. 12:28)

How To Teach The Truth...

- **How will Christ return?**
 - a. Acts 1:10-11; Rev. 1:7
 - b. 1 Thess. 5:1-3
 - c. 2 Thess. 1:7; Matt. 25:31
 - d. 1 Thess. 4:16-17; 1 Cor. 15:52
- **What will happen when He returns?**
 - a. 1 Cor. 15:23-26
 - b. John 5:28-29
 - c. John 12:48; Acts 17:30-31; Matt. 25:31-46
 - d. 1 Cor. 15:24
 - e. 2 Peter 3:10-13
 - f. 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Matt. 25:41, 46



Catholicism



Roman Catholicism has the largest number of adherents of any religious group claiming to be "christian." South America (for example) is predominantly a Catholic country. The world media centers pay close attention to what is said by representatives of the Catholic church and promote them as being the spokespersons for all who claim to be a "christian." Many people have differences with Catholicism, but sometimes we are unable to adequately give an answer because we do not fully understand what it means to be a Catholic.

The rise of what is now known as the Roman Catholic Church was a slow and sinful departure from the truth proclaimed by the apostles. The first man who wore the title of Pope was Boniface III in 606 A.D. Many departures from the faith preceded this date in areas of the organization of the church and the authority of elders (bishops). Rome became the center of Christianity as the Roman Empire adopted Christianity as an approved state religion under Constantine in 313 A.D. As the Roman empire began to fragment and lose power in 364 A.D., the religious leaders began to assert authority and held Rome as a seat of their power. Much of Romanism was retained in Catholicism, such as: the dominion of Rome was universal, and the sanctity and divinity of the emperor.

From the time of Constantine till the 15th century, the Roman Catholic church purposefully kept the world's population ignorant of the truth revealed in the Bible. They translated and maintained Scriptures in Latin, long after it became a dead language. This insured that the priests would have to translate it for the common man, thus being able to introduce errors benefitting the Catholic church. The Catholic church during these "dark ages" held political power over most nations and in many ways operated as a world leader. This power was and is still claimed by the pope. Pope Pius IX (in 1870) drafted a syllabus of more than 80 articles drawn from the utterances of previous popes. The first 14 articles have to do

with the pope's right to control all philosophy and theology. Number 5 asserts the inspiration of the pope. Number 19 claims the rights of the "church" are unlimited and denies the state the right to interfere in any way. Number 24 claims the right for the "church" to employ force. Number 45 claims the right of entire direction over public schools. Number 73 claims the right of Catholicism as the only religion of the state to the exclusion of all others (state meaning any civilization). When this syllabus with its articles and decrees had been ratified by the Catholic church, it proclaimed (for the first time) that the pope was infallible. These political and theological views persist in the Roman Catholic church to this day.

Pope Pious IX in this syllabus claimed authority over all nations. Napoleon (in France) opposed the pope immediately. The nation of France soon joined him. Pious IX attempted to compromise, but Napoleon refused. Napoleon led 50,000 soldiers against the Vatican. The Roman Catholic church defended with 8,000 men, but soon surrendered. So much for the Catholic church being in power over all nations. His decree did not even last two months.

The abuses of the Roman Catholic Church are many and well documented. The corruption of the leadership and worldly passions which are their motivations are easily seen. Gone are the spiritual teachings of Christ which demand humility, honesty, and adherence to the things He taught. They have so corrupted the teachings of Christ that now the word of the pope is infallible, but the word of Christ is not. They have changed the teaching of Christ when it was convenient. This truth is easily seen in the organization of the Roman Catholic Church, their doctrines, and their practices.

Roman Catholic claims of existence since the time of Peter is false. Their claims of authority are false. In point of fact, very little promoted by the Roman Catholic church is truth. We must know what they believe in order to know how best to teach and defend the truth.



What The Bible Says... For each point compare the Roman Catholic teaching to the given passage.

- The pope is infallible. (Rom. 3:23)
- The Pope is called the “*Vicar of Christ.*” (2 Thess. 2:3-4)
- The Catholic church “does not derive her certainty about revealed truths from the Holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994, p.26, point 82*) (Matt. 15:3-9; Col. 2:8; Gal. 1:8; 2 Tim. 3:16-17)
- “Affusion, or sprinkling is sufficient for baptism, as well as immersion.” (*Catholic Dictionary, Addis and Arnold, p.60*)
(Provide some passages)

Implications & Errors...

For each of the following, indicate the error with a supporting passage.

