**ICGDL MONTH OF TEACHING ON FALSE DOCTRINES**

**Your Word Is Truth**

Outline:

Week 1

Explanation of the problem: Unity and Diversity. Who is a Christian?

Catholicism

Week 2

Calvinism

Evangelicalism, Sinner’s Prayer, etc.

Week 3

Evangelicalism, continued

Pentecostal/Charismatic

Week 4

Premillennialism

Messianic Christianity

Week 5

Mormonism

Jehovah Witness

If time, Postmodernism

**Explanation of the problem: Unity and Diversity. Who is a Christian?**

Our approach: Why these topics are important.

John 4:23 God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in Spirit and in truth.

1 Tim 4:16 Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

Our attention to correct biblical teaching is a salvation issue both for us and for those we interact with.

It takes MUCH more work to maintain proper “life,” Less total time is needed to attend to proper doctrine, but we must spend some time on this as well.

2 Peter 3:16 Peter points out that some distort the writings of Paul and the other Scriptures “to their own destruction.”

Two distinctions to pay attention to here:

A. On doctrines, one can describe three categories:

1. Essential doctrines. Ones on which our salvation may depend.

-Theology: The nature of God

-Christology

-Soteriology—how we are saved

2. Important doctrines. Not “salvation issues” but ones which Christians may divide over.

-miraculous gifts

-biblical leadership roles

3. Unimportant doctrines. Foolish to divide over these issues.

-age of the earth

-nature of end times

-when to worship, how often to take Lord’s Supper

As we look at different groups and teachings, it is very important for us to make these distinctions. John 17. Jesus desires Christians to be as unified as possible.

The truth: The ICOC has a history of being divisive and judgmental over level 2 and 3 doctrines. Let us not use this class to do that!

B. Doctrine and Theology versus practices

Orthodoxy = correct doctrine or theology

Heterodoxy = false doctrine or theology

Orthopraxy = correct Christian practice (eg. Consistent with the primitive church)

Heteropraxy = different or incorrect Christian practice

Q: Which is “worse”? Heterodoxy or heteropraxy?

When we look at the Roman Catholic Church and at Protestantism/Calvinism/Evangelicalism, this will be a VERY important distinction.

Our goal here is to hold very strictly to Orthodoxy, especially over doctrines in the first category.

Let us remember that anyone who holds to orthodoxy, and who believes the message about Jesus, who makes Jesus Lord, who repents and who is subsequently baptized, is saved, regardless of practice, and doctrines in category 2,3. They may not join our group, but they are our brother and sister. They are saved.

My may choose to divide from other Christian groups over doctrines in the second category.

We should be very cautious against dividing over practice and doctrines in the third category.

Rice Haggard (and many other early Stone/Campbell leaders): In matters of faith, unity. In matters of opinion, liberality.

**Roman Catholicism**

I will pursue a more historical approach than most. I want to know WHY Catholics believe what they believe (even if they do not know why!)

For simplicity, we will look at Augustine of Hippo. A very large proportion of both false doctrine and practice of Catholics can be traced to Augustine.

Before we do this, one important note:

Catholics (and Orthodox, Coptics, Jacobites,…) claim that they are the original church, and we are an innovation. They are the faith of the apostles and we are not.

In this, they are correct.

Advice: Do not get defensive about this and accept the premise as true. But… ASAP, establish that the Bible is the only ultimate authority for truth. Do a Word study. Do not assume that this will work every time!

The idea that the Bible is NOT the only authority for truth traces to well before Augustine:

Irenaeus: Defended Christian teaching, not necessarily on the grounds of scriptural authority, but on **apostolic tradition, the rule of faith and apostolic succession**.

This was his antidote to Gnosticism. He could not end all arguments with Gnostics using scripture, but as to apostolic rule of faith, he won his arguments.

“We appeal again to that tradition which has come down from the apostles and is guarded by the successions of the elders in the churches.”

Going perhaps still farther in assigning authority to tradition, he says; “Even if the apostles had not left their Writings to us, ought we not to follow the rule of the tradition which they handed down to those to whom they committed the churches?”

Irenaeus finds authority seated not only in the canonical writings, he finds truth and even salvation in “the Church” (ie. the Roman Catholic Church)

Us: The Scripture (Old and New Testament) is “sufficient for every good work.” Our only reliable source of authoritative truth is the canonical Bible.

Proof-texts of Catholics for obeying church traditions: 2 Thess 3:6, Rom 16:17, Phil 3:17, etc.

Mark 7:1-13 **“You nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down.” “They worship me in vain, teaching as doctrines the traditions of men.”**

Catholics: Truth is found in 1. The Rule of Faith. 2. The traditions handed down from the church fathers. 3. Scripture.

The “Rule of Faith” is a somewhat ill-defined supposed set of teachings, not necessarily laid out in Scripture, but which was handed down by the apostles and those in the apostolic succession (such as the bishops of Rome).

Suggestion: Lay out this distinction at the very beginning and make those you sharing with aware of the stark difference. But let them decide for themselves.

**Augustine of Hippo 354-430 AD**

“Man’s free will avails nothing except to do evil.”

Laid the groundwork of Christendom, of Medieval Christianity and to a large extent of Reformation theology!

His overarching theme: The Sovereignty of God. “The City of God.”

Important teachings of Augustine:

1. Christendom. The church should have authority over the state. The church has a right to defend itself, to raise armies and to fight wars to defend its prerogatives. Rebellion against the church is rebellion against the state.

Augustine virtually invented Christendom.

