

NT 19 b – FALSE TEACHING

Colossians, James, 2 Peter, 1&2 John, Jude



Inscription at Miletus of 5 (of 7) Prayers to Archangels

The General Characteristics of the Errors that emerge at the end of the first century of Christianity. By no means are these uniform or comprehensive since those errors took many forms in various places. They emerge not only from Christianity but also from the general cultural ooze of their times.

Docetism –from the Greek word that means “appearance.” This might be “incipient Gnosticism”

- General dualistic world-view.
- Creation of matter by an inferior power or “demiurge”
- A false Christology. FF Bruce calls it “novel.”
- Docetic Christology distinguishes the man Jesus from the Christ
- **Jesus** is son of Joseph and Mary) but has greater virtue and wisdom than ordinary men.
- **Christ** descended on Jesus in the form of a dove after he was baptized empowering him to perform miracles and proclaim the “unknown Father”. But left before he died, so that Jesus suffered and rose again, while the Christ remained immune from suffering because he was a “spiritual” being.
- **Matter** is by nature evil and could not possibly become the presence of God on earth.
- **Jesus** as a manifestation of God on earth could not possibly have a real human body; he only *seemed* to have a body. It was for appearance only. Hence, Docetic.
- **The biblical doctrines of creation, incarnation and resurrection** were excluded.

The General Pattern of the Gnostic Myth—see FF Bruce, *NTH*, pp. 420-421

- A heavenly essence falls from the upper spiritual world of light into the lower material world of darkness and is imprisoned in a number of earthly bodies.
- To liberate this pure essence from its imprisonment a savior descends from the world of light to impart the true knowledge (gnosis)
- He is at once Revealer and Redeemer
- By acceptance of the revealed knowledge, the pure essence attains release from the captivity of matter and re-ascends to its true abode.

More on Gnosticism from Dr. Bruce Wrightsman

- Since God is pure spirit, he has no contact with the material world.
- God deals with the material world through intermediaries.
- Paul calls the intermediaries “elemental spirits” or angelic powers who were thought to be rulers of a particular sphere in the universe.
- The lowest sphere is this world.
- This world was supposed to be under that control of a “Tyrant” god whom the Gnostics identified as the OT Creator.
- Humans as part of the material world was subject to this god (sometimes called the “demi-urge.”
- This “demi-urge” was not the Father of Jesus who was the true divine God.
- To attain salvation, humans had to be initiated into secret “knowledge” (gnosis) which involved knowing the names and data of the hierarchy of the angels and archangels.

That explains the lists of angel names inscribed on the theatre wall in Miletus.

Errors addressed in Colossians, James, 2 Peter, 1 & 2 John, Jude

BIG IDEA 1: JESUS IS GOD INCARNATE—THE ONLY SUFFICIENT AND NECESSARY MEANS OF SALVATION

Colossians

1. Jesus image of the invisible God (1.15)
2. Creator of ALL things—“In him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.” (1.16)
3. Jesus holds ALL things together (1.17)
4. The mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord’s people. (1.26)
5. Delude with beguiling speech (2.4); instead continue in what you were taught (2.7)
6. Philosophy and empty deceit
 - Human tradition
 - Elemental spirits (stoicheia)
7. Fullness of Deity dwells bodily in Jesus (2.9)
8. Reconciled by his body of flesh (2.11)
9. He disarmed the principalities & triumphed over them, making them a public spectacle (2.15)
10. Let no one pass judgment on food or drink, festival or new moon or Sabbath (2.16) These are a shadow of things to come. The reality is Christ.
11. Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you. Such a person also goes into great detail about what they have seen; they are puffed up with idle notions by their unspiritual mind. (2.18)
12. You died with Christ to the elemental spiritual forces of this world (2.20)
13. Do not handle, taste, touch,
14. Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence. (2.23)

The main point is the full sufficiency of Jesus Christ for salvation, as he has been revealed in the teaching of the Apostles. To add to that in any way is to diminish the complete work of God in Christ.

Chapter 3 – particular moral and spiritual instructions to the truly holy life – not content to just speak against false devotion, but to insist on true devotion and godliness – PUT ON THE NEW NATURE, WHICH IS BEING RENEWED IN KNOWLEDGE AFTER THE IMAGE OF ITS CREATOR.

Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus

BIG IDEA 2: THE BASIS OF THE TRUE FAITH IS THE ONE TAUGHT BY SCRIPTURE—both Old Testament and Apostolic.

JUDE—perverted grace is not what Jesus taught

Being “spiritual” is not a license to sin. Attack on perverted dualism.

- 2 Contend for the faith once delivered to the saints
- 4 *Admission secretly gained by those who “pervert the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.”*
- 8 On the basis of dreams, they defile flesh, reject authority, revile the glorious ones.
- 11 They follow the way of Cain, Balaam’s error, Korah’s rebellion
- 12 Blemishes on love feasts who boldly carouse
- 13 Waterless clouds, twice dead...
- 16 Grumblers, boasters, malcontents, follow passions, flatterers.
- 19 These divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit.

BIG IDEA 3: TRUE FAITH AND GODLY LIVING ARE INSEPARABLE.