- **How does the Roman Catholic church disregard the revealed pattern for the organization of the church?**
- **The doctrine of Transubstantiation holds that the bread literally becomes the body of Christ, and the fruit of the vine literally becomes the blood.**
- **One cannot be saved without praying to Mary.** (*Glories of Mary, pp. 245, 255, 189*)
- **Priests and nuns are to be celibate, yet permanent concubinage is not immoral.** (*Catholic Encyclopedia, IV, p.207*).
- **The bible is not to be read by all; the Pope forbids it; all must not read it.** (*Catholic Dictionary, p.82*)

How To Teach The Truth...

- **About indulgences:** “Pope John Paul II announced Friday that throughout the millennium celebration, penitents who do a charitable deed or give up cigarettes or alcohol for a day can earn an ‘indulgence’ that will eliminate time in purgatory...” (*HOUSTON CHRONICLE, Nov 28, 1998, p. 26A*) (1 John 1:9; 2:1; Col. 3:5-10)
- **Peter is claimed to be the first pope.** (Matt. 16:18; 23:9-12; Matt. 8:14; Gal. 2:11-13; Eph. 1:22; Luke 22:24-26; 2 Cor. 12:11; Acts 10:25-26)
- **The Priesthood:**
The priest is ‘another Christ,’ the means of access between the sinner and God... “who holds the place of God.” (*True Spouse of Christ, St. Ligouri, p.93*). (1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 7:11-12, 22-24)
The priests are a special group of people distinguished from the “laity.” (1 Pet. 2:5-9; Rev. 1:5-6)



The Social Gospel



Many in the Church have read articles and heard preachers use the phrase “the Social Gospel” thinking this was a unique phrase in the Church. It is not. The phrase “Social Gospel” began to be used in the early 1800’s and continues in use today speaking of a philosophy about the relationship of society and the church. A definition: “A movement in the USA concerned with the application of Christian principles to the social and political order in the service of the Kingdom of God. Among its most prominent leaders were Washington Gladden (1836-1918), Walter Rauschenbusch (1861-1918), and Shailer Matthews (1863-1941). (<http://encyclopediastateuniversity.com/pages/20885/Social-Gospel.html>)

Generally, the “Social Gospel” is an effort to relieve suffering in society. It is held that if people see Christians working out of love to relieve suffering, more people will be drawn to Christ. So love is supposedly demonstrated in relieving hunger, disease, poverty, and much more. More recently this has grown to include all sorts of counseling and training so that a person can successfully be a part of society. This was promoted in a strong way in the 1887 book, *In His Steps*. Charles Sheldon, the author, presented situations where fictional characters saw the plight of their fellow man and were challenged by a religious leader who asked them “what would Jesus do?” The religious groups (in the novel) changed to adopt the “Social Gospel” concepts.

Many of our country’s child labor laws and women’s suffrage arose from the “Social Gospel” movement. Martin Luther King and the civil rights movement was an outgrowth of his belief in the “Social Gospel.” His reasoning was that the doctrine of Christ saw all men as equal, therefore so should the society. He worked successfully to apply the gospel to our society. While there is no doubt that our society has improved as a result of some of these efforts, that does not argue that the “Social Gospel” is a work of the church.

George W. Bush began his presidency by

forming his White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. This was an extreme move demonstrating the acceptance of the “Social Gospel” by a very large contingent of our society. The government, in recognizing how religious groups worked to improve society, began to supplement the religious group’s treasury with financial assistance. Rather than now seeing a “Social Gospel” we also see a “Religious Government” involvement. The belief is now going in both directions, rather than merely from a religious conviction.

One of the ways some groups with “Church of Christ” on the sign have moved away from the truth of God is through an adoption of the “Social Gospel.” Voices began to be heard about this in the 1960’s and 1970’s. “Surely that same divine love which led Christ to die for us while we were yet sinners (Rom. 5:8), and to feed the hungry multitudes, most of whom followed him mainly for the loaves and fishes, and to heal the sick and diseases just because they needed healing, will lead His body the church to do what it can to alleviate human suffering, and to meet human needs wherever and whenever possible, even of those who are unsaved, recognizing always that the ultimate goal of all such efforts is the saving of the souls of those who are aided.” (Gaston Cogdell, *The Cogdell Turner Discussion*, p. 91, GOT Pub.) Other voices have been added as the years have passed.