2. Original sin, total depravity of mankind

 a. and thus justification of infant baptism. Baptism only brings forgiveness of Original Sin. Sin committed afterward require penance. (the idea of Purgatory came later)

3. Predestination. Man is incapable of responding to God. God chooses us, not us choosing him.

 “Free will” is something we receive and grow into after we are saved. This was later rejected by the Roman Catholic Church in favor of Thomas Aquinas and the Jesuits’ teaching on free will.

4. Sacramentalism. Baptism, communion, etc. *ex opere opero* The act as a power in and of itself, apart from faith on the part of those who receive it.

“The word is added to the element, and there results the Sacrament, as if itself also a kind of visible word.”

To Augustine, the Church can absorb the world. The authority of the Church is not held in the righteous behavior of its priests and bishops, never mind its members, but in the Church universal as an abstract entity. Christianity is maintained, not by Christians living like Christ, but by proper maintenance of the sacraments. He conceived of the sacraments as having a power in and of themselves, apart from faith on the part of the participants to impart righteousness and justification.

Salvation is by sacrament, not by faith.

5. Sacerdotalism. Salvation of the masses is dependent on the acts of a separate class of ordained priests. 1 Peter 2:9 You are a holy people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation. Exodus 19:6 I will make you into a kingdom of priests. Biblically, all Christians are priests. 1 Tim 2:5 For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus. A priest is a mediator. The pope claims to be the pontifex maximus—the highest of the high priests.

Even before Augustine, the Eucharist was becoming a sacrifice, occurring on an altar.

Therefore, there is no salvation outside “the Church” (read that as the Roman Catholic Church)

6. Etc. Transubstantiation (really an offshoot of sacramentalism)

After Augustine:

**Gregory “the Great” (590-604)**

John Calvin: The last “good” pope. First monk/pope. Greatest scholar of his age. Made Rome a model of caring for the poor, sick, etc.

Almost by accident, became the first pope to exercise temporal power. He did so out of a desire to help the poor and starving in a very chaotic time.

Gregory equated Mary of Bethany (John 12:1–8), the sinful woman caught in adultery (John 8:1–11) and Mary Magdalene, making Mary Magdalene a sinful woman. Not a good thing!

Strong advocate of—the virtual inventor of the idea of Purgatory. Sins committed after baptism must be forgiven by acts such as pilgrimage, performance of masses, (later confession)

The idea of Purgatory is in category #1 of false teachings. It denies the sufficiency of the sacrifice of Jesus for salvation.

Pilgrimage, penance, indulgences are false practices.

Sins not forgiven in this life must be worked off in Purgatory (normally through of loved ones left behind)

This, combined with indulgences and confession to priests, which came mostly after AD 1000, became the dominant teaching in the life of Catholics.

Concerning the Catholic Church, he said, “The holy universal church proclaims that God cannot truly be worshipped, save within herself, and asserts that all they who are without her shall never be saved.”

Gregory a strong advocate of veneration of saints, and especially veneration of Mary.

Suggestion: Do not go strongly after veneration of Mary and the Saints. The official RC doctrine is that we do NOT worship them, but only venerate them and pray through them.

After Gregory:

Immaculate Conception

Confession

Indulgences

Infallibility of the Pope

**Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)**

The most influential theologian of the Medieval period. The greatest since Augustine.

Augustine ⇔ Plato Thomas Aquinas ⇔ Aristotle

The key theologian of modern Catholicism. 16th century declared “Doctor of the Church.”1879 RC church officially declared Aquinas’ theology normative for Roman Catholicism.

Wrote Summa Theologiae

Did not accept strict predestination, but agreed that a response of faith and action on our part is required for salvation.

Thomas Aquinas:

“God, therefore, is the first cause, who moves causes both natural and voluntary. And just as by moving natural causes He does not prevent their actions from being natural, so by moving voluntary causes He does not deprive their actions of being voluntary; but rather is He the cause of this very thing in them, for He operates in each thing according to his own nature.”

In other words, Aquinas believed in free will.

Thomas Aquinas: God predestines/foreordains in that he foreknows who will freely choose to be saved.

Augustine, Luther and Calvin: God is the author of both good and evil. Physical things and pleasure are evil.

Aquinas: God is the author only of good. Physical things are good, pleasure is not necessarily evil.

Thomas believed that our divine nature was damaged by the fall, but not destroyed.

Thanks to Aquinas, Roman Catholic theology is more “Christian” than most Protestant theology.

Suggestions:

Do not join with other believers in Catholic-bashing.

Acknowledge the “good” in Catholicism, such as their historical root, generally good theology.

First and foremost, establish the unique authority of the Bible, as it is the only thing about which we can be absolutely certain of its inspiration.

Second, go after the idea of Purgatory and the idea that acts such as masses, pilgrimages, confession, Our Fathers, Hail Mary’s can produce forgiveness of sins.

Third, go after the idea of sacramentalism—that holiness is found in “the Church” or in official physical sacramental acts by ordained priests.

Do not go after Mary, the Saints, the Pope. Do not judge the sincerity of individual Catholics.

**Reformation, Reformed Theology and Calvinism**

The Protestant Reformation was primarily a reaction against false practice—heteropraxy. Much of their criticism was justified, of course! Thank-you John Wycliffe, John Hus, Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli!

Martin Luther wrote the 95 theses against Purgatory and indulgences.

**Martin Luther. 1483-1546.** Catholic priest and Augustinian monk. Not out to abolish Catholicism per se, but to reform it. Placed 95 theses on church door in Wittenburg in1517 against indulgences, worldliness of priesthood.

Rejected celibacy for priests, confession, sacraments other than baptism, eucharist. As proponent of orthopraxy, Luther is a hero.

