

Bible Study Center Seminar

Topic: “What people say... What God says! - Part 2”

This is a 3-part seminar dealing with the topic of TRUTH IN RELIGION. In this material we will discuss several popular beliefs found in religion today and then compare these ideas to what the Bible actually says. The goal is to show that we all must be careful and check to make certain that what people SAY is true actually IS true! We will see how easy it is to take passages of the Bible out of their original context and make them say whatever people want them to say, but we will also see how putting such passages back into context helps us set things straight and see what God intended for us to see. Ultimately, this series of lessons will be expanded to examine more “popular” teachings.

Each day’s sessions of the seminar are designed to span 2 hours, from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM and will break down into an initial 10-minute introduction/review, followed by a 40-minute lecture, with a 20 minute snack/visitation break, followed by another 40-50 minute lecture.

The flow of topics covered in the seminar are as follows:

Session 1A = Laying a FOUNDATION

Session 1B = Concerning Holy Spirit Guidance

Session 2A = “The ANTICHRIST”

Session 2B = Pastors, priests, and Popes!

Session 3A = Concerning “Spiritual Gifts” and Miracles

Session 3B = Summary and “Open Forum”

1A: Laying a FOUNDATION...

“**RELIGION**” today is a very confusing situation. While almost everyone around us claims to believe in God and in Christ as the Son of God, the problem of religious division is so easy to see. Where there should be unity in faith and practice, there are differences and debate! What started with Jesus and his one church has evolved into over hundreds, perhaps thousands, of groups worldwide - each one **claiming** Jesus as their Lord, each **claiming** to follow the Bible, and each **claiming** to be the right church, and yet no two of these groups teach the same things!

We live in a world where we must be very careful to make certain that the teachings we accept and follow are the same original ones that came to the people in the time of original Christianity! This warning is not new. Even during the time of original Christianity there were people who started out as genuine Christians but later altered the original teachings of Christianity and caused confusion and problems for many people. In response, the Christian leaders of that time unanimously condemned such behavior, **ALWAYS** challenging the believers to stay committed to the original teachings they had received at the beginning of their faith. (See: **Galatians 1:6-9, 2 John 1:9-11; Revelation 22:18-19; and 1 John 2:24**)

Christianity is NOT a democracy! The teachings of Christianity **WILL NOT change** with time. **Christianity will not EVOLVE!** This is because Christianity is based upon a message from God that was revealed completely in the first generation of believers and once it was completed, it was fixed and unchangeable for all time. God is its author, Christ and the Apostles were the messengers, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the result is what WE call the Bible. (**2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21**)

It is an undisputed fact that differences in teachings between religious groups exist today because many people, whether or not they are sincere, **use God’s word**

outside of its original intended CONTEXT. While this is sad and creates much arguing and confusion, the situation is not hopeless. All we really have to do to repair things is to get everyone to stop and apply to religion and the Bible one of the most basic guiding principles that ALL people in ALL nations hold dear, which is the belief that what a person says (a message) belongs to that person and that, out of respect for that person, no one should ever misrepresent that person’s message in any way.

Our obligation is not necessarily to agree with what a person says, but to UNDERSTAND that message, as it was intended, and, if we should decide to tell that message to other people then we must do so in a way that preserves the INTENDED meaning of the one who originated that message. Anything less would be disrespectful and unethical!

To understand the importance of this point, simply consider the following question. “**How do YOU feel when someone misrepresents your words?**” Not good, right? It is no different with God and HIS message! (**2 Timothy 2:14-**

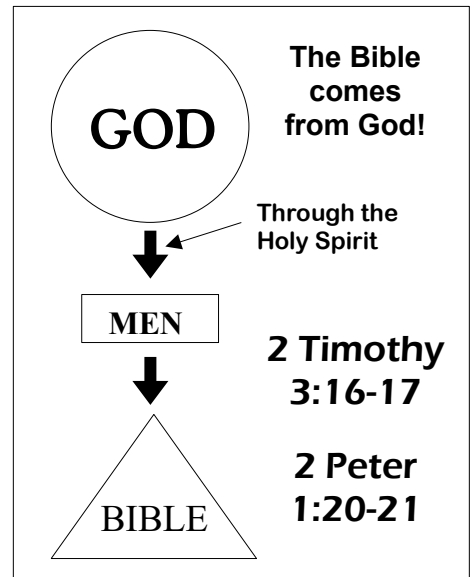


Diagram 1

15) We must study to UNDERSTAND God's message BECAUSE IT BELONGS TO HIM!

Why is this important, and how does it relate to the topic of this seminar? **With the reality of the many religious groups and all the variations in teaching, we must be careful to understand what GOD SAID and reject anything that HE did not say – no matter what might happen!** It does not matter what people think or say. The only thing that matters is what GOD thinks and says.

Jesus once spoke to people about “being right” and “being wrong”. In **Matthew 7:21-23**, he told a story about some people who, at first, seemed to be very religious and proud to call Jesus “Lord!” As the story continues, we are amazed to hear Jesus condemn these “good” and “active” people! His words “I never knew you” stood in contrast to their own beliefs and personal convictions! **They BELIEVED in Jesus! They WORKED for Jesus! They GAVE CREDIT to Jesus! How could Jesus disown them?** The key to understanding the whole story is simple. It is NOT enough for a person to do religious things for God and then trust in our feelings to show us what is TRUE and what is FALSE!

The point of Jesus' story is that each one of us must “***do the will of my Father who is in the heavens***” in order to be pleasing to the Father! According to what Jesus said in **John 12:44-50**, **THAT WILL** is to be found in the teachings that he brought. He also stated that those teachings will be the basis for the Judgment, because those teachings were not his own, but originated with the Father. Jesus was just another of the many “spokespersons” that God used throughout time to deliver a message to the people of the world. Because of this, we all must study those teachings and follow them carefully and completely!