Now some called “Church of Christ” are busy with medical missions. “Today medical evangelism continues to open doors not only in developing countries, but in other places as well. Medical missions programs sponsored by the Churches of Christ have allowed Christians to enter places once thought to be impossible, such as the countries formerly controlled by Communism in Eastern Europe and Communist countries such as Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. Opportunities abound in much of the world for the sharing of the good news through the compassionate ministry of medical evangelism.” (Phillip Eichman, *Medical Missions Among the Churches of Christ*, 2nd Ed., chapter 1; <http://www.ovc.edu/missions/medical/medbook6>)



htm)

Another popular advent of the “Social Gospel” is secular education. “The Bel-Aire church of Christ has been supporting the World English School ministry since February 1995. About twenty-two teachers are involved in teaching the Gospel through this effort. The method used is to teach English through a correspondence school using the Bible as a text book. This method of teaching English is being conducted in many countries; however, our congregation supports this effort in Romania to compliment our missionary efforts there. Students requesting special attention in the study of the Bible and/or requesting baptism are referred to our Romanian missionary.” (Website, Bel-Aire c of C, Tullahoma, TN; <http://www.belairechurchofchrist.com/mission6.htm>)

The thinking amongst most who attend a “Church of Christ” is that the whole man must be considered and the church is responsible for the whole man. “Bridges to the World is a non-profit Christian organization meeting basic human needs while supporting and sustaining local initiatives to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We link resources and Christian volunteers with missionaries and churches in developing countries to equip all for service in the body of Christ. Professionals and students offer curative and preventative expertise in fields such as nutrition, education, agriculture, construction, and economic development. Volunteers’ talents are combined with the local expertise and direction of third-world Christians to create sustainable practices through agencies or custom-solutions.” (<http://www.bridges2theworld.org/index.htm>) “Bridges to the World is a church of Christ based organization based in Abilene, Texas. Their group was made up of primarily university students from Abilene Christian University.” (Jarrod Brown, West Houston Church of Christ, Honduras Mission; <http://www.westhoustonchurch.org/missions/honduras.htm>)

Adherents to the “Social Gospel” believe the kingdom of God is a great social synthesis which includes the whole life of man, spiritual, moral, mental and physical; its field of manifestation is man’s personal, family, social, political and industrial relations. Many view these social efforts as a means by which the many denominations can be united. Thus, one church is as good as another, and we are all supposedly brethren in Christ.

“Churches of Christ are now putting elaborate kitchens and gymnasiums in their buildings. Church sponsored youth camps, retreats, and encampments are commonplace. Schools, colleges and hospitals have been built and supported from congregational treasuries. Day-care centers, hobby classes, talent shows, nursing homes, homes for unwed mothers, boy scout troops, bowling teams, basketball teams, softball teams, track meets, skating parties and various social welfare programs are being supported by local churches under direction of their respective elders. Seminars are conducted on such subjects as “The Problem of Aging”; “Family Relations and Child Development” (to teach children about themselves and how to reach out to others); “Marriage Enrichment” for couples, etc. Many in these churches have come to look on the church as an institution responsible for the social welfare needs of man. It is evident that a great percentage of churches of Christ (especially city churches) have accepted the “whole man” theory - that the church is responsible for the social, mental and physical development of the individual (a theory borrowed from secular education psychology)” (Harold Fite, www.truthmagazine.com/archives/volume27/GOT027088.html)

Because of the now wide-spread acceptance of the “Social Gospel,” we must be those who return to the book of God and examine again what is taught. We must look to see if authority from God exists to support the “Social Gospel” from the Lord’s treasury. There are some who disagree with the “Social Gospel” who are not a member of any group with “Church of Christ” on the sign, but they, like us, are in the minority. Of all the issues and questions examined in this series of lessons, probably none will present us with an opportunity to teach more frequently than the concepts in this lesson. I urge you to study these things diligently and understand the truth of God.



What The Bible Says...

- What is the nature of the church, spiritual or physical? (John 18:36; Luke 17:20-21; Rom. 14:17)
- What is the means through which the gospel is spread? (Matt. 16:18-19; 28:19-20; 1 Cor. 2:1-5; 1 Thess. 2:11-13)
- What is the purpose of Jesus' death on the cross? (Matt. 1:21; Luke 19:10; 1 Tim. 1:15.) How does this compare with the teaching of the "Social Gospel?"

Implications & Errors...

- The "Social Gospel" assumes authority for the individual is transferred to the congregation. Demonstrate from Scripture there is a difference in what the individual can do versus what the congregation can do in the realm of benevolence.
- Demonstrate from Scripture what is wrong with supporting an institution from the Lord's treasury. (Many groups do this in support of missionary societies, orphan homes, homes for the aged, and "ministries" of all sorts.) Specifically address:
 - Medical Missions
 - Secular Education
 - Kitchens and "church meals"

How To Teach The Truth...

For each of the following passages, describe how the Scripture denies the "Social Gospel."