But, then there is his theology…

Luther fell in love with the Book of Romans. Believed in Augustinian predestination.

**“Free will is an empty term whose reality is lost and a lost liberty is not liberty at all”**

**“Free will is really a fiction… everything takes place by absolute necessity.” Luther, Assertio, 36**

Salvation by **faith only.**  Sola Scriptura, Sola Gratia et Fides Scripture, Grace and Faith Alone

Book of James “a book of straw”

Faith Alone—that no act by a human being can have any connection with salvation—is the principle doctrine of the Reformation. It is a false doctrine. James 2:14-24. James 2:24 “You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do, and **not by faith alone**.

Luther’s mistake? Trying to reform Catholicism, rather than restore biblical Christianity. Revived Augustine, not NT.

He, along with Zwingli brought back orthopraxy, but not orthodoxy.

Luther was succeeded by his right hand man: Philip Melanchthon (1497-1560). Melanchthon was a much milder predestinationist, and more intellectual. Lutheranism could justifiably be called Melanchthonism (although that does not roll off the tongue).

Under Melanchthon, Lutheranism took on a relatively Catholic feel. Lutherans, unlike Reformed Protestants are not Calvinist or predestinationists.

**Ulrich Zwingli 1484-1531**

Swiss reformer. More radical than Luther in restoring New Testament practice.

Zwingli, not Luther, was the fount of what is known as Reformed Theology

Rejected priestly garments, church calendar, instrumental music.

Church is “four bare walls and a sermon.

Like Augustine and Luther, Zwingli was a radical predestinationist. He saw the sovereignty of God as the chief principle of Christianity.

**“Those individuals who end up damned forever in hell are also eternally determined by God for that fate.”**

Zwingli: Lord’s supper and baptism are symbolic ceremonies, and are not the means of grace. We can see where this led. “Sacraments are signs or ceremonies by which men offer themselves before the church as soldiers or disciples of Christ. Completely rejected baptismal regeneration.

Zwigli the first in history to teach that baptism was the New Testament equal of circumcision—that it was a mere symbol of what God had already done. That it was “an outward sign of an inward grace.”

He denied baptism had any connection with salvation.

Here we see the first step in creating the modern evangelical false doctrine of salvation.

**John Calvin. 1509-1564** Geneva.

Most influential theologian of the Reformation.

Wrote **Institutes of the Christian Religion.**

His theology known as Calvinism. Monergism. The impetus for our salvation comes from God alone. As opposed to Synergism. God’s grace along with our response to that grace by faith produces salvation.

To quote Calvin: “God is said to have ordained from eternity those whom he wills to embrace in love, and those upon whom he wills to vent his wrath.”

Two categories of humans: The elect and the reprobate.

Total depravity

Unconditional election

Limited atonement,

Irresistible grace,

final Preservation of the saints. (once saved, always saved) (TULIP) Double predestination.

Limited atonement: 1 John 2:2 He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins; and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

1 Tim 2:4 God our savior wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

Here is how it works…. If you accept T, the U, L, I, and P follow.

God has two wills; one revealed (1 Tim 2:3-4, 2 Pet 3:9) and one secret: foreordination for eternal salvation or damnation. Double predestination.

Denominations which are essentially Calvinist: Presbyterian, Dutch Reformed, Baptist, Puritan (Congregationalist) Anglican/Episcopalian (sort of) most Charismatics are essentially Calvinist in their doctrine. Evangelicals in general are Calvinist. Pray Jesus into your heart, confessing Christ and once saved/always saved are stepchildren of Calvinism.

Calvinism morphs into Evangelicalism:

1700s:

Jonathan Edwards: “Sinner in the Hands of an Angry God.” A die-hard Calvinist.

STRONG emphasis on a personal conversion experience. Very strong emphasis on Calvinism.

Church attendance in the Americas, by the time of the revolution was quite low.

He, along with John Wesley and George Whitefield, created the idea of the importance of revival in Christianity.

The most important figure in the First Great Awakening in the British colonies and England.

Church attendance in the US dropped to less than 20%.

1800’s

Charles Finney the most influential theologian of this period.

Produces what I call Happy Calvinism.

Denied Limited Atonement, but continued Calvinism.

Created the “Burnt Over District” in upstate New York.

Created the idea of instantaneous conversion—not through some sort of process of God leading a person to a Methodist-like conversion experience.

Instantaneous conversion at the Mourner’s Bench.

Here we see modern Evangelicalism almost fully formed.

Billy Sunday and the Sawdust Road.

The idea of the Revival, praying Jesus into your heart, instantaneous conversion, accepting Jesus became essential to Evangelicalism.

Evangelicalism becomes tied to Fundamentalism and the Political Right.

Before Billy Sunday and the late 19th century, evangelicalism was associated with political liberalism and progressive causes such as free education, care for the poor. After Billy Sunday, Evangelicalism was associated with Fundamentalism and strongly conservative, anti-communist politics.

20th century:

Bill Bright and the Four Spiritual Laws.

Billy Graham and the spread of Evangelicalism.

By this time, happy Calvinism had produced the chief false doctrines of American and therefore world evangelicalism:

Faith-only salvation. Salvation apart from works.

Easy believism. All you have to do is believe.

Pray Jesus into your heart.

Confess Jesus as one’s personal Lord and Savior.

Baptism an “outward sign of an inward grace.”

Once saved, always saved.

Response:

Unfortunately, disproving Calvinism will not work, because most present-day Christians do not know that their belief is the result of Augustinianism/Calvinism.

Therefore, we need to go to the Scriptures.

Suggestion: “Always be prepared to give an answer,” but do not try to “disprove” these false doctrines. Let us study the Bible with people using our Bible study series.

