

# Bible News Prophecy

October-December 2025

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*About the Front Cover:* Artwork developed for the *Continuing Church of God*.

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## FROM THE EDITOR IN CHIEF: BOB THIEL



### **Repackaged Pagan Holidays**

After the Feast of Tabernacles, which is a biblically-enjoined time, we see the world observe many days that are not enjoined in scripture.

Many would be surprised to learn that Greco-Roman theologians have sometimes condemned these holidays as pagan and inappropriate for Christians — despite the fact that various Greco-Roman churches promote them in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Halloween/All Saints' Day**

While the idea of honoring the memory of the life and death of a person like a saint is not opposed to scripture (cf. Judges 11:38-40), veneration of saints and sacrificing to them is opposed to apostolic teachings.

Satan wanted Christ to bow down and worship him (Matthew 4:9), but Jesus refused (Matthew 4:10). Simon Magus (Acts 8:9-23) reportedly encouraged his followers to venerate/worship him (Irenaeus. *Adversus haereses*, Book 1, Chapter 23, Verses 1-5).

The Apostle Peter not only denounced Simon Magus, he forbade a Gentile from bowing down or paying homage to him (Acts 10:25-26). The Apostle Paul forbade Gentiles from sacrificing to him and Barnabas (Acts 14:11-18). The Apostles basically both argued that they were men and this should not be done. Early Christians understood this and did not do such. Over time, however, some heretics began to venerate relics in the late second century.

The veneration of claimed saints began to be a significant problem with the Greco-Roman churches in the fourth and later centuries, despite the fact it was not an apostolic practice.

Notice the following:

By incorporating familiar Pagan images, such as Celtic gods, the Green Man, and bicephalic heads within churches and cathedrals, church officials encouraged the populace to intermingle the two spiritual traditions in their mind supposedly easing their acceptance of the new religion and smoothing the transition from the old ways to the new. (Pesznecker S. *Gargoyles: From the Archives of the Grey School of Wizardry*. Career Press, 2006, p. 85)

In a book, the above statement preceded a truncated version of the following that Pope “Gregory “the Great” wrote around 600 A.D.:

Tell Augustine that he should be no means destroy the temples of the gods but rather the idols within those temples. Let him, after he has purified them with holy water, place

altars and relics of the saints in them. For, if those temples are well built, they should be converted **from the worship of demons** to the service of the true God. ... Let them therefore, on the day of the dedication of their churches, or on the feast of the martyrs whose relics are preserved in them, build themselves huts around their one-time temples and celebrate the occasion with religious feasting. **They will sacrifice and eat the animals not any more as an offering to the devil, but for the glory of God** to whom, as the giver of all things, they will give thanks for having been satiated. (Gregory I: Letter to Abbot Mellitus. Epistola 76, PL 77: 1215-1216)

Pope Gregory advocated the incorporation on pagan practices. Yet, the Bible opposes this and these type of sacrifices as demonic (1 Corinthians 10:20-21). Furthermore, the Bible teaches that after the sacrifice of Jesus that there is no need for animal sacrifices (Hebrews 10:1-10). Allowing the above for 'saints days' shows that this is also relic of paganism and that they are truly demonic holidays.

Many dress biblically inappropriately (cf. 1 Timothy 2:9) and sometimes also as witches (which the Bible condemns — Exodus 22:8) on Halloween. This is not a biblically-appropriate celebration and certainly was not an early Christian one.

All Saints' Day was declared in the seventh century, and later moved to November 1<sup>st</sup> and the evening before became known as Halloween (Mershman F. All Saints' Day. The Catholic Encyclopedia. Vol. 1. Nihil Obstat. March 1, 1907).