- 1 Corinthians 11:17-34
- Romans 1:16-17
- 1 Timothy 3:15

What evidence is there to indicate Jesus did not promote a "Social Gospel?" (Matt. 25:31-46; John 6:26-27; other references)

How does the "Social Gospel" deny the authority of God and of Scriptures? (see Rev. 3:3)



Modern Day Revelation



There are a large number of people who believe God is still revealing His will to men through an inspired means. When taken together they number more than a quarter of all those who claim to be a Christian. The concept of modern day revelation has a huge bearing on the faith of many and must be considered in this series of lessons.

While the Catholic church contends the Pope does not have the right to add to the word which was once for all delivered to the saints, it must be noted that they do proclaim a belief in personal revelations. Many of these are approved by the Catholic church claiming they do not violate Catholic doctrine. It seems odd to me how the Pope does not receive revelation from God when he is supposedly Christ's representative on earth. Of all the Catholic claims, this seems to not fit their organizational model.

The Mormon church obviously believes in modern day revelation. Not only that Joseph Smith was a prophet who received 134 revelations in a 20 year period, and whose translation into English was inspired, but also their ninth article of faith states: "We believe all that God has revealed, all that he does now reveal, and we believe that he will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God." Their creed, found in *Doctrines and Covenants* 1:38 states, "What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; and though the heavens and the earth pass away, my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same." Peter says, "God's divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3), but the book of Mormon says, "Wherefore, because you have a Bible you need not suppose that it contains all my words; neither need you suppose that I have not caused more to be written." (2 Nephi 29:10 see also v3-6)

"Each of the 92 Apostles called since then in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has been sustained as a prophet, seer, and revelator. But the

prophets, seers, and revelators succeeding Joseph as Presidents of the Church have been those Apostles in whom all of the keys of Christ's earthly kingdom have been active and functioning. Many divine instructions have been received. Much revelation received, in this time as well as anciently, has been doctrinal. Some of it has been operational and tactical... This process of revelation comes to the Church very frequently. (Wilford Woodruff, 4th President of the Mormon Church, www.mormonbeliefs.org/mormon_beliefs/mormon-beliefs-continuing-revelation, quoting *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, 56) The Mormons contend, "While the prophet of God receives revelation and inspiration to guide the Church as a whole, revelation flows at every level, including to the leaders of congregations and to individual families and members. (<http://newsroom.lds.org/article/modern-prophets-and-continuing-revelation>) No one can be a member of the Church of Latter Day Saints who does not believe in modern day revelation for that is what the false doctrine is entirely based on: another testament of Jesus Christ.

Beyond the Mormon Church is a movement begun in the 1960's primarily in Pentecostal groups now referred to as the Charismatic Movement. It is marked by tongue speaking and gifts from the Holy Spirit. It is now seen all across denominationalism. The Gaither's (made popular recently with their gospel singing) are proponents of this movement. "Christians are still receiving by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, direct revelation from God when teaching, preaching, writing songs and books and when making decisions" (*Traditions of Men versus The Word of God*, p.127). Rodman Williams, president of Melodyland School of Theology in Anaheim wrote, "The Bible is not our final source of God's revelation but simply a "witness" to additional revelation that He is giving today" (*The Era of the Spirit*, 1971, p.16). All Pentecostals believe their message comes from the Holy Spirit when speaking in tongues.

The Worldwide Church of God was established and promoted by Herbert W. Armstrong in his book, *The United States and British Commonwealth in Prophecy*.



The whole movement was started when Mrs. Armstrong claimed an angel revealed God's will to her (*Plain Truth About Armstrongism*, p.9).

Oral Roberts was a very popular televangelist in the 1980's who also claimed God revealed things to him. "People often ask me how God speaks. I can only tell them how He speaks to me. When He does, I grab some paper and a pencil and start writing as fast as I can. God often speaks to my spirit on the inside of me, and I understand the words. At times He will speak to me in a still, small voice. Other times His words will come up from my spirit into my head and fill it until it's as if my head is roaring. Each time I have heard God's voice, it has been crystal clear and the words were spoken as distinctly as if you were speaking to me. When I was dying with tuberculosis, I heard the voice of God on the inside of me say, "Son, I'm going to heal you, and you're to take My healing power to your generation." Then He added that someday I would build Him a university. Before I had finished high school and gotten into college myself, God told me that I would someday build Him a university!" (www.ondoctrine.com/unquotes/robeo011.htm quoting *Recognizing The Voice Of God*, www.orm.cc)

Oral Roberts claimed that he did everything that God told him to do, including obtaining the 8 million dollars needed to send out medical missionaries (the famous 8 million dollars that God told Oral Roberts he had to raise or lose his life). The medical missionaries were never sent. In April 1987 Oral Roberts received his 8 million dollars, in November 1987 (eight months after receiving the money) he announced that the City of Faith (his university which absorbed the 8 million dollars) would be closing, in January 1988 all medical scholarships were discontinued, and by September 1989 the university was officially closed. Oral Roberts was proven a charlatan and scoffers claimed God was made to look foolish for having "revealed" the message to him.