Let us gently but firmly insist that, despite what they were taught:

Faith-only is not correct. James 2

Once saved, always saved is not correct (Hebrews)

Belief and repentance are “works” God requires (John 6:28-29)

Baptism is not a work of man—it is a work of God.

**Pentecostalism/Charismatic Movement**

**History of Pentecostalism:**

Grew out of the Holiness Revival Movement within Wesleyanism/Methodism in the 1890s.

Holiness leaders such as John Alexander Dowie, and Albert B. Simpson established healing missions across the U.S.

They believed a new, miraculous era of the spirit was coming which would end in the second coming of Christ.

Problem: What is the nature/sign of this new spiritual awakening?

Is it healings, quaking, snake charming, physical phenomena?

Early pioneers: Charles Parham. Topeka Bible School, January, 1901. Students spoke in tongues. Moved to Houston. Trained William Seymour.

According to most, the Pentecostal movement began April 9, 1906 in Asuza Street Revival in Los Angeles, California, under leadership of William Seymour.

Interracial, No order of service. Entirely spontaneous. People share a word of prophecy, a tongue, fall in the Spirit, etc.

Broke out in tongues. Extremely emotional. Spread like wildfire.

Tongues became the single mark of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Entire Holiness denominations were converted.

Reproducible, available to all.

Initially, believers thought that learning foreign languages by Christians would no longer be necessary. This did not turn out to be true.

Most early groups were Methodist/Wesleyan.

This led to the Reformed Pentecostal group of churches as a reaction. Today, most Pentecostals are Reformed.

1914 All-white group of ministers formed the Assemblies of God as Reformed Pentecostal.

1913 Jesus’ name baptism only. Rejected trinitarianism. HS baptism essential for salvation. (modalism)

Pentecostal Churches:

Church of God, Church of God in Christ, Pentecostal Holiness Church (Wesleyan, Methodistic)

Assemblies of God, International Church of the Four Square Gospel, Calvary Chapel, Vineyars (Reformed, Baptistic)

United Pentecostal Church International, Assemblies of the World (Oneness, modalistic, deny the trinity)

1998 11,000 Pentecostal denominations. Today, about 350 million worldwide, especially in the Third World.

What do all these groups share in common?

Experiential/emotional Christianity.

Eschatological focus. Discussion of end times is a MAJOR part of their preaching and teaching.

Emphasis: Baptism of the Holy Spirit—especially speaking in tongues. Whether or not this is a requirement for salvation it is the thing they talk about the most.

“Fundamentalists.” (young earth creationists, very literal interpretation of the Bible, tend to have very conservative rules of clothing, drinking, etc.)

Pentecostalism ≠ Charismatic. Charismatic is a broader term, applying to those who believe in modern miraculous gifts in general, including those in the denominations.

1960s and 70s, many in Protestantism and Catholicism began to accept Holy Spirit gifts, especially tongues, as normative, but did not leave their denominations. They formed what is known as the Charismatic Movement.

As many as 400 million.

The fastest-growing religious movement in the world today. Will eventually pass the Roman Catholic Church.

**History of Gifts of the Spirit/Speaking in Tongues**

"In ancient times the practice of speaking in unintelligible languages during religious ecstasy was not unknown. From eleventh-century B.C. Egypt come reports of ecstatic speech, and later in the Greek world the prophetess of Delphi and the Sibylline oracle priestess spoke in unknown tongues. Amongst the Roman mystery religions, the Dionysian Cult was known for this practice. Hindu and other examples have been noted as well.

From this we know that glossolalia can be a general phenomenon created by religious ecstacy.

Some of the early church fathers mention miraculous gifts in the church. (Irenaeus and Tertullian, late 2nd century) but speaking in tongues is virtually not mentioned at all. Chrysostom (d. 407) disapproved, and Augustine (d. 430) declared that the gift was only for New Testament times.

The Montanist movement of the late second century included prophetesses, claims of new revelation, speaking in tongues; the movement was declared heretical by the official church and speaking in tongues seems to have been rare in the church after this time.

In the nineteenth century glossolalia was practiced in America amongst the Shakers and Mormons.

**What should our response be?**

I. Doctrinal response. (the typical CoC response)

II. Emphasize the legitimate role of the Holy Spirit in Christianity. Allow ourselves to be influenced, at least to some extent, by these people to a more balanced Christianity.

**I. Doctrinal response.**

The miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit were given by the laying on of hands of an apostle, with a particular purpose in mind, which was to testify to the message of the Gospel.

Baptism of the Holy Spirit ≠ the one baptism of Ephesians 4:5 It is a one-time special event at Pentecost. “Wait in Jerusalem…. But in a few days, you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit Acts 1:5. (actually a two-time event Acts 10:44-48, as confirmed by Peter in Acts 11:15 “as he had come on us at the beginning.”)

Hebrews 2:3-4 The gospel was testified to by signs, wonders and miracles. This was the purpose. This is a biblical pattern. The need for these miraculous gifts has ended.

Acts 8:9-17 They had not yet received the Holy Spirit. Context: the miraculous gifts. Apostles went there to take care of this.

2 Tim 2:6 A gift given to Timothy when Paul laid on his hands.

1 Tim 4:14 The elders laid their hands of Timothy to give him a charge.

1 Cor 13:8-10. Where there are tongues, prophecies, etc… they will cease. When the perfect comes, the imperfect disappears.

Careful about using this as a proof-text, but…

Response: Our response should not be to try to “disprove” other people’s personal experiences or even to disprove present-day miraculous gifts.