If “*the words I have spoken will be the judge on the last day*” is a true statement, then does it not mean that ALL TRUE TEACHINGS of Christianity must be found in the teachings of Christ? Was this NOT the point of John in **2 John 1:9-11? The answer must be “YES!” to BOTH questions! This is the reason why each person must learn to study the Bible! How can we place our trust in any other person to study for us? As we will see as we go along in this study, there are many variations of teaching concerning the topic of SIN and we all must be careful to study and make certain we are following truth! We cannot simply trust what our religious leaders tell us! What if they are wrong? You alone must study and decide these matters for yourself, because YOU will stand alone before the Lord and give an account for your beliefs and actions! (**2 Corinthians 5:10**)**

The focus of this seminar will be on two areas. First, we will examine several popular teachings that are accepted as truth by millions of people. We will examine key passages that are said to support the different ideas. Then we will look at what the Bible ACTUALLY teaches about the topics. We do not ask you to believe whatever we tell you. After all, we might be no different than those people who disrespect God's words. All that we ask of you is that you put aside what you have been told about these matters and look carefully at **what the Bible really says**. What you do then is your choice!

1B: Regarding Holy Spirit Guidance TODAY

Earlier, we stated that many groups have many different claims, one of which is the claim that they are true believers **because they follow the Bible**. So how can we have ONE BIBLE and get this ever-increasing number of “Christian” churches? The answer is found when we go a little deeper into the explanations they give about God and about how a person discovers TRUTH **from God**.

Almost ALL groups teach that **God MUST GUIDE** a person to that truth in a very direct way. At the extreme end of this idea are strict Calvinists, who believe that a person’s entire relationship is controlled by HIM through the GUIDANCE of the Holy Spirit, and you can’t do anything to stop it.

But the more common position is that the Holy Spirit “enlightens” or “illuminates” people to understand God’s will, and this “enlightenment” is what determines what is right and wrong. We will take a closer look at what many people are saying and then look at what God actually says....

Our journey begins with a reading the main passage people point to when they speak about Holy Spirit guidance: **John 16:12-13**

¹² *"I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.
¹³ But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, **he will guide you into all truth.**
 For he will not speak on his own authority, but will speak whatever he hears, and will tell you what is to come. (NET)*

A. What people say....

(Please note that any Bible passages found in quoted material DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT WHAT THE PASSAGES MEAN. You must place them into context!)

- People NEED God’s guidance to find and understand the truth and John 16:12-13 applies to all people living in all times.
 - “The Holy Spirit won’t do your studying for you, but **He will help you with your studies**. All through high school and college, before I took any test in my classes, I prayed this prayer, “Lord, by your Holy Spirit, help me to remember all the material that I have faithfully studied.” It worked! I was the Valedictorian (the person with the highest average) of my senior high school class, and later graduated from college with honors (magna cum laude), having a grade point average over 3.7! **I know firsthand that the Holy Spirit is our Teacher**. In the front of every book I write (including this one), there is a section for Acknowledgments. I thank those who have helped me in any way with that certain book. After I list the people, I always add, “To the Holy Spirit, who is my Teacher.” **He taught me the Bible** so that now I can impart that knowledge and wisdom to others. I feel privileged to be here for you and to pass on what I have learned in the last 40 years **from the Holy Spirit**.” - Kelley Varner, Protestant leader¹

¹ <https://kelleyvarner.org/holy-spirit-teacher/>

- “The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, **helps believers discern between what is true and what is not**; what is wise and what is foolish; what is best and what is simply OK. Each day is full of decisions. Most of our decisions concern issues not clearly spelled out in the Scriptures, for example, where to attend school, whether to hire a particular applicant, how much to budget for vacation, on and on it goes. As you are constantly confronted with the details of everyday living, **the Holy Spirit will guide you. He will give you that extra on-the-spot sense of discernment you need to make both big and small decisions.** As you develop a greater **sensitivity to His guidance**, you will worry much less about the decisions you make. Why? Because the Holy Spirit is a trustworthy guide.” - Dr. Charles Stanley, Protestant leader²
- “Jesus told his disciples that the truth will set you free (John 8:32). The truth liberates us from doubts, illusions, and fears. Since God is the source of all truth, then the closer we draw to him and listen to his word, the more we grow in the knowledge of him and of his great love and wisdom for us. Jesus told his disciples that he would send them the Spirit of truth who will announce to you the things to come. Through the Holy Spirit, we proclaim our ancient faith in the saving death and resurrection of Christ until he comes again. **The Lord gives us his Holy Spirit as our divine Teacher and Helper** that we may grow in the knowledge and wisdom of God. Do you seek the wisdom that comes from above and do you willingly obey God's word?” - Washtenaw Covenant Community, Protestant group³
- “The Holy Spirit has many functions. Not only does He distribute spiritual gifts according to His will (1 Corinthians 12:7–11), but He also comforts us (John 14:16, KJV) teaches us (John 14:26), and remains as a seal of promise upon our hearts until the day of Jesus' return (Ephesians 1:13; 4:30). The Holy Spirit also takes on the role of Guide and Counselor, **leading us in the way we should go and revealing God's truth** (Luke 12:12; 1 Corinthians 2:6–10). But how do we recognize the Spirit's guidance? How do we discern between our own thoughts and His leading? After all, the Holy Spirit does not speak with audible words. Rather, He guides us through an **inner voice** (John 16:13), **our own consciences** (Romans 9:1), **and other quiet, subtle ways.**” - S. Michael Houndman, Protestant leader⁴
- The Holy Spirit, then, as Jesus promises, guides us "into all truth" (Jn 16:13) he leads us not only to an encounter with Jesus, the fullness of Truth, but guides us "into" the Truth, that is, he helps us enter into a deeper communion with Jesus himself, gifting us knowledge of the things of God. We cannot achieve this on our own strengths. **If God does not enlighten us interiorly, our being Christians will be superficial.** The Tradition of the Church affirms that the Spirit of truth acts in our hearts, provoking that "sense of faith" (sensus fidei), through which, as the Second Vatican Council affirms, the People of

² <https://808bo.com/2013/02/10/the-guidance-of-the-holy-spirit-by-dr-charles-stanley/>