Beyond those who claim to be a Christian, there is also a belief in modern day revelation. Islam claims to be the revelation of God (Allah) through the angel Gabriel to a man named Muhammad. There are shocking similarities between the claims of revelation given to Muhammad (Islam) and Joseph Smith (Mormonism). They include visions, a holy

place (Mecca and Salt Lake City), both were told no true religion existed on the earth, both were told to restore true religion, both wrote a book inspired of God, both claim their book is the holy and perfect will of God, both claim to have been a "final prophet" of God, and both religions claim new revelation is taking place (Islam's doctrine of Nasikh). There are many other similarities, but these suffice. With the obvious differences in beliefs of Mormons and Islamics it is clear one or both must be lying. Both cannot have received such contrary messages from God.

A thorough examination of these various claims further points out the problem of God supposedly contradicting Himself. All of these claims cannot be true. Some or all must be lying. Modern Day Revelation is a perversion of the gospel which has greatly grown in popularity in the last fifty years. It's adherents are steadily growing in number, particularly in Islam and the Mormon Church. It is vitally important that the believer know what the word of God says on this subject and be able to logically discuss it with friends.



What The Bible Says... (For each reference relate how Modern Day Revelation is denied)

- 2 Timothy 3:16-17
- John 12:48 (also James 2:12)
- 2 Peter 1:3
- Revelation 22:18-19 (also 1 Corinthians 4:6 and 2 John 9)
- Psalm 19:7

Implications & Errors...

- Because modern day revelations disagree, what IS going on? (2 Peter 2:1-3; 3:16; Gal. 5:7)
- If modern day revelation is true, what is the purpose of the written word? (Consider Ephesians 3:3-5, 2 Corinthians 1:13, Matthew 13:23, 2 Timothy 1:13)
- If modern day revelation is true, how can individuals know what is truth and know they are right with God? (2 Timothy 1:12; 1 Timothy 2:4; Matthew 22:29; Colossians 1:9, 5-6) What assures us of our salvation?

How To Teach The Truth...

- Explain the meaning of 1 Corinthians 14:37 in context.
- How were men convinced of God's will during a period when miraculous gifts existed? (Acts 17:2, 11-12; 18:28)
- Explain when miraculous gifts would cease as taught in 1 Corinthians 13:8-13.
- What is meant by "the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints" (Jude 3)?



Unity In Diversity



Denominationalism has strongly embraced unity in diversity. They have an “open fellowship” with those who believe and teach different doctrines. They contend these differences are not a barrier to fellowship. This false doctrine has led to the wide-spread belief that people in all churches are right with God and that all who believe in Jesus are “brothers and sisters” in Christ. Therefore, “go to the church of your choice” seems logical because doctrine really does not matter. People who have accepted this doctrine desire to “lay aside their differences” in order to accomplish some mutually agreed upon goal. So we see “interfaith food pantries”, “Interfaith Ministries for Greater Houston” (which provides housing and assistance) and HAAM (Humble Area Assistance Ministry). In recent years this doctrine has been called Ecumenism and Religious Pluralism.

No greater slogan for this doctrine can be named than the slogan of the Moravian church: In essentials, unity. In nonessentials, liberty. In all things, love. “Moravians support collegial experiences with children of God in other Christian churches, and carefully avoid all disputes, respecting opinions and ceremonies peculiar to one or another Church. We recognize that through the grace of Christ different denominations have received many gifts and that the Church of Christ may be enriched by these many and varied contributions. It is our desire that we may learn from one another and rejoice together in the riches of the love of Christ and the manifold wisdom of God. We welcome every step that brings us nearer the goal of unity in Him. In this fellowship we cooperate with other churches in the support of public charities or Christian enterprises, which have a just claim upon us as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.” (www.moravian.org/believe)

“The Episcopal Church USA is in full communion with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Moravian Church in North America.” (www.anglicanonline.org/communion/infull.html) This agreement

occurred in 2000 as a result of a vote from both denominations councils. “The two denominations will not actually merge. However, they will be able to share clergy, and fully recognize each other’s members, ministries and sacraments. Rev. Donald Brown, chair of the Committee on Ecumenical Relations of the Episcopal Church explained during the 2000 convention: “It is not a marriage or a merger of our two churches. Each church will retain its own liturgical, theological, and organizational uniqueness and integrity...” We Episcopalians will still be inspired by the liturgical genius of Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, and Lutherans will still proudly claim the theological insights of Martin Luther. But most importantly and significantly, both our churches will be living into the reality of Jesus’ prayer in the 17th chapter of the Gospel of John that all his followers might be one.” (www.religioustolerance.org/elca_epi.htm)