October 31 was a date the ancient Druids observed:

The Druids, and order of priests in ancient Gaul and Britain, believed that on Halloween, ghosts, spirits, fairies, witches, and elves came out to harm people. ... From these Druid beliefs come the present-day use of witches, ghosts, and cats in Halloween festivities ... The custom of using leaves, pumpkins, and corn stalks as Halloween decorations comes from the Druids. The early peoples of Europe also had a festival similar to the Druid holiday ... In the 700s, the Roman Catholic Church named November 1 as *All Saints' Day*. **The old pagan customs and the Christian feast day were combined into the Halloween festival.** (Halloween. World Book Encyclopedia, vol 9. Chicago, 1966: 25-26)

It may be of interest to consider what a Roman Catholic writer wrote:

**Why would a pope put the Catholic celebration of the dead on top of the pagans' celebrations of the dead? Because the Catholic feasts are in continuity and fulfill the meaning of the pagan ones.** (Killian Brian. Halloween, as autumn celebration, reminder God's name is hallowed. Catholic Online International News. 10/31/06)

It is a fact that many associated with the Church of Rome relish and boast about pagan connections for their faith. It is the Bible that they, and all, should look to as the source of doctrine (cf. 2 Timothy 3:16) and it condemns using pagan forms of worship (Deuteronomy 12:29-32; Jeremiah 10:2-6; 1 Corinthians 10:21; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

**Christmas**

The Bible never endorses the celebration of birthdays, including that of Jesus. The early Church of Rome did not celebrate Christmas nor any other birthday. Furthermore, Tertullian warned that to participate in the winter celebrations with wreaths and gift-giving made one behold to pagan gods. There was one such celebration known as the Saturnalia that was celebrated by the heathen in late December.

The claimed “father of Latin theology,” Tertullian denounced winter celebrations, such as Saturnalia (from a pagan deity whose name meant plentiful) which morphed into Christmas as he wrote:

The Minervalia are as much Minerva's, as the Saturnalia Saturn's; Saturn's, which must necessarily be celebrated even by little slaves at the time of the Saturnalia. New-year's gifts likewise must be caught at, and the Septimontium kept; and all the presents of Midwinter and the feast of Dear Kinsmanship must be exacted; the schools must be wreathed with flowers; the flamens' wives and the aediles sacrifice; the school is honoured on the appointed holy-days. The same thing takes place on an idol's birthday; every pomp of the devil is frequented. Who will think that these things are befitting to a Christian master, unless it be he who shall think them suitable likewise to one who is not a master? (Tertullian. On Idolatry, Chapter X)

Around the time of Tertullian, the Roman Bishops Zephyrinus (199-217) and Callistus (217-222) had a reputation of compromise and corruption (and this is confirmed by such Roman Catholic saints such as Hippolytus – see Hippolytus. Refutation of All Heresies, Book IX, Chapter VI) and allowed people in their church that compromised with paganism, etc.

The Roman Saturnalia and the Persian Mithraism themselves were adaptations of an even earlier pagan religion – that of the ancient Babylonian mystery cult. The ancient Babylonians celebrated the reborn Nimrod as the newborn Tammuz by worshipping an evergreen tree. The Bible condemns worship involving evergreen trees (Deuteronomy 12:2-3; Jeremiah 3:13; 10:2-6).

The Babylonians also celebrated a rebirth of the sun during the season of the winter solstice. December 25<sup>th</sup> was eventually chosen as the date of Jesus' birthday, because the Saturnalia and other sun god worship happened at that time of the year:

In 354 A.D., Bishop Liberius of Rome ordered the people to celebrate on December 25. He probably chose this date because the people of Rome already observed it as the Feast of Saturn, celebrating the birthday of the sun. (Sechrist EH. Christmas. World Book Encyclopedia, Volume 3. Field Enterprises Educational Corporation, Chicago, 1966, pp. 408-417)

Helios Mithras is one god ... Sunday was kept holy in honour of Mithra, and the sixteenth of each month was sacred to him as mediator. **The 25 December was observed as his birthday, the natalis invicti, the rebirth of the winter-sun, unconquered by the rigours of the season.** (Arendzen J. Mithraism. The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume X. Nihil Obstat, October 1, 1911)

Emperor Constantine had been the follower of the sun-god Mithras, who was considered to be the unconquered sun and was one born from a rock in a below ground cave. Perhaps because of this, his mother Helena decide to believe the myth that Jesus was born in a below ground rocky cave.