³ <https://dailyscripture.servantsoftheword.org/readings/john1612.htm>

⁴ <https://www.gotquestions.org/guidance-Holy-Spirit.html>

God, under the guidance of the Magisterium, adheres unwaveringly to the faith given once and for all to the saints, (113) penetrates it more deeply with right thinking, and applies it more fully in its life (cf. Dogmatic Constitution, "Lumen gentium", 12). - Pope Francis, Catholic leader (May 2013)⁵

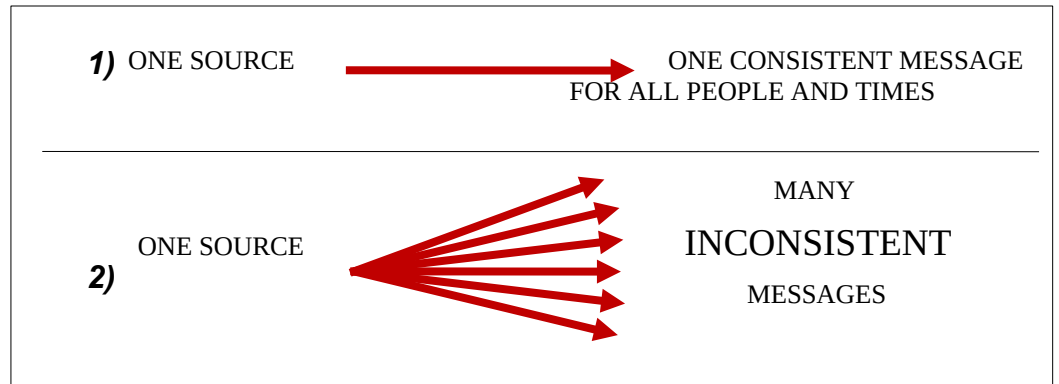
- **Some common observations we can make from what is said above...**
 - **People today BELIEVE that they receive guidance from the Holy Spirit.**
 - **People today believe John 16:12-13 applies to all generations.**
 - **All point to some PERSONAL EXPERIENCE as proof of the legitimacy of their belief.**
 - **The bottom line is that while the Bible is "the Word of God" it is the Holy Spirit's guidance that makes it REAL for people, and determines what the correct teaching of God is.**

- **THE BIG PROBLEM!**
 - **All of these claims are SUBJECTIVE!**
 - **Since the evidence supporting is usually a personal testimony (a subjective experience) which the person BELIEVES has come from God, through the Holy Spirit, they accept whatever happens after that as "coming from God" and therefore, legitimate and true!**
 - **This is how so many "teachers" in these groups get their "power" and "authority". If people BELIEVE their story then they will choose to become "followers".**
 - **This is how many of the denominations came to exist.**
 - **"How can we "challenge" a person's claim when they have such "wonderful" stories of faith?"**
 - **With no objective way to evaluate the claims then "anything goes", and that creates lots and lots of "Christian" groups.**
 - **An example of this subjective influence: prayer before Bible study!**
 - **People ask for "guidance" and then accept whatever is said and taught in that Bible study as THE TRUTH from God!**
 - **The result of this GUIDANCE IS INCONSISTENCY and even CONTRADICTION!**

⁵Public address made by the Pope in May of 2013. The text of the speech can be found at <http://www.catholicworldreport.com>

○ **Questions to think about:**

- **How can one source INTENTIONALLY guide people to an EVER INCREASING number of variations?**
- **Looking at God's dealings with mankind, as recorded in the Bible, which of the options below best describes God communicating with man?**



Consider this statement:

"There are as many sects and beliefs as there are heads. This fellow will have nothing to do with baptism, another denies the Sacrament, a third believes that there is another world between this and the Last Day. Some teach that Christ is not God, some say this, some that. **There is now no rustic so rude but that, if he dreams or fancies anything, it must be the whisper of the Holy Ghost and he himself a prophet.** There is no one who does not wish to be cleverer than Luther; they all want to try their steel on me... They speak like madmen; I have during the year to listen to many such wretched folk. In no other way can the devil come so close to me, that I must admit. Formerly the world was full of noisy, disembodied spirits giving themselves out to be the souls of men; **now its full of uproarious spirits with bodies, who all declare that they are real angels.**" - Martin Luther in 1525⁶

B. What GOD says....

- JOHN 16:12-15

"12 I have still much to tell to you, but you are not yet able to handle it; 13 but whenever the that one, the spirit of the truth, might come, he will guide you into "the every truth"; for he will not speak from himself, but whatever he hears he will speak and he will report to you the things that are coming. 14 That one will glorify me, because he will take the things of me and he will report to you. 15 All things whatever the Father has are mine; on account of this I said that he will take what is mine and report it to you." BDM

- **Analysis of the passage**

⁶ "To the Christians at Antwerp " early in April, 1525. " Werke," En. ed., 53, p. 342 ; " Briefweelisel," 5, p. 151.

- **Jesus started delivering a message, but was not able to complete it during his time on Earth.**
- **The rest of the message is coming.**
 - **The phrase “the every truth” is important and indicates “all” or “complete”.**
 - **This statement - in context - is NOT given on a hillside to “all believers.”**
 - **Rather than being an open-ended promise, it indicates a situation where at present something is lacking but in a future time (after the coming of the Spirit of the truth) what is lacking will be provided.**
- **How was this promise fulfilled?**
 - **The Spirit of the truth came in Acts 2.**
 - **The disciples - minus their Master - continued His work and received many more instructions and teachings.**
 - **What was lacking when Jesus spoke the words of John 16, MUST HAVE BEEN REVEALED before the death of those he spoke to.**
 - **Proof of this can be seen in the WARNINGS found in the later books of the New Testament.**
 - **Galatians 1:6-9**

“**6** I am surprised in this way that you are so quickly changing from the one who called you in Christ’s grace into another good news, **7** not that there is another, except there are some who are troubling you and wanting to pervert the good news of the Christ. **8** But even if we (Paul and his fellow workers) or an angel out of heaven (Gabriel, Michael, “Moroni”) should bring you a good news different from that which we gave you, let him be condemned. **9** As I stated before, now I say again, if anyone is telling you a good news different from that which we gave you, let him be condemned.”
 - **2 John 1:9-11**

“**9** Anyone going forward and not remaining in the teaching of the Christ does not have God; the one remaining in the teaching, this one has both the Father and the Son. **10** If a certain person comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into house and do not speak to him a greeting; **11** for the one greeting him shares in his evil works.”
 - **Revelation 22:18-19**

“**18** I witness to anyone hearing the words of the prophecy of this book; if anyone adds upon them, the

God will add upon him the plagues which are written in this book, **19** and if anyone might take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, the God will take away his part from the tree of the life and from the special city which are written in this book.”