God still works miracles. God still heals. God could even cause someone miraculously to know a language, for all I know, but what we do not have is people who, in themselves, possess personal miraculous gifts. We all say we believe in miracles, but, in practice, we seem to deny believing in God working miraculously (I am guilty of this!).

Not: I have this miraculous gift, but God worked a miracle. A very different thing.

A sermon I have taught: **The Holy Spirit His Role in Our Lives**

John 16:5-7 It is a good thing that I am going. Having the Spirit live in us is better that having Jesus live near us.

Q: On a daily basis, how much to you think about the Holy Spirit?

Q: Do you recognize/feel the Holy Spirit working in your life?

The GREATEST gift the Father has given us, after his Son is sending his Spirit.

Encouraging Facts about the Holy Spirit:

1. The Holy Spirit Lives in Us

2. He lives in us, but we can be more or less filled with the Spirit.

Acts 6:2-3 I don’t know about you, but I would love to be full of the Spirit.

1 Thess 5:16-19 Do not quench the Spirit.

3. The Holy Spirit can and will give us promptings and influence us.

Acts 8:29-31 HS orchestrated this entire situation. God will work through the Holy Spirit.

4. The Holy Spirit helps us in our prayers (especially; in our emotions, our desires, our deepest needs—things words cannot express)

Romans 8:26-27 We should be aware of the Holy Spirit’s presence and role when we pray. Sometimes we need to stop talking.

5. The Holy Spirit a seal, mark, guarantee of our salvation. Ephesians 1:13-14

Let us:

Be filled with the Spirit, be led by the Spirit. (Romans 8:14)

Serve God by the power of the Spirit (Romans 7:6)

Keep in step with the Spirit (Galatians 5:25)

**Premillennialism**

More accurately, Dispensational Premillennialism.

End-time theories (Eschatology):

Preterist The view that the Scripture prophecies of the Book of Revelation have already been fulfilled.

Amillennialist The view that rejects the theory that Jesus Christ will have a thousand-year long, [physical] reign on the earth.

Premillenialist The doctrine that the prophesied millennium will begin with the Second Coming of Christ.

Postmillenialist The doctrine that the Second Coming of Christ will be the culmination of the prophesied millennium.

According to the most common premillennial view, known as dispensational premillennialism Rev 4-19 is about a seven year period which will follow the “rapture” as prophesied in Daniel 9:24-27.

This “seventieth week” is separated by a very long and indeterminate amount of time from the other sixty-nine weeks of Daniel 9, marking the end of the Christian Era.

During this seven-year period the temple will be rebuilt in Jerusalem, and the Antichrist will rule. The antichrist will be an actual, single, identifiable person, and will be the “man of sin” in 2 Thess 3. The “beast” in Rev is also an actual future person. Antichrist will impose his rule and attack Christians. He will be defeated and destroyed after 3-1/2 years in a battle known as Armageddon. This is the interpretive method of the Scofield Bible.

At the end of the 7 years, Jesus will come and establish his kingdom.

This view has the Kingdom of God principally established at some time in the future. It downplays the coming of the Kingdom at Pentecost or when Jesus came.

This view is untenable for several reasons:

1. Revelation 1:1 God seems to have anticipated some false interpretations here.

2. Makes Revelation have virtually no value to its primary audience: The primitive church.

3. Blatant overliteralizing

4. Serious covenant errors. Has Jewish sacrifices being reestablished in a rebuilt temple. Has Jesus coming down from the true heavenly tabernacle to occupy a physical throne which is only a shadow of the real one (Hebrews 9:11-12)

5.(the biggest problem) It makes the kingdom of God a physical kingdom. (Luke 17:20-21 the kingdom of God is within (or among) you.) My kingdom is not of this world John 18:36)

Response:

This is NOT a salvation issue. Therefore, we should generally avoid debating or even making a big issue out of this false doctrine. Some are strongly emotionally attached to this teaching, but we can afford to deal with it over time. It does not need to be addressed before baptism.

Teach a class on Revelation at your church (lots of material at www.evidenceforchristianity.org)

**Messianic Christianity.**

Messianic Christianity is an association of Christians who hold that they Covenant of God with Moses is still in effect.

Their theology is orthodox. They believe in the Trinity, and accept the inspiration of both the Old and the New Testament.

Most Christians believe that those who are in Christ have “replaced” the Jews (those who do not become Christians) as God’s people. Jews who do not become Christian are no longer part of God’s kingdom.

Messianic Jews deny this. They use Romans 11 and other passages to teach that even Jews who do not yet accept Christ are still the people of God.

Messianic Jews teach that the Torah is still in effect. Some observe Jewish dietary laws, but not all. Most avoid pork and shellfish. They observe Jewish holidays such as Day of Atonement, Tabernacles, and Passover.

Most Messianic Jews worship on Friday evening or Saturdat. Many observe the Sabbath, but more do this so as to make it easy for Jews to join them.

Messianic Jews prefer to use Hebrew/Aramaic terminology. For example, they call Jesus *Yeshua*. They call baptisms *mikvahs*.

Are Messianic Jews guilty of the heresy that Paul denounced in Galatians 1:6-9? Probably not. For example, they do not demand circumcision of male Gentile converts, and they strongly teach against works salvation.

It might even be possible for a Messianic Jew to be a true Christian.

Suggestion: Let us not be defensive toward this group. Let us befriend them, and respect their desire to adhere to the Scripture. Find common ground is the Jewishness of Jesus, and be willing to take part in one of their Jewish festival celebrations.

350,000 worldwide. This is not a large movement.