1 JOHN

- 2.4 He who says, “I know him”, but disobeys, is a liar...
 - He who says he is in the light and hates his brother is in the darkness still
 - He who denies that Jesus is the Christ is a liar.
 - No one who denies the Son has the Father. He who confesses the Son has the Father also.
 - I write about those who would deceive you.
- 3.4-10 Living without sin – does not excuse sin. Doing right and loving brother...
- 4.1 Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits → false prophets ☹
- 4.2 By this you know the spirit of God – confession that JC has come in the flesh
- 4.3 And every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not of God
- 4.15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the son of God, God abides in him and he in God.
- 4:20 Person who says I love God and hates his brother is a liar.
- 5.1 Every one who believes that Jesus is the Christ is a child of God, and every one who loves the parent loves the child.
- 5:3 This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.

BIG IDEA 4: BEWARE FALSE TEACHERS—THEY BRING FALSE TEACHING.

2 JOHN

Truth and love

- v. 7 Many deceivers have gone out into the world, men who will not acknowledge the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh; such a one is a deceiver and the antichrist.
- v.9 Whoever does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine has both the Father and the Son.
- v.10 If any one comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into the house or give him any greeting – lest you share his evil work.

BIG IDEA 5: LAWLESSNESS IS CONTAGIOUS

2 PETER

For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; ⁶ and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; ⁷ and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. 1 Peter 1.5-7

- 1:16 We did not follow cleverly devised myths... [like the Gnostics] but eyewitnesses of Christ.
- 2:1 False Prophets bring destructive heresies, denying the master.
- 2:2 Licentiousness
- 2:10 Indulge lust and despise authority; revile the glorious ones.
- 2:13 Revel in daytime, dissipation, carousing.
- 2:14 Entice unsteady souls; trained in greed.
- 2:15 Way of Balaam.
- 2:19 Promise freedom, but are slaves.
- 3:3 Scoffers – where is the promise of his coming?
- 3:5 Ignore: God’s word made heavens, & judgment to come.
- 3:13 We await new heaven and new earth.
- 3:17 Beware lest you be carried away with the error of lawless men.

A good definition of Scripture: 2 Peter 1.20-21:

Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation of things. ²¹For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

BIG IDEA 6: FAITH BEARS FRUIT

JAMES

James is particularly addressed to the problem of fruitless faith. We have seen that James, contrary to popular opinion (and Luther) is not opposed to Paul and Peter. But is concerned about the tendency to deny the connection between being spiritual and obeying the commands of our spiritual leader.

RESPONSE SCENARIOS

ONE

A friend comes to you this week and tells you: I went to a church last Sunday on vacation where they had the most amazing service. The pastor spoke without the Bible telling of one of his dreams. He envisioned a time when God would rule everyone directly. He said no one could get close to God without having learned some secret formulas which would need to be told to the gatekeepers of the various heavens. Jesus was the first one who made it through, but that we all could follow Jesus, if we only just stayed in touch with the truths that would be revealed in this pastor's vision in the coming months.

What would you say?

Script TWO

A neighbor invites you to a Bible study where the group is very concerned about health issues. They are studying the Bible to discover the food and personal purity laws as a means of clearing their minds to gain a greater vision of God. The leader says she believes that paying very close attention to the need for self-denial is the key to getting close to God.

What would you say?

Script THREE

You find your way into a neighborhood church that emphasizes love. They are very concerned to help everyone feel very comfortable and never to teach anything that might cause anyone to feel uncomfortable. You are invited to participate in a social club where you notice that some couples form, who are married people, but the couples are not married to each other. You are assured that nothing would ever be done in this church that is not done out of love and that love makes everything okay.

How do you evaluate this situation? Should you stay involved?

Script FOUR

You are shopping for a church and discover one where the Bible is used and referred to regularly, but you find that not very many people know it for themselves. But they do have many opportunities to get involved in study and many seem to do that. You notice that some people seem to be doing a great deal of ministry and some people complain they are left out. This church seems to have a lot of ideas, but follow-through is not as consistent as you would like. The services seem to center on Jesus who is acknowledged, but everybody pretty much lives a normal life.

What would you do?

ASSIGNMENT FOR WEEK 26: REVELATION

Read the Book of Revelation.

What do you learn about Jesus in this book?

How many of the Principles of Interpretation are needed to deal with Revelation? (Not counting your favorite—the Shelf Principle)

List them and give examples.

You may find the attached chart useful for studying and comparing the 7 Churches of Revelation.

Markers

| | |
|--------------|------------------------------------|
| Colossians 2 | Fullness of Deity dwells in Christ |
| 2 Peter 1 | Scripture defined |
| 1 John 4 | Test of whether you love God |

| Church | Sender | Good things | Bad things | Message | Warning | Promise |
|---------------|-----------------------|--|----------------------|---|--|--|
| Ephesus | Holder of the 7 stars | Toil, patient endurance, test for false apostles, endurance for name's sake, not grown weary, hate Nicolaitanism | Abandoned first love | Remember from what you have fallen & repent; do first works again | I will remove your lampstand; get ears to hear | I will grant to eat of the Tree of Life. |
| Smyrna | | | | | | |
| Pergamum | | | | | | |
| Tyatira | | | | | | |
| Sardis | | | | | | |

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Churches, cont.

| Church | Sender | Good things | Bad things | Message | Warning | Promise |
|---------------|---------------|--------------------|-------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Philadelphia | | | | | | |
| Laodicea | | | | | | |