▪ **1 John 2:24**

“**24** Let that which you heard from the beginning remain in you! If that which you heard from the beginning remains in you, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father.”

- ***What do these warnings tell us about Holy Spirit Guidance and John 16:12-15?***
 - ***The message that was lacking must have been revealed during the lifetime of the Apostles.***
 - ***The people were told to make a comparison.***
 - ***To make a comparison, you must have something that is considered to be a complete “original” to use as the basis of comparison.***
 - ***If the message Jesus spoke of in John 16 was not yet complete, then on what basis do the writers issue the warnings?***
 - ***If the message was completed during the time of original Christianity, then any “guidance” being claimed can be verified in the same way the Galatians were told by Paul, John to his readers, and Jesus in the book of Revelation. We determine if it is right or wrong by comparison with the original!***

Those who say that we are to be guided by the Spirit, forget that even though the first Christians had Spirit guidance, there were no guarantees.

▪ **1 John 2:18-27**

18 Children, it is *the* last hour, and just as you have heard that an antichrist is coming, also now **many have become antichrists**, from this we know that it is *the* last hour. **19** They went out from us, but they were not out of us; for if they were out of us they would have remained with us; but so that they might be shown because they are all not out of us. **20** And **you have a KRISMA** from the special one and all of you know. **21** I did not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it and because every lie is not out of the truth. **22** Who is the liar except the one denying that Jesus is not the Christ? This is the antichrist; the one **denying** the Father and the Son. **23** Every one denying the son neither has the Father, the one confessing the Son also has the father. **24** Let that which you heard from the beginning remain in you! If that which you heard from the beginning remains in you, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father. **25** And this is the

promise which he proclaimed to you, eternal life. **26** I wrote these things to you concerning the ones deceiving you. **27** And **the KRISMA** which you received from Him, remains in you and you have no need in order that someone might teach you, but as his **KRISMA** teaches you concerning all things and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you must remain in it.

○ **Analysis**

- *There false teachers causing problems for people.*
- *John warns the people about them.*
- *He tells them to be careful what they believe.*
- *He tells them that they have a special teacher inside of them and they know all things.*
- *This teacher gives them the right information but does not force them to keep it.*
- *Having the Spirit as a guide did NOT give them the right to claim that any idea they had about God was “a guidance”.*
- *The people had a guide and they were warned to “remain” in what they were taught.*
- *The fact that they were warned proves that it is possible for a person to “resist” the teaching from the Spirit and believe and do something different!*
 - *This is why Paul said what he did in Galatians 1 and why John said what he did in 1 John!*

What does it all mean?

- People today may claim what they want to, but there will be no NEW truth!

If the same Spirit that guided the original Christians is working to guide people today, then TWO THINGS ought to be true:

ONE: Just as the Spirit taught the same message to all people in all places, there should be a consistent message in ALL GROUPS!

TWO: Since "THE TEACHING OF THE CHRIST" is the final message from God (for all time,) and since it was completely revealed during the lifetimes of the Apostles, then IF the Spirit will return and guide people the message that the Spirit will reveal WILL BE THE SAME MESSAGE HE REVEALED THE FIRST TIME.

- Therefore, we can KNOW if the claims and teachings we hear today, from those CLAIMING to be "guided by the Spirit", are true or not by simply comparing what they say to the original record of the Spirit's teachings found inside of the New Testament!

FINAL THOUGHTS:

MATTHEW 7:21-23

JOHN 12:44-50

2A: "The ANTICHRIST"

The topic of the ANTICHRIST has captivated the imagination of people for generations. Believed to be an agent of Satan, theologians and movie writers have created much fear and trembling in the hearts of millions of people around the world by claiming that Satan will bring forth and use one specific individual as an evil counterpart to Christ, and that this "antichrist" will be of such similar power and might to the real Christ that the world and all souls in it will be in great peril leading to one final battle that will decide the ultimate fate of the universe and beyond!

The teaching has evolved and each new generation of religious "thinkers" adds new elements to the mystique that is the Antichrist!

A. What people say....

(Please note that any Bible passages found in quoted material DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT WHAT THE PASSAGES MEAN. You must place them into context!)

The first written record of a single individual end-times "Antichrist" with special powers was around 180AD. (Against Heresies, Book 5, ch. 25 *Irenaeus*)

The following article, taken from the website about.com, (<http://christianity.about.com/od/endtimestopicalstudy/a/antichrist.htm>) adequately summarizes the most basic common beliefs about antichrist today. (*Verse quotations have been removed for reasons of space.*)

Who is the Antichrist?

*Although the Bible does not specifically name who the antichrist will be, it does give us some clues as to **what he will be like.***

Speculation

During my research I came across a lot of current speculation about the antichrist, who he is or who he might be. A great many unlikely guesses were among the suggestions. The most popular names to come up were George W. Bush, Barack Obama, and the Pope. I too have been accused of being the antichrist by a few of my readers who don't agree with a biblical perspective or an editorial I've written. However, it's highly improbable that one of these (Bush, Obama, Benedict, or Me) is the actual "son of perdition" spoken of in 2 Thessalonians, chapter 2.

Bible Names for Antichrist:

By taking a look at the different names for the antichrist in the Bible, we can gain a better understanding of the kind of person he will be.