**MORMONISM or THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF THE LATTER DAY SAINTS**

Founder: Joseph Smith (1805 - 1844)

Born in Vermont, 1805, raised in rural New York State.

Not known for holding a regular job

Turned to scamming people. Was a religious charlatan.

Divining, dousing treasure hunting

Arrested and convicted of scamming people out of money for finding treasure

Used “magic stones” to find buried treasure.

Dreamed about a large ancient buried treasure near Palmyra New York and got a number of people to pay to support his treasure hunt.

When he could not make sufficient money from treasure hunting, turned to a pseudo-Christian organization to make money.

Joseph Smith said he was visited by an angel named Moroni in 1823, who told him of an ancient record containing God's dealings with the former inhabitants of the American continent.

Claimed to have a vision and to receive a direct commission from The Father and the Son, Jesus Christ.

Claimed to have found golden tablets buried under ground in 1827 on which was inscribed in “Reformed Egyptian” writing (which never existed) the Book of Mormon.

Translated them by putting his head inside a hat and holding the same magic rocks he used to search for buried treasure.

Never produced these supposed golden tablets for the public.

Joseph showed these plates to three of his closest associates. They prayed for several hours for the faith to “see” the plates. After lengthy praying, one witness reported that he saw only an empty box. Joseph sent him out for additional prayer, after which the golden plates were fully visible to the witness. The three signed an affidavit that they had seen the plates.

All later apostasized from Mormonism.

Joseph later announced that he had returned the plates to the angel who had first led him to them. The angel took them off to eternity

Mormon movement grew rapidly, moved to Kirtland, Ohio; Independence, Missouri and Far West, Missouri. Finally it would find a resting place in Nauvoo, Illinois between 1839-1944. Joseph Smith became Mayor. Took on a number of other wives, including stealing wives from some other leaders in the movement.

Sidney Rigdon became sort of his right hand man on teaching of Mormonism.

Rigdon a major figure in the Restoration Movement, under leadership of Alexander Campbell.

Into speaking in tongues, other gifts, left Disciples of Christ movement 🡒 became part of Mormonism.

Rigdon’s influence: repentance and baptism for forgiveness of sins part of Mormonism.

Persecution at Nauvoo, Il became intense, Smith arrested, killed in a shootout at a jail in nearby Carthage Illinois.

Movement scattered, many moved to Independence Missouri, others followed Brigham young to Salt Lake City, Utah.

**MORMON SCRIPTURES**

**A. THE BOOK OF MORMON**

Supposedly translated from “Reformed Egyptian” (Mormon 9:32)

Mormon 8:18 “Don’t demand to see the plates or you will be killed.”

Originally published in 1830.

The original is not generally available. It had thousands of blatant spelling and grammar errors.

Book of Mormon is a grade B historical fantasy novel with many passages stolen directly from the Old Testament, especially from Isaiah. Written is pseudo King James English.

Jews came to Central America (Mexico?) in two waves. About 1800 BC a group of Jews—the Jaredites--crossed the Atlantic ocean in a cubic shaped boat with one hole in the bottom, one in the top and no windows! and 600 BC. Nephites came and built great cities, had massive wars.

When they were more righteous their skin became whiter. When they returned to sin, their skin became darker. They were filthy and loathsome.

After his resurrection in Palestine, Jesus came to the New World to preach to the Nephites. (3 Nephi 9)

Repentance and baptism for the forgiveness of sins is preached by about 600 BC.

Jewish sacrifices are practiced by Christians after AD 30.

No archaeological discovery supports any of the events in the Book of Mormon.

Book of Mormon has cows and horses in Central America when there were none. (Enos 1:21). Silk in the New World in 600 BC (Ether 7:9) Even elephants (Eth 9:19).

Most of the really strange Mormon doctrines are not found in the Book of Mormon

**B. PEARL OF GREAT PRICE**

**I. Articles of Faith. (Smith)**

**II. The Doctrine and the Covenants (Smith, Brigham Young and others)**

Mormons believe in progressive revelation. The Pearl of Great Price can be added to.

Here is where the strange doctrines of Mormonism are found.

**C. THE BIBLE** (The King James Version only)

**TEACHINGS OF MORMONISM**

1. The original church completely fell away with the death of the original apostles. There was no legitimate church for about 1700 years.

2. Joseph Smith is a prophet of God.

3. The Father, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are three separate gods. Mormonism is a polytheistic religion. Joseph Smith declared, "I will preach on the plurality of Gods. I have always declared God to be a distinct personage, Jesus Christ a separate and distinct personage from God the Father, and the Holy Ghost was a distinct personage and a Spirit: and these three constitute three distinct personages and three Gods" (**Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith**, p. 370).

4. Truly spiritual people can become gods as well, eventually having their own world to be the god of.

In April 1843, Joseph Smith preached perhaps his most famous sermon. "God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens!...I am going to tell you how God came to be God. We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity. I will refute that idea, and take away the veil so that you may see...He was once a man like us; yea that God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ himself did...Here, then is eternal life...you have got learn how to be Gods yourselves,...the same as all Gods have done before you" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith,* pp. 345-46).

5. Polygamy. Taught and practiced by Smith, even with married women. Officially denounced in 1890. Mormon apostle and later counselor to Brigham Young in Church's First Presidency Jedediah M. Grant quotes with approval pagan philosopher Celsus, "The grand reason why the gentiles and philosophers of his school persecuted Jesus Christ, was because he had so many wives; there were Elizabeth, and Mary, and a host of others that followed him."