Catholicism has embraced this doctrine through the leadership of Pope John Paul II. The Vatican II Decree states: “The restoration of unity among all Christians is one of the principal concerns of the Second Vatican Council.” John Paul himself said, “Thus it is absolutely clear that ecumenism, the movement promoting Christian unity, is not just some sort of “appendix” which is added to the Church’s traditional activity. Rather, ecumenism is an organic part of her life and work, and consequently must pervade all that she is and does.” (May 25, 1995) “The implication is that all those elements that Christ willed for his Church are to be found in the Roman Catholic Church, but nevertheless Christ’s Church cannot be totally identified with the Catholic Church. The fact that the Catholic Church understands itself to possess all those things which Christ intended his Church to have does not imply, and should not be taken as implying, that other Churches have none of these things. [Nor, it might be added, does it imply that the Catholic Church always uses these gifts to the best effect.] The Vatican II Decree on Ecumenism recognises that other Churches have many of these elements, and the Catholic Church recognises that



the Holy Spirit has used, and continues to use, other Churches as means of salvation. What we all have in common is greater than what separates us.”

(vatican2voice.org/6unity/restore_unity.htm)

The degree to which this doctrine has been made popular is evidenced in the formation of new religions. Unitarian Universalism, a religious group which formed in 1961, has 6 congregations in the Houston, Texas area. Their website states, “Diverse beliefs about the existence of a higher power are welcome in Unitarian Universalist congregations. Unitarian Universalists may be Atheists, Humanists, Christians, Pagans, or identify with other theological and philosophical traditions... Unitarian Universalists may find guidance in many written materials, including the sacred texts and scriptures of other religious traditions.” (www.uua.org/visitors/spiritualtopics/index.shtml)



what God desires. I urge you to carefully consider the passages on the next page and understand how to teach the truth on this very important doctrine. May we all strive to teach the next generation about the unity of the saints both from Scripture and by our example.

Community churches and fellowship congregations have arisen in the last twenty years which claim to be nondenominational and self governing. Many of these are proponents of unity in diversity and accept people of all beliefs (or many beliefs) as righteous children of God. The large numbers these groups are drawing is another indication of how popular this doctrine has become. Joel Osteen’s *Lakewood Church* is a supreme example of this. If you call yourself a Christian, you are accepted. There is no discussion or concern about doctrine in most of these types of groups.



The concern is that this mindset and belief will spill over into the Lord’s church. There are already disturbing examples of the acceptance of this doctrine. One example can be seen in how The North Madison Church of Christ in Madisonville is working in association with many different Baptist churches (www.madisonvillemeteor.com/news/article_9d1ee59a-f358-11df-8497-001cc4c03286.html). While my father, Don Willis, labored with the small Highway 90 congregation in Madisonville, he told me once every two months the North Madison congregation held a pulpit exchange with the local Baptist congregation, and occasionally held a joint assembly.



We must be diligent in understanding the truth about unity from God’s word. There is much said in the Bible about how we are to be united in Christ. Unity in diversity is not what Jesus taught and is not

What The Bible Says... (tell how the following passages deny Unity in Diversity)

- Romans 15:5-6
- 1 Corinthians 1:10-12
- Philippians 2:2
- Philippians 3:16-17
- Ephesians 4:2-3
- Acts 2:44-46
- Romans 12:4-5

Implications & Errors...

- If unity in diversity is true, who is the factious man in Titus 3:10-11?
- What is to become of the one who does not listen to the instruction of the apostle (2 Thess. 3:14-15)? Would this have to be ignored to accept unity in diversity?
- Who would go "too far" (2 John 9-11) if unity in diversity is accepted?
- How does unity in diversity deny the "one shepherd" (John 10:16) and one "head over all things to the church" (Eph. 1:22) which Scripture grants to Christ?

How To Teach The Truth...

The following are "favorite passages" of Unity in diversity proponents. Be prepared to discuss the truth from each passage.

- 1 Corinthians 2:2
- John 17:20-23
- Luke 9:49-50

From Philippians 1:27 give the meaning of:

- a manner worthy of the gospel
- standing firm in one spirit
- striving together for the faith



Who is God?



Several large religious groups have vastly different beliefs about God. All claim to be based on the inspired word of God, and all point to various passages. I will attempt to represent three of these ideas in this article, and in our discussion we will examine what Scripture says about God.