Antichrist

The name "antichrist" is only found in 1 John 2:18, 2:22, 4:3, and 2 John 7. The Apostle John was the only Bible writer to use the name antichrist. Studying these verses, we learn that many antichrists (false teachers) will appear between the time of Christ's first and Second Coming, but there will be one great antichrist who will rise to power during the end times, or "last hour," as 1 John phrases it. He will deny that Jesus is the Christ. He will deny both God the Father and God the Son. He will be a liar and a deceiver.

By the end times, many will easily be deceived and embrace the antichrist because his spirit will already dwell within the world.

Man of Sin

In 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, **the antichrist is described** as the "man of sin," or "**son of perdition**." Here Paul, like John, is also warning believers about the antichrist's ability to deceive:

The NIV makes it clearer that a time of rebellion will come prior to Christ's return and then the "**man of lawlessness, the man doomed to destruction**" will be revealed. **The antichrist** eventually will exalt himself above God to be worshiped in the Lord's Temple, proclaiming himself to be God. Verses 9 and 10 say that the antichrist will do counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, to gain a following and deceive many.

The Beast

In Revelation 13:5-8, **the antichrist** is referred to as "the beast."

We see this name "the beast" used for antichrist several times in Revelation.

The antichrist will gain political power and spiritual authority over every nation on the earth. He will most likely begin his rise to power as a very influential, very charismatic, political or religious diplomat. He will rule the world government for forty-two months. According to many eschatologists, this time frame is understood to be during the latter half (3.5 years) of the tribulation. During this period, the world will endure a time of unprecedented trouble.

A Little Horn

In Daniel's prophetic vision of the end of days we see "a little horn" described in chapters 7, 8 and 11. In the interpretation of the dream, this little horn is a ruler or king, and speaks, **of the antichrist**.

According to many end times Bible scholars, Daniel's prophecy interpreted together with verses in Revelation, specifically point to a future world empire coming from a "revived" or "reborn" Roman Empire, like the one in existence at the time of Christ. They predict that **the antichrist** will emerge from this race.

False Christ

*In the Gospels (Mark 13, Matthew 24-25, and Luke 21), Jesus warned his followers of the terrible events and persecution that will occur before his second coming. **Most likely**, this is where **the concept of an antichrist** was first introduced to the disciples, although Jesus does not refer to him in the singular:*

Conclusion

*Is the Antichrist alive today? He could be. Will we recognize him? Perhaps not at first. However, the best way to avoid being deceived by the spirit of **the antichrist** is to know Jesus Christ and be ready for his return.*

- Analysis:
 - The writer points out that the name “antichrist” IS ONLY FOUND IN JOHN’S WRITINGS!
 - The writer states that the antichrist is spoken of in several other writings, even though neither the word itself nor any such connection of the antichrist to the passages can be found in the writers on the first 100 years after the close of the New Testament!
 - The entire idea of a one single person being **THE** ANTICHRIST is the product of human opinion.
 - The fact that hundreds of thousands of people believe and teach it as fact does not make it a fact.

B. What GOD says....

As the writer mentioned above, there is only one New Testament writer who speaks about an antichrist, and this is John.

- The antichrist is anyone (there can be many) who begins as a Christian and then denies Christ!

- **1 John 2:18-23**

***18** Children, it is the last hour and just as you have heard that an **antichrist** is coming, also now **many have become antichrists**, from this we know that it is the last hour. **19** They **went out from us**, but they were not out of us; for if they were out of us they **would have remained with us**; but so that they might be shown because they are all not out of us. **20** And you have a **KRISMA** from the holy one and all of you know. **21** I did not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it and because every lie is not out of the truth. **22** Who is the liar except the one denying that Jesus is not the Christ? This is the **antichrist**; the one **denying** the father and the son. **23** Every one denying the son neither has the father, the one confessing the son also has the father. **24** Let that which you heard from the beginning remain in you! If that which you heard from the beginning remains in you, you also will remain in the son and in the father. **25** And this is the promise which he proclaimed to you, eternal life. **26** I wrote these*

things to you concerning the ones deceiving you. 27 And the KRISMA which you received from him, remains in you and you have no need in order that someone might teach you, but as his KRISMA teaches you concerning all things and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you must remain in it.

The Christians lived in a time when all of them has special Holy Spirit guidance. (We mentioned this yesterday.) This is the KRISMA - or "anointing" - John mentioned here. The arguments made by John in this text center around the idea of identifying the TRUE Spirit of guidance when claims are made.

People who were once Christians (2:19) and who had received the KRISMA (the Holy Spirit) somehow became deceived in their minds and started believing incorrect things. They would then publicize their wrong ideas claiming to have received them from The Spirit. When other Christians heard their ideas and knew they were Christians, they became confused.

- **1 John 4:1-6**

*1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit **but test to prove** whether the spirits are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 By this we know the spirit of [the] God; every spirit which **confesses** Jesus Christ having come in the flesh is from [the] God, 3 and every spirit does not confess Jesus is not from [the] God; and this is the **antichrist**, which you heard is coming, and now is already in the world. 4 Children, you are out of God and you have **overcome** them, because greater is the one in you than the one in the world. 5 They are out of the world, and on account of this they speak and the world hears them. 6 We are out of [the] God, and the one knowing [the] God hears us, whoever is not out of [the] God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of **deception**.*

- **2 John 1:7**

*7 For many deceivers have gone out into the world, the ones not confessing Jesus coming in the flesh; this is the deceiver and the **antichrist**.*

Context indicates that these teachers were saying false things about Jesus--like teaching that Jesus was not a real person!

This is why John points out that the TRUE KRISMA will never say that Jesus was not a real person. Notice how John (in 2:18) very clearly does not speak of only ONE person coming in the future, but rather speaks of MANY antichrists that had - at that time - already become antichrists!

This is the only place where antichrists are mentioned. There is no connection made in the Bible between the people John mentions here and the writings of Paul, of Daniel, or even of John's own writings in that book of Revelation. The only person who can become an antichrist is a Christian! **Any Christian who decides to go outside of**

the teaching of Christ becomes a deceiver and an antichrist!