Rome now teaches this (and this author has seen that 'nativity' displayed multiple times in Vatican City), but in the third century one of its supporters, Commodianus, condemned the rock deity:

The unconquered one was born from a rock, if he is regarded as a god. Now tell us, then, on the other hand, which is the first of these two. The rock has overcome the god: then the creator of the rock has to be sought after. Moreover, you still depict him also as a thief; although, if he were a god, he certainly did not live by theft. Assuredly he was of earth, and of a monstrous nature. And he turned other people's oxen into his caves; just as did Cacus, that son of Vulcan. (Commodianus. On Christian Discipline)

Jesus was not born from a rock, yet that is partially how His birth is now portrayed. It is also not true to teach that He was born on December 25<sup>th</sup>. Scholars recognize that shepherds would not have been out with their flocks in the field (like the Bible shows in Luke 2:8) as late as December 25<sup>th</sup> and that the biblically-mentioned (Luke 2:1-5) "census would have been impossible in winter" (Christmas. The Catholic Encyclopedia, 1908).

Many of the practices and customs associated with Christmas come from paganism as real scholars will admit. Neither Jesus' apostles nor their early followers observed Christmas.

### **New Year's Day Honored Janus (god of time) and Strenua (goddess of purification and well being)**

*The Bible begins the year in the Spring (Exodus 12:2), but what is commonly called New Year's Day is observed on January 1<sup>st</sup> on modern calendars. In the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D., Greco-Roman theologian Tertullian condemned those who professed Christ who were celebrating a version of it. But, that did not stop many who wanted to celebrate.*

*The Catholic Encyclopedia* reports:

Christian writers and councils condemned the heathen orgies and excesses connected with the festival ... celebrated at the beginning of the year: Tertullian blames Christians who regarded the customary presents — called *strenae* (Fr. *étrennes*) from the goddess *Strenia*, who presided over New Year's Day (cf. Ovid, *Fasti*, 185-90) — as mere tokens of friendly intercourse (De Idol. xiv). (Tierney J. New Year's Day. The Catholic Encyclopedia. Vol. 11, 1911)

Around 487 A.D., the Greco-Romans seemed to adopt the "Feast of the Circumcision" on January 1<sup>st</sup>. This, however, did not stop all heathen activity.

*The Catholic Encyclopedia* notes:

Even in our own day the secular features of the opening of the New Year interfere with the religious observance of the Circumcision, and tend to make a mere holiday of that which should have the sacred character of a Holy Day. St. Augustine points out the difference between the pagan and the Christian manner of celebrating the day: pagan feasting and excesses were to be expiated by Christian fasting and prayer (P. L., XXXVIII, 1024 sqq.; Serm. cxcvii, cxcviii). (Ibid)

So, it also states:

... towards the end of the sixth century the Council of Auxerre (can. I) forbade Christians *strenas diabolicas observare*.

The expression *strenas diabolicas observare* roughly translates from Latin to English as “observing the new time of the Devil.” It is likely that New Year’s resolutions are related to prayers and practices once given for the pagan goddess.

January 1<sup>st</sup> is not a biblical holiday, and even the Church of Rome has forbidden some of its attributes as demonic.

### **Valentine’s Day Honored Faunus/Pan (god of herds and fertility)**

The Bible does not have a holiday like Valentine’s Day, but many people observe it.

Here is what a Roman Catholic source has written about it:

The roots of St. Valentine's Day lie in the ancient Roman festival of Lupercalia, which was celebrated on Feb. 15. For 800 years the Romans had dedicated this day to the god Lupercus. On Lupercalia, a young man would draw the name of a young woman in a lottery and would then keep the woman as a sexual companion for the year...