There has been a movement within the Pentecostal church in the last 20 years which is now called *Oneness Pentecostalism*. They believe Jesus is the Father and He is the Holy Spirit. They say God was “manifested as Father in creation and as the Father of the Son, in the Son for our redemption, and as the Holy Spirit in our regeneration.” (<http://www.upci.org/about/index.asp>) They believe God revealed Himself in the Old Testament as Jehovah, in the New Testament as Jesus, and now as the Holy Spirit. They additionally teach baptism as a requirement for salvation, but must be done “in the name of Jesus” rather than in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as Jesus commanded in Matthew 28:19. So strong is this belief, they pray not just in the name of Jesus, but they pray to Jesus.

Unitarian Universalists contend God is only one person and that He is a separate being from Jesus Christ. You may recall this is the same group that derives beliefs from all the world’s religions, including atheists. In their view God can be called Jehovah, Allah, or many other names. Unitarians cannot even loosely be called “Christians”, yet in many communities they are presented as “just another church”.

Jehovah’s Witnesses’ also hold to a perversion of the gospel in regard to who God is. They contend God is one person so that there is no Trinity (*Let God be True*, p. 100-101; *Make Sure of All Things*, p.386). They teach the Holy Spirit is not alive but is an impersonal active force (*Reasoning from the Scriptures*, 1985, p.406-407; *The Watchtower*, June 1, 1952, p.24). Even further, they state Jesus was God’s first creation and was used by God in creating everything else (*Aid to Bible Understanding*, p. 390-391). In fact, they believe Jesus was Michael the Archangel (*The Watchtower*, May 15, 1963, p. 307; *The New World*, p. 284).

The strongest proof text put forward by the Jehovah’s Witnesses is John 17:2 which says, “And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” They claim because God is the ONLY “true God” then Jesus as not deity. This belief (sometimes called Arianism) must deny the truth of Ephesians 4:4-6 that there is “one Lord” and “One God and Father.” If “one God” excludes Jesus from being God, then “one Lord” must exclude the Father from being God. You can’t have it be true in John 17 and not in Ephesians 4.

“Jehovah is not only called the Only true God (John 17:3), but the “Only Saviour” (Isa 43:11; 45:21; Hos 13:4; Jude 25), and “Only King” (Zech 14:9). If John 17:3 excludes Jesus from being “True God”, then Jesus is also excluded from being a Saviour or King. Conversely, Jesus is called the “Only Teacher, (Matt 23:8,10, Mt 10:24 and Jn 13:13), “Only Master” (Jude 4, 2 Peter 2:1), and “Only Lord” (Jude 4, Eph 4:4, 1 Cor 8:4,6, Mt 6:24). If John 17:3 excludes Jesus from being “True God”, then the Father is also excluded from being our Teacher, Master or Lord.” (www.bible.ca/trinity/trinity-texts-john17-3.htm)

These errors are against the truth of God contained in the Holy Scriptures. Because of these false doctrines, many have been led to a belief in Jesus that is false. Truly, they have even denied the Master who bought them (2 Peter 2:1). This destructive heresy fails to give due consideration to all of Scripture and is derived from just a few verses which have been badly twisted. Let us be certain to understand the truth of God’s word that we might be able to teach it in simplicity to our friends.



What The Bible Says...

- Deuteronomy 6:4 (quoted in Mark 12:29) (try to define the words translated “one” in Hebrew and Greek. Compare with the use in Matthew 19:5)
- James 2:19
- Genesis 1:26, 3:22, 11:7 and John 1:1-3
- Isaiah 6:8
- John 8:54-59
- Matthew 3:16-17

Implications & Errors...

For each reference state what truth is denied by believing in the “oneness” errors discussed in this lesson.

- John 15:1-11
- Romans 10:9
- 2 Corinthians 4:6
- Philippians 2:11
- Hebrews 4:14-16; 7:24-25; 1 Timothy 2:5
- 1 Peter 1:2
- 2 John 9
- Revelation 22:13

How To Teach The Truth...

Describe how each reference proves the “oneness” doctrine discussed in this lesson is wrong. How would you present this to a friend?

- Matthew 26:39
- 1 Corinthians 8:6
- John 14:9-12

Provide passages that demonstrate God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one.

Provide passages that demonstrate God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are different beings.



The Eternal Hope



Ephesians 4:5 says there is “one hope of your calling.” While you would think everyone who claims to follow the Bible would believe the same things about heaven, that is not the case. The purpose of this lesson is to examine a few of the various differences in false doctrines regarding life after death and compare them with the teaching of Scripture.