2B: Pastors, Priests, and Popes

When people today think about “Christianity”, almost everyone envisions a group of people gathering in some sort of building, wherein they engage in activities of “worship” to give glory and honor to God! The picture almost always includes a special person (or persons) whose purpose it is to LEAD the group of believers. **If the person is a Roman Catholic, the person that comes to mind is a PRIEST, and if the person is a Protestant then it is a PASTOR.** Priests and Pastors are held in high regard by the people of their respective religions because the people BELIEVE that they are “Godly men who have dedicated their lives to serving God.” People accept them as God’s “representatives” and as such allow them to have positions of great influence in their lives.

We want to ask two simple questions. 1) Where do these positions of leadership come from? And 2) Does the Bible teach that there are Priests (such as Catholic Priests) and Pastors (such as Baptist Pastors)

A. What people say....

Most articles that seek to explain things go back to the Old Testament and show how God set up a system of leadership in the beginning wherein a “priesthood” of special people served both God and the people, acting as an assistant and mediator. They presume that since God seeks to bring lost people into a “**group** of believers” in the New Testament then, just like in the Old Testament, these people will need someone to help them with their relationship God, and God will need some special assistants to help him in dealing with the people.

- The word **priest** comes from “presbyter”, a Greek word for **older men** who cared for the church.
- **After the death of the Apostles**, over the next several hundred years time, the requirements to be a “priest” changed (e.g., vows of celibacy). Men were trained, ordained, and appointed to live in certain places and help people with their relationships with one another and, more importantly, with God!
- Additional levels of leadership were created. Priests organized and elected leaders among themselves, called Bishops, and those in turn eventually elected a “Supreme Bishop”, more popularly known as the Pope. One Bishop to rule them all!
- The resulting hierarchy of leadership continues to this day.

By the time we get to the 16th Century, corruption had invaded all levels of leadership in Catholicism. Many “activists” stepped forward and spoke out regarding this problem but change was slow until a German Priest, named Martin Luther, made a stand against the corruption, which he believed extended even to the office of the Pope!

Luther’s resulting protest gave birth to what is now known as the Protestant Reformation. Since Catholicism was the dominant “Christianity” of the day, most of these so-called “reformers were former Catholics.

Surprisingly, many of these reformers did not question the theology of Catholicism, but rather the corruption inside! Since the Catholic Church would not admit to this and reform, these reformers left the church and began a crusade to convince Catholics everywhere also to leave and join their groups.

One of the more famous of these reformers was a man named John Calvin, a French Catholic lawyer who escaped a death sentence by taking refuge in Geneva, Switzerland. He became famous and his influence grew to a point where he was asked to create a town charter for establishing the perfect Christian community! On November 20, 1541⁷, he established the role of the Pastor as a replacement for the Catholic priest. His thinking was that the people need someone to help them with their relationship with God, through administration of “the Sacraments” and by receiving confessions.

This is how the position of the office of the Protestant Pastor began.

The only basic differences between the two is that the Catholics have the sacrifice of the mass and the Sacraments, which the Protestants do not. The Pastor and Priest are leaders of their respective groups of believers, exercising leadership authority over the members where they are assigned.

- Conclusions:
 - The positions of Priest and Pastor evolved over the years.
 - Priests in Catholicism are based upon the priesthood found in the Old Testament.
 - The protestant Pastor is based upon an office created by John Calvin, designed to replace the priest in Protestant theology.
 - The Pope is nothing more than a special priest that has moved up in rank through the hierarchy to sit at the highest leadership position in Catholicism.

B. What GOD says....

There is no Biblical foundation for the Protestant Pastor, the Catholic Priest, or for the Pope! The evidence is found in the way Jesus spoke of leadership in HIS Christianity.

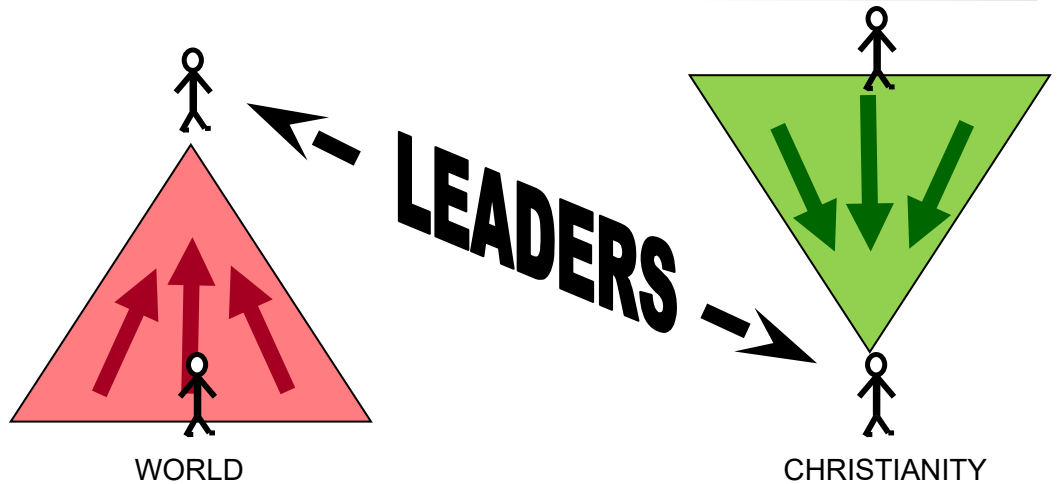
The leadership model applied in BOTH Catholic and Protestant churches is based upon the standard “pyramid principle” of leadership wherein the leader sits at the top of the pyramid and all others below submit to his authority and command.

- **Matthew 20:20-28**

20 Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came up to him, with her sons, and kneeling before him she asked him for something. 21 And he said to her, "What do you want?" She said to him, "Command that these two sons of mine may sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom." 22 But Jesus answered, "You do not know what

⁷ John Calvin, Ecclesiastical Ordinances. 1541

*you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?" They said to him, "We are able." 23 He said to them, "You will drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father." 24 And when the ten heard it, they were indignant at the two brothers. 25 But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. 26 **It shall not be so among you;** but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever would be first among you must be your slave; 28 even as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*



Since the Popes, Priests, and Pastors all work within the worldly model of leadership. This cannot be from God!