*The Catholic Church no longer officially honors St. Valentine, but the holiday has both Roman and Catholic roots.* (The Origins of St. Valentine's Day. <http://www.american catholic.org>)

A day of pagan roots and sexual license is certainly not a day for Christians to observe. This type of behavior was warned against in the New Testament (1 Corinthians 6:18; Jude 4).

Notice some Islamic comments about Valentine’s Day:

Celebrating the Valentine Day is not permissible because: Firstly, it is an innovated holiday ... Christians were aware of the Pagan roots of Valentine's Day. **The way the Christians adopted St. Valentine's Day should be a lesson for Muslims ... We should avoid anything associated with pagan immoral practices** ... Love between families, friends and married people does not need to be celebrated on a day with such ... origins. (Ruling on Celebrating Valentine's Day. <http://www. contactpakistan.com>)

Notice that Muslims associate Valentine's Day with Christianity (obviously the false compromising kind) and sin.

In other words, Valentine's Day causes the name of Christ (through the term 'Christianity') to be blasphemed among the Gentiles (Romans 2:24; Isaiah 52:5). Do not have "the name of God blasphemed because of you" (Romans 2:24) keeping pagan holidays.

### **Repackaged Pagan Holidays**

While the Bible does not prohibit secular holidays (like sober independence day observances), early Christians did NOT pray to dead saints nor observe anything like All Saint's Day nor Christmas. Many pagan deities were essentially changed from being the 'god of something' to being called the 'saint of something.'

Some of the pagan practices may have changed, but the repackaged demonic holidays are still not Christian, nor are they those that Jesus and His early followers kept. Many holidays that people keep came from paganism, and even have ties to the ancient Babylonian mystery religion. When God sent Nehemiah to help the children of Israel who had been influenced by Babylon, notice what Nehemiah said he did:

<sup>30</sup> I cleansed them of everything pagan. (Nehemiah 13:30)

The New Testament warns of a compromised faith and "Mystery Babylon the Great" (Revelation 17:5).

Notice what the Bible teaches that God's people should do in regards to "Babylon the Great":

<sup>4</sup> Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. (Revelation 18:4)

Christians should flee temptation and sin (1 Corinthians 6:18; 2 Timothy 2:22), not embrace it nor promote it. They should not combine pagan practices in with the worship of the true God (1 Corinthians 10:19-21; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18), even it is a tradition (Matthew 15:3-9).

Real Christians do not keep repackaged demonic holidays (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:21).

*More on this can be found in our free e-book: [Should you observe God's Holy Days or demonic holidays?](#) available at [ccog.org](http://ccog.org).*



## Antipope – Antichrist



*'Antichrist' picture per Pixabay*

Do biblical and Greco-Roman Catholic prophecies point to the final Antichrist being a pope who will betray the Church of the Seven Hilled City?

The Cathari, a name that seemed to include true Church of God Christians, believed that the early 4<sup>th</sup> century Roman Bishop Sylvester (they were not called popes then) was a/the antichrist and all successors were apostates (Robertson JC. History of the Christian Church: A.D. 64-1517, Volume 3. J. Murray, 1866, p. 194) – not that antichrists nor apostates are limited to various popes however, per 1 John 2:18.

Shortly after the Roman Bishops took the title of Pontifex Maximus in the late 4<sup>th</sup> century, those referred to as Paulicians (they did not call themselves that) seem to have been the first came up with the papal-antichrist theory. According to Cardinal John Newman, they did this sometime in the 4<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> centuries (Newman JH. The Protestant Idea of Antichrist. [British Critic, Oct. 1840]. Newman Reader – Works of John Henry Newman. Copyright © 2004 by The National Institute for Newman Studies).

Why would that occur then?

It was not until the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries that the Church of Rome really gained a lot of Imperial influence, called their top leader Pontifex Maximus (a title previously held by pagan Roman Emperors), and were able to highly persecute the faithful.