Some teach there is no life after death. I know, this sounds funny coming from people who claim to be Christians, yet some contend strongly that we pass into oblivion when we die. The Jehovah’s Witnesses state, “when the person dies, it is the human soul that dies...hell is simply the grave” (*The Truth That Leads To Eternal Life*, Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society: New York, 1968).

Some believe the sinful will not live on, thus indicating there is no hell. One of the loudest proponents of this false doctrine is Edward Fudge, who has served as an elder of the Bering Drive Church of Christ in Houston, Texas. His website promoting his book, “The Fire That Consumes,” states, “Mortals who throughout life intentionally refuse relationship with the Creator, and who intentionally reject his gift of eternal life, in the end are totally cut off from God and truly perish (cease to exist)” (www.edwardfudge.com/written/fire.html). Much of his beliefs and teaching derive from 2 Thessalonians 1:9 which says “these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.” Jehovah’s Witnesses also contend “the ultimate end of Satan is complete annihilation” (*Let God Be True*, 1946, p.64). The Seventh Day Adventist’s agree, saying “sinners, Satan, and the devils ultimately are consumed in the lake of fire and experience the extinction of the second death” (Samuele Bacchiocchi, ch 6, *Hell: Eternal Torment Or Annihilation*).

The Mormons believe in three levels of heaven. They cite John 14:2 as evidence for this doctrine, “in My Father’s house are many mansions...” Further they point to the King James translation of 1 Corinthians 15:40 which says, “There are also celestial bodies,

and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.” Their official website says, “There are three kingdoms of glory: the celestial kingdom, the terrestrial kingdom, and the Telestial kingdom. The glory we inherit will depend on the depth of our conversion, expressed by our obedience to the Lord’s commandments. It will depend on the manner in which we have received the testimony of Jesus... The celestial kingdom is the highest of the three kingdoms of glory. Those in this kingdom will dwell forever in the presence of God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ... Individuals in the terrestrial kingdom will be honorable people who were blinded by the craftiness of men... Telestial glory will be reserved for individuals who received not the gospel of Christ, neither the testimony of Jesus. These individuals will receive their glory after being redeemed from spirit prison, which is sometimes called hell” (<http://lds.org/study/topics/kingdoms-of-glory?lang=eng>). They contend baptism for the dead will enable those who are sons of perdition the ability to leave a place of torment and enter the Telestial glory. Furthermore, they believe marriage can continue into the Celestial glory.

Catholics teach of a place called purgatory where spirits of the dead are in torments for a while, but who can later enter into paradise. Very similar to the Mormon belief connected to the Telestial glory.

The Jehovah’s Witnesses state, “It is the heavenly Kingdom for which Jesus taught all his followers to pray. Soon it will become the one government over all the earth and will solve mankind’s pressing problems... The earth will never be destroyed or depopulated but will become a peaceful paradise” (www.jw-media.org/aboutjw/article31.htm#kingdom). They believe “heaven is reserved only for 144,000 Jehovah’s Witnesses who were born before 1935, when the Watchtower Society proclaimed that the doors of heaven had been shut” (www.spiritwatch.org/whajwwon.htm).

Let’s examine what the Bible says, for it is the truth of God which is to be believed.



What The Bible Says...

- 1 Corinthians 15:35-49
- Revelation 20:10
- 1 Peter 1:3-9
- Matthew 25:31-46
- John 5:28-29

Implications & Errors...

What are the consequences in believing there is no hell, or that the sinful will not be punished? (See also Eccl. 12:7; Matt. 22:32; Luke 16:19-31; Romans 2:6,11;)

Catholics on Purgatory: "The very reasons assigned for the existence of purgatory make for its passing character. We pray, we offer sacrifice for souls therein detained that God in mercy may forgive every fault and receive them into the bosom of Abraham" (www.newadvent.org/cathen/12575a.htm). If a person can pass into a heavenly realm (approved by God) after death, as the Catholics and Mormons teach, why live faithful now? (see also Rev. 14:11, 20:10)

What is worse than death (Heb. 10:28-29)?

How To Teach The Truth...

How can we reconcile the doctrine of living in a paradise on earth for eternity with 2 Peter 3:10-14? (compare also 1 Pet. 1:4 and Rev. 21:1-4)

Who comprised the 144,000 (Rev. 7:4, 14:1-5)?

Jehovah's Witnesses claim Jesus' second coming occurred in 1935 (which is why the gates to heaven are shut). What does Scripture say? (Acts 1:11; Rev. 1:7; John 5:28-29; 1 Cor. 15:23-26)

How does Hebrews 6:19-20 defeat the two hopes promoted by Jehovah's Witnesses (heaven, and paradise on earth) or the three promoted by the Mormons (Celestial, Terrestrial, Telestial)?

