

PARACLETE

ADVOCATING FOR THE TRUTH OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

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When “Christians” Get It Wrong: How You Can Know (Part 2)

By Dr. Don Bierle, *FaithSearch* President

The apostle Paul identified how you can know whether someone claiming to be a Christian has gone wrong (2 Corinthians 11:4). If they have a:

- Different Gospel (way to be saved);
- Different Jesus;
- Different spirit; or
- Different authority.

In part 1 of this 3-part series, I identified the biblical Gospel (grace alone by faith alone) and discussed the deviations from this in several groups who claim to be Christian. The major departure is the unbiblical addition of human “works” to be saved. (Available online: faithsearch.org/when-christians-get-it-wrong-how-you-can-know-part-1/)

In part 2, I want to address a “**different Jesus.**” This test points the way to distinguish between genuine Christian groups and those often identified as “cults.”

The Genuine: An Important Unity

The three major divisions within Christianity all agree about Jesus, the object of our faith:

We believe there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. We believe in the deity and humanity of Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood, in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the



right hand of the Father, in His present rule as Head of the Church, and in His personal return in power and glory.

This description is consistent with all the major creeds of the Christian faith, including the **Apostles’ Creed**, the **Nicene Creed**, and the **Athanasian Creed**. The apostle Paul established this truth in his writing to the Corinthian church:

By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation... For no one can lay a foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 3:10-11).

Protestants, Catholics, and Orthodox are united on this.

The Counterfeit: A Different Jesus

A heretical group, the **Gnostics**, had proclaimed a counterfeit Jesus already in the first and second centuries. They challenged the incarnation (“*And the Word [God] became flesh*” – John 1:14) by alleging that Jesus the man was a

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IN THE NEWS

More than Engine Trouble!

A Ford® Focus that wasn’t working quite right was brought into the Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, Ford service department in September. Mechanics quickly discovered they had no tools to fix it.

When they popped the hood they noticed “a massive tan-colored hose stretching from the car’s radiator toward the back of the engine.” They had never seen an “auto-part” like that. It was a live eight-foot, twenty-pound, albino boa constrictor. It was so entwined that they had to remove several engine parts to enable an exterminator to get to work. “It wasn’t easy,” the exterminator said. “They’re all muscle.”

I’ll bet this dealership had no “line item” on their invoice to identify that work order! 

Source: *World Magazine*, November 4, 2023, page 22; Don’s comments.



Without Excuse – Romans 1:18-20

The following quote is from a new book, *Science After Babel*, by David Berlinski. The author is a senior fellow
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How You Can Know

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different being than the spirit Christ. According to this view, the physical man Jesus died and only the spirit Christ was resurrected. The apostle John, living nearly to the end of the first century, was especially confronted by this cult. His answer is recorded in 1 John 2:22, “Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ?” He adds that “Jesus Christ has come in the flesh” and “Jesus is the Son of God” (4:2, 15).

This heresy has continued to the present day, though not exactly like Gnosticism in detail. The **Jehovah’s Witnesses (JW)** teach that “the man Jesus is forever dead but only an invisible spirit Son was resurrected.” Likewise, **Christian Science** says, “The spiritual Christ was infallible; Jesus, as material manhood, was not Christ.” Millions of people today, claiming to be Christians, are following this false teaching.

Another group, **Mormonism**, has a different Jesus also. Their Jesus is not eternal but “was a spirit-being conceived of physical mother and father gods in the preexistence.” He is not one person of the Trinitarian God but “a normal man who progressed to godhood.”

In stark contrast, the Bible says, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, yes and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). The apostle Paul, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrote that “in Him [Jesus] all the fulness of Deity dwells in bodily form” (Colossians 2:9).

Jehovah’s Witnesses also share the view that Jesus Christ was not eternal but rather was created by Jehovah. Neither, they claim, is he one person of a Trinitarian God. The problem with the Mormons and JWs is that they say they believe in “Jesus,” but their description of him is not the Jesus of the Bible and cannot save us from sin and death. With these groups, we must insist on definitions because they say the same words as in the Bible, but they mean something else entirely.

Solus Christus (Christ Alone)

As described in part 1 of this series, there have been and still are some significant departures from salvation by **grace alone** through **faith alone** by groups who claim to be Christians. The Mormons and JWs have departed further from **Christ alone** (which is defined in the Bible). The apostle Paul minced no words regarding the importance of this



A memorial by István Horváth, marking the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017, in Veresegyház, Pest County, Hungary. (Use authorized under article 68 of the Hungarian copyright law (1999/LXXVI).)


truth: “By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation... For no one can lay a foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

Hymn writer Robert Lowry made it clear why it is so important to get this right:

*What can wash away my stain?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus;
What can make me whole again?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.*

*O! precious is the flow
That makes me white as snow;
No other fount I know,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.*


“Nothing but the Blood of Jesus,” by Robert Lowry, 1876 (public domain).

In part three of this series, I will determine whether there are “Christians” who have a “different spirit” than the Holy Spirit or a “different authority” than the Bible. 

IN THE NEWS

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low of the Discovery Institute in Seattle. It is quoted from *World Magazine*, October 21, 2023, p. 32.

There remains, at the heart of the universe, the profound mystery of life itself: “a kind of intelligence evident nowhere else,” whose “fantastic and controlled complexity, its brilliant inventiveness and diversity, its sheer difference from anything else in this or any other world” is beyond the reach of science to explain. 



FOR REFLECTION

Understanding God’s Word

The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy,

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).

But another of his notable statements about the Gospel, in Romans 1:17, has been translated in such a way as to be almost misleading, resulting in a misunderstanding by many Christians.

The KJV reads: “The just shall live by faith.” The NIV is similar: “The righteous will live by faith.” Many Christians take this to refer to their conduct – how they are to “walk.”

Instead, the meaning is captured better in the New English Bible: “he shall gain life who is justified through faith,” and again by Today’s English Version: “He who is put right with God through faith shall live.”

Paul’s Gospel meaning of righteousness is then consistent with *sola fide* (faith alone) as opposed to by works of the Law. We are not righteous by our “walk,” but by grace alone through faith alone.

This is “handling accurately the Word of truth!” 



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