6. Blacks and especially Indians are degenerate humans. Mormon 5:15 “Indians are dark filthy and loathsome.” 1 Neph 11:13 “dark people are sinful.” 2 Nephi 5:21 Dark skin is loathsome. Those who marry dark skinned are cursed. The doctrine of racism was officially renounced in the 1980’s with a new revelation that blacks can join the Melchizedek priesthood.

7. Baptism for dead people.

8. Celestial, telestial and terrestrial levels of heaven. The highest level attained through covenant marriage, temple rites, many children and baptisms for the dead. Only apostate Mormons go to hell.

**HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE WITH A MORMON**

Their belief is based on emotion, not on rational knowledge.

“All I know is that Joseph Smith is a prophet and the Book of Mormon is the Word of God.”

Showing “proof” that the book of Mormon is not inspired may not help.

You might be surprised that they may be more outwardly righteous than you would expect.

Get them to make a clear statement that the Bible is the Word of God, and begin studying the Bible.

Generally, people come to Christianity in two steps:

1. Disillusionment and leaving Mormonism.

2. After a period of mourning, they may become open to Christian teaching.

**JEHOVAH WITNESS**

Founded by Charles Russel

Russel was influenced by the Adventist movement (led to the 7th Day Adventist Church). The Adventist/Millerite movement began in the 1830’s

William Miller used Daniel 8:14 and Daniel 9:25 (a very odd connection) to calculate that the millennial reign would come in October, 1844.

Russel founded his own cult-like movement in the 1880s

a. Strong emphasis that only his followers are saved.

b. Predicted that Jesus began coming back in 1874 and would fully return in 1914. When that did not happen, said we have entered the Investigative Judgement to choose the 144,000 who will be in heaven.

c. Jesus is NOT God.

Russel began the Watchtower Society—the publishing arm of the church.

The Watchtower Society in Brooklyn, NY became the all-powerful, controlling influence in the Religion. One Watchtower publication: “We recognize not only Jehovah God as our father, but his organization (The Watchtower Society) as our mother.”

Was divorced by his wife for “mental cruelty.”

Died 1916

Later, the JW movement basically disowned Russel and do not acknowledge him as the founder of their religion.

Succeeded by “Judge” Rutherford.

Rutherford increased the power and organization of the Watchtower

Society.

When Rutherford died, a shadowy group of leaders of the Watchtower Society took over.

A very strong emphasis on the requirement of every member to share their faith or lose their salvation has caused the group to grow rapidly. Two-thirds are outside the US. 2021 about 9 million “publishers” who submit monthly evangelism reports. 21 million at memorial remembrance services.

Fundamental beliefs of JW movement:

1. Jesus Christ is the archangel Michael. He definitely is not deity. He is a very powerful created being. He was not raised from the dead in a physical body.

2. The Holy Spirit is not a person and is not God. It is a force for good, rather than part of God.

3. The only true and acceptable name for God is Jehovah. Those who do not use the name Jehovah are not true Christians.

4. Only faithful JW members will be in heaven with Jehovah. (144,000 of Revelation 7.)

5. There is no such thing as Hell as a place of torment for those who are not saved. Those who are not saved when they die simply cease to exist. All go to a common grave called hell when they die. There is no such thing as a soul without a body. “Man does not have a soul. He is a soul. Therefore there is no consciousness at all after death without a body.

6. Very soon after Jesus ascended to heaven, the true church became completely apostate. There were no true Christians at all until God’s “Faithful and Discreet Servant” Charles Russel came to call people back to the true gospel. (Nowadays, JW’s would emphasize the Watchtower Society as the Faithful and Discreet Servant, not Russel)

7. Jehovah Witness Practices: As with most Adventist groups, there is a strong emphasis on obeying selected Old Testament laws.

a. No eating of blood, no transfusions accepted, even to save a life.

b. All celebrations and holidays not mentioned in the Bible are sinful. Birthdays, Anniversaries, Christmas, Easter, etc.

c. Refusal to serve in the armed forces of whatever country they live in. Will not pledge allegiance to the flag.

d. Christians cannot wear a cross, because it is a pagan symbol. “Jesus most likely was executed on an upright stake without any crossbeam.” (John 20:25)

8. Various false eschatological prophecies.

a. Jesus second coming began back in October, 1874.

b. The world would end in 1914 (now described as the beginning of the investigative judgement—an invisible appearing. Supported by a false reading of Matthew 24:3)

c. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob would rise from the grave in 1925.

d. Jesus would come back bodily to begin his 1000 year reign in Jerusalem in 1975.

THE WATCHTOWER SOCIETY

JW’s call the Watchtower Society the “faithful and discreet slave” of Matthew 24:45-47 (faithful and wise servant)

“Unless we are in touch with this channel of communication (The Watchtower Society) that God is using, we will not progress along the road to life, no matter how much Bible reading we do”

Not only do we find that people cannot see the divine plan in studying the Bible by itself, but we see also that if anyone lays the Scripture Studies aside, even after he has used them, after he has become familiar with them, after he has read them for ten years—if he then lays them aside and ignores them and goes to the Bible alone, though he has understood his Bible for ten years, our experience shows that within two years he goes into darkness. (Witness of Jehovah, 1988, p.33)

1969 edition of the Watchtower mag: God’s faithful and discreet slave is God’s sole “channel of communication to His people.”

Other quotes from the WS:

“God has not arranged the [His] word to speak independently or to shine forth life-giving truths by itself. It is through his organization God provides this light”

If we have love for Jehovah and for the organization of his people, we shall not be suspicious, but shall, as the Bible says, “believe all things,” all things that The Watchtower brings out.”

Acts 17:11 The more noble Bereans checked the Scripture to see if what Paul said was true.