The New Testament speaks of leaders in the church.

- **1 Timothy 3:1-7**

1 The saying is sure: If any one aspires to the office of bishop, he desires a noble task. **2** Now a bishop must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, sensible, dignified, hospitable, an apt teacher, **3** no drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and no lover of money. **4 He must manage his own household well,** keeping his children submissive and respectful in every way; **5** for if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how can he care for God's church? **6** He must not be a recent convert, or he may be puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil; **7** moreover he must be well thought of by outsiders, or he may fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

- **Titus 1:5-9**

5 This is why I left you in Crete, that you might amend what was defective, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you, **6** if any man is blameless, the husband of one wife, **and his children are believers** and not open to the charge of being profligate or

insubordinate. **7** For a bishop, as God's steward, must be blameless; he must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, **8** but hospitable, a lover of goodness, master of himself, upright, holy, and self-controlled; **9** he must hold firm to the sure word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to confute those who contradict it.

- **Three terms, one person!**

Three words DESCRIBE the responsibilities of leaders in REAL Christianity!

- **Shepherd** (Pastor)- someone who cares for and protects animals
- **Guardian** (Overseer/Bishop/Episcopate) - a person who takes responsibility for the property of another
- **Elder** (Presbyter/Priest?) - an older person

- **One word says it all!**

PROISTEMI = The word means “to stand before” or “to stand in front of”. This is where a person faced with oncoming evil steps forward and places himself between that evil and the ones he is assigned to protect. 1 Timothy 3:5 puts the concept of leadership into practical terms.

“If a man does not know how to “stand up” for his own family, how can he care for God’s church?”

- **Conclusions:**

- Catholicism and Protestantism are BOTH based upon a worldly model of leadership; **PYRAMID PRINCIPLE!**
- Christ’s model of leadership is **an UPSIDE DOWN” PYRAMID!**
- The leaders in REAL Christianity are NOT school trained professionals!
- Leaders in REAL CHRISTIANITY are life trained and are tested through the experience they gain from leading their families!
- The task of leadership is leading by example!
- Leaders must be willing to put themselves in front of any evil that tries to gain entry into the Body of Christ!

3A: MIRACLES AND HOLY SPIRIT GIFTS

There is, today, a lot of emphasis placed on "experiencing" Christ in a person's life. The problem with this is determining HOW we actually "experience" Christ in our lives.

A. What people say....

Most religious groups teach that in order to really experience Jesus, one must be baptized in the Holy Spirit. Once this occurs, the Spirit resides in the life of the Christian and brings forth a variety of "miraculous" outpourings that are "visible" to all. Although different religious groups have different interpretations of these visible miracles, almost all of them focus great attention upon two of the many "gifts of the Spirit" mentioned in the Bible. (See: **1 Cor. 12:7-11**) These being: 1) speaking in tongues; and 2) miraculous healing. Considering the importance of this subject and the extreme variance in teachings from group to group, it warrants a deeper look into the Bible's view on the matter.

Seeing that an exhaustive study of the gifts of the Holy Spirit would require an in-depth look at the person and nature of the Holy Spirit himself, which would take perhaps two or three hundred pages, we will limit our study to a comparison and contrast between two pictures.

1) What the Bible teaches about the gifts of tongues and healing; and
2) what most religious groups say on the matter.

• **Speaking in Tongues**

- This is a very popular subject. It is commonly coupled with "the Baptism of the Holy Spirit".
 - Speaking in tongues is said to be a "sign" that a person has been **baptized** by the Spirit.
 - Almost all religious groups that practice this will tell you that a **tongue** is a "**heavenly language**" that **only God understands**.
- When someone speaks "in a tongue" others will not be able to understand what is being said unless there is a person present who has the gift of "**translating** the tongue" into the common language of the people.
 - To support this idea, several passages are cited. (Please read: 1 Cor. 14:2; 1 Cor. 14:27-28.)

• **The Gift of Healing**

- While most groups that believe in "speaking in tongues" also practice the gift of healing, no two religious groups teach the same thing regarding this gift.
- Groups claim that the Holy Spirit is the power behind the healing, but there are a couple of observations we need to be pointed out.
 - These groups **will NOT promise immediate results** and cases where "immediate healing" **IS** claimed deal with cases of "internal illnesses" which cannot be verified without a medical check-up involving an X-Ray.

- The "healer" usually puts the condition of "faithfulness" upon the hearers who seek miracles.
 - "Your miracle may not happen in the next minute, or hour. It may not happen tomorrow, or next week. It may even take a year. But AS LONG AS YOU HAVE FAITH IN THE POWER OF JESUS, your miracle will come."
- You will never see missing or deformed limbs restored or straightened "immediately".
- You never see "healers" raise the dead!

B. What GOD says...

- **Regarding Speaking in Tongues**

- **Acts 2:1-13 - Pentecost**

- The Spirit is poured out on the disciples;
- They began to speak in "tongues";
- The crowd of people from all over the world heard these people speaking in their "own native languages";
- The crowd was surprised that these people could speak different languages.

- **Observations for Acts 2**

- We see that this event was due to the action of the Spirit and therefore we are witnessing the first occurrence of the "gift of tongues". The crowd was composed of people who were "devoted people", but they were not disciples.
 - It would be impossible for any of the crowd to possess the "gift of translation", because the Spirit was given to the disciples only; not to the whole crowd.
 - The wording of verse 6 takes away any doubt, because each person heard them speaking in his/er OWN language.
- The crowd UNDERSTOOD the words of the disciples, and this shows us that a tongue, in Acts 2, was a real "earthly" language!
- The "gift" of tongues is not something that is LEARNED, because if you learned to speak a foreign language then it would no longer classify as a gift! These disciples did not go to a language school!