THE NEW WORLD TRANSLATION

JW’s have their own translation which they use so as to avoid some of the obvious problems and contradictions between their beliefs and the Bible.

Most famous example:

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was a god. No support for this translation;

REFUTING FALSE DOCTRINES OF JW’S

I. Jesus is not God. Jesus is the first and highest of created beings. Jesus is an angel. He is the archangel Michael. (“Michael the great prince is none other than Jesus Christ Himself” (The Watchtower, Dec, 1984, p 29.) (Daniel 10:1,13, 12:1)

This is the Arian heresy Arius

J. W. proof-texts:

Jn 1:1 In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was a god.

Coll 1:15-17 The first-born of (NIV over) all creation…. By means of him all other things have been created (they insert the word other)

Jn 14:28 The Father is greater than I

1 Cor 15:28 the head of Christ is God.

Claim: Jesus is never worshipped in the NT

Jesus is never called Jehovah, so he is not God, because Jehovah is the only name of God. (of course, the Father is also not called Jehovah in the New Testament)

Answer:

Compare Coll 1:16 to Hebrews 2:10

Besides, just look at Coll 1:16 all things were created by Christ….all things were created by him and for him.

Heb 1:2 the entire universe

OT: God is the creator

NT: Jesus is the creator Jesus is God.

Jn 8:58 Before Abraham was born, I AM (Exodus 3:14)

 …they picked up stones to stone him.

Jn 10:30 I and the Father are one. Clear enough? Read through vs. 33.

Coll 2:9 The fullness of deity lives in bodily form.

 (NWT: Because it was in him that all the fullness of the divine quality dwells bodily)

Not one single Greek scholar will support the NWT

Jn 20:28 My Lord and my God.

Titus 2:13 Our great God and savior, Jesus Christ

 (NWT: the Great God and of the savior of us, Jesus Christ)

 Is 43:11 God says that only he saves

Phil 2:5,6 Who being in very nature God, …

II. The Holy Spirit is not deity or part of God. It is a force for good.

 “The Holy Spirit is not a person, but is a powerful force that God causes to emanate from himself to accomplish his holy will” (Reasoning from the Scriptures, 1989, p 381)

 The HS can be likened to electricity, “a force that can be adapted to perform a great variety of operations.” (Should You Believe in the Trinity?, 1989, p.20),

 Naturally, if JW’s deny deity to Christ, they have to do so with the Holy Spirit as well.

Arguments:

 HS never given a name.

Answers?

1 Cor 2:10 The Spirit searches all things.

Eph 4:30 Do not grieve the Holy Spirit.

1 Cor 12:11 The Holy Spirit distributes spiritual gifts to each one individually just as He wills.

Jn 14:16 …another helper, that He may be with you forever…

Jn 16:5,f … the Counselor… I will send him to you… When he comes, he will convict the world

Matthew 28:18 …in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. JW’s make a big deal out of the HS not having a name….

Acts 13:2 The HS says Set apart for Me Barnabus and Saul for the work to which I have called them.

Acts 16:6 The HS forbids Paul to preach

Acts 8:29 The HS told Philip to speak to the Ethiopian.

Matthew 12:32 Anyone who speaks against (blasphemes) the HS will not be forgiven. Can you blaspheme a force?

III. Jehovah is the only legitimate name for God, both in NT and OT

Proof-texts:

Ezekiel 39:6 “People will have to know that I am Jehovah.”

Exodus 3:15 …This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation.

JW’s: Those who do not call God his proper name, Jehovah, are not saved!

 (a very familiar cult methodology)

a. Response to these passages: to the ancients, the name of a person was taken as a personification of the person. “Halt in the name of the king”

b. The word Jehovah is never used in either the OT or the NT

YHWH plus the vowels for ADONAI (Lord) = YAHOWAH

Went into Yiddish, then into German as Jehovah.

 c. God has many other names in the OT Elohim, Adonai, etc.

 (JW’s claim superstitious Jews selectively took YHWH out without any evidence at all)

d. God is never called YHWH even once in the NT. (Father, God, Lord, etc. Jesus never called his Father Jehovah. (Abba, Father, into your hands I commit my spirit)

e. Get this…. JW’s claim that the early church changed all the references to YHWH in the New Testament. This one is absolutely ridiculous. We have manuscripts from AD 125

IV. There is no punishment in hell.

JW’s claim that there is no conscious existence after death. There is no soul apart from the physical body. This even applies to Jesus. God will re-create us at a later time to live in a new physical body. All go to a common “Hell” upon death to experience soul-sleep.

Some, 144,000 JW’s (the “anointed class”, the “little flock” of Luke 12:32)will live with God as spiritual beings, in heaven (Rev 7:4)

The other (my “other sheep” of John 10:16) JW’s will live on a physical paradise earth.

Proof-text: Matthew 6:10 Your kingdom come, on earth as it is in heaven NWT: “Let your will take place, as in heaven, also upon earth.”

Proof-text: Ecclesiastes 9:5 “the dead know nothing”

Everyone else will simple cease to exist.

Answer?

Rev 14:9-12 smoke of their torment rises forever and ever.

Vs 13 Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. Blessing and punishment are laid alongside one another.

Mark 9:44 What does this mean if hell does not involve punishment.

 Daniel 12:2 How can you have one without the other.

Luke 12:46-48 Degrees of punishment. If there is no punishment, how can there be degrees of punishment?

Luke 16:19-28 torment = pain.

Witnessing to Jehovah Witnesses:

Do not get into arguments with them. Do not debate scriptures. Do not try to prove their false doctrines wrong. Show them unconditional love. Show them Christian family. JW is about the head, not the heart. Show them the heart of Christian love.