- **1 Corinthians Chapter 14:**

- The people in Corinth were Greek speaking people.
- In this setting, if a person in Corinth stood and began to speak (under the guidance of the Spirit) in German, then only God would know what was being said, because no person in the group would understand German.
- This situation would only change if another person in that group (under the guidance of the Spirit) was able to translate the German into Greek.

- Seeing the Bible's definition of tongues, set in place by the events of Acts 2, this is the only way to consistently explain what is going on without changing the overall picture of tongues speaking in the New Testament.
- Some verses to consider: 1 Cor 12:26-3; 1 Cor 14:1,5,13,19,27

- **Regarding Healing**

- When Jesus began his teaching, he gave his disciples the power to heal the sick. (Read Matt. 10:1-8)
- There are many examples of the "gift of healing" being used in the New Testament. Consider Jn. 4:46-53; Jn. 5:2-9; Jn. 6:1-14; Jn. 11:40-44; Acts 3:2-10; Acts 9:17-18; Acts 9:36- 43; Acts 14:10; Acts 16:18; and Acts 20:7-12.
- Each reference shows some person being healed of a certain illness and from these verses we learn several things about "healing":
 - The result of healing can be seen IMMEDIATELY.
 - Even if the patient was in a different place, or even if the person was dead!
 - The faith of the one being healed was not a "condition" for the healing since the healing was done through the power of the Spirit. (After all, how could a dead person have faith?)
 - The severity of the illness did not affect the time necessary for the healing to take place.
 - Crippled limbs were straightened before the eyes of the onlookers and dead people were brought back to life!
 - **ALL healing was done INSTANTLY!**

SAME -- OR -- DIFFERENT?

All we lack is a simple comparison between what people say and what God says.

If God is consistent and works the same things in all times, and if a group today claims to "possess" the true Spirit of God, yet this "spirit" they have shows itself in a way that is different from the ORIGINAL form as seen in the New Testament, then that "spirit" cannot be God's Spirit! Why? Because God's Spirit cannot change!

So, what does this mean? There must be ANOTHER spirit working in the world today. The Bible speaks of many different kinds of "spirits" in the world.

- In **1 Timothy 4:1-5**, Paul talks of spirits that will originate from Satan and act through men who represent them for the purpose of deceiving Christians.
 - Just as Satan can disguise himself as an "angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:15) these people will also "seem" to be Christians.
 - They will talk about Jesus, teach from the Bible, and seem to be sincere.
 - This cautions us not to believe everything we see or hear from "religious people".

- It is one thing to CLAIM to be from God, another thing to actually BE from God.

What can we say about the "miracles" done by these people? There are many cases that seem genuine.

- In **2 Thess. 2:9-12**, Paul warns people about "false miracles".
 - These are NOT done by God's Spirit, but by the actions of Satan and are there to trick people into thinking God is behind them.
 - These miracles must be very convincing because Paul says that many people will be fooled!
 - He goes on to say that God will not keep people from being fooled but will actually will allow people to "believe the lie" because they refuse to accept the truth!

Therefore, we cannot expect God to "tell us who is right or wrong" with a voice from heaven. After all, he has shown us REAL CHRISTIANITY and we have everything we need (the Scripture) in order to determine what is right and wrong. (**Remember: 2 Tim. 3:16-17**)

Therefore, just because a certain religious group exercises some kind of miraculous power it does not even mean that they are Christians. Remember **Matthew 7:21-23**. Didn't those people have miraculous powers?

So how, then, can we be sure that we are Christians? The only way that we can be sure is to understand God's will and follow it. We cannot follow our emotions, or our conscience, or our opinions, or our interpretations, or our religious leaders, or even our miraculous experiences. We must always base our faith upon what God actually says the Bible says.

3B: FINAL SUMMARY

- The Bible is God's message and people must handle it correctly.
- Our responsibility is to understand God's message and follow exactly what he tells us to do. (CONTEXT)
- Jesus began giving God's message we call the New Testament, but was not able to complete it during his life on Earth.
- In John 16:12-15, he promised that after he left, the Holy Spirit would come and guide his disciples to "all the truth".
- The Spirit came in Acts 2 and the New Testament is a record of the teachings the disciples received.
- Warnings found in the writings of those disciples who received the promise of John 16, indicate that the message was complete during their lifetimes.
- Since there was no written record at the time, Christians received a KRISMA from God to give them instruction.
- Even though Christians received special guidance (KRISMA) the teachings they received were NOT different from the ones the Apostles gave them in person.

- Any Christian that made changes to those teachings and taught them to others became “a deceiver and antichrist”.
- There were many antichrists in the final days of the first century!
- Today’s religious world has distorted John’s original idea of “many antichrists” and replaced it with the idea of a single very evil, coming from Satan “Antichrist”, which the Bible simply does not mention!
- In addition to “antichrist”, the religious world has taken Jesus’ original idea of “servant leaders” in His church and replaced it with the “hierarchy” of leaders that are based upon the world’s PYRAMID OF LEADERSHIP!
- Just as in the case of “The Antichrist”, the Pastors, Priests, and Popes commonly found in religion today are NOT taught in the Bible!
- The term “pastor” is one of three (pastor/shepherd, guardian, and elder) terms used in Scripture to describe the character and responsibilities of leaders in REAL CHRISTIANITY.
- Christian leaders are husbands/fathers who receive their spiritual training while leading their families, and they are “qualified” by the attitudes found in their wives, children, their character, and by how outsiders look at them!
- The “Speaking in Tongues” and “Healing” that are common religious practices among the “Christian” groups today are not the same as what we find mentioned in the Bible.
- If the same Holy Spirit is going to work in our time today, with the same activities we find in the time of the New Testament, then this work ought to be exactly the same and done in exactly the same way as it was in the New Testament.
- We can KNOW which CLAIMS are true and which are false by listening to what is claimed and then comparing it to what is found in the Bible.
- ANYTHING that is not the same is NOT from God.
- Any person who does not remain in those original teachings does not have God!

MATTHEW 7:21-23