While the Church of God position had been that the False Prophet of Revelation, also known as the final Antichrist, would almost certainly be a pope, centuries later Protestants such as Martin Luther held that position. However, while that is still the position of the *Continuing* Church of God, Protestant leaders have become more ecumenical and have tended to no longer teach that the pope is the Antichrist.

### **Greco-Roman Catholic Writings and Prophecies**

There are prophetic writings from Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholics that support the historic Church of God position that the final Antichrist will be a pope.

One slight change that the *Continuing* Church of God has asserted is that this leader will be more of an antipope who will betray the Roman Catholic Church consistent with prophecies in Revelation 17:15-18.

And interestingly, there are Roman Catholic writings that also point to an antipope rising up and betraying their church.

Technically, the final Antichrist could also be construed as an “antipope” in that he will accept changes to the current Roman Catholic religion that the “King of the North” (Daniel 11:37-40) prefers and promote emperor worship (Revelation 13:14).

While historically most have considered that antipopes were those who claimed they were the Bishop of Roman when another had it, it is reasonable to conclude that one who was elected under false pretences would also be a false claimant and hence an antipope. Or if a pope changed and became demonically-possessed, such as the situation involving the False Prophet of Revelation 16:13, would that not make him an antipope? Most Roman Catholics, at least now, would tend to agree that such a one would be a false claimant to the papal role. If so, that would seem to make him an antipope.

Although there have not been any officially recognized antipopes for several centuries, over a century ago *The Catholic Encyclopedia* had a list of thirty individuals that have been officially considered antipopes by the Church of Rome.

Yet, various Greco-Roman Catholic “private prophecies” warn that a major “antipope” and major schism is to come. Since there has not been a formally recognized antipope since the 15<sup>th</sup> century, for numerous reasons these prophecies could be interpreted to mean that a 21<sup>st</sup> century pope will be an antipope who will implement changes Notice some of them:

*Yves Dupont* An anti-pope shall be set up in Rome.

*Anne Catherine Emmerich* (January 12, 1820): There is now some question of Protestants sharing in the government of the Catholic clergy.

*Anne Catherine Emmerich* (July 1820): I came to the church of Peter and Paul (Rome) and saw a dark world of distress, confusion, and corruption ...

*Anne Catherine Emmerich* (October 22, 1822): I saw in Germany among the worldly-wise ecclesiastics, and enlightened Protestants, plans formed for the blending of all religious creeds ...

*Anne Catherine Emmerich* (April 1823): They built a large, singular, extravagant church which was to embrace all creeds with equal rights: Evangelicals, Catholics, and all denominations, a true communion of the unholy with one shepherd and one flock. There was to be a Pope, a salaried Pope without possessions.

*Melanie Mathieu* (19<sup>th</sup> century): Rome will lose faith and become the seat of Antichrist.

*Jeanne le Royer* (died 1798): I see that when the Second Coming of Christ approaches a bad priest will do much harm to the Church.

*St. Gregory the Great, Pope* (died 604): In those days, near the end ... an army of priests and two-thirds of the Christians will join the Schism.

*Yves Dupont*: "prophecies are quite explicit about the election of an anti-pope ... Many prophecies predict an anti-pope and a schism."

*Roman Catholic priest and writer R. Gerald Culleton* (20<sup>th</sup> century): A schism of short duration is destined to break out ... An antipope, of German origin, is to be set up, and finally Rome itself will be destroyed.

*Frederick William Faber* (died 1863): Antichrist ... Many believe in a demonical incarnation — this will not be so — but he will be utterly possessed ... His doctrine as apparent contradiction of no religion, yet a new religion ... He has an attending pontiff, so separating regal and prophetic office.

*Blessed Joachim* (died 1202): Towards the end of the world Antichrist will overthrow the Pope and usurp his See.

*Merlin* (7<sup>th</sup> century): There will come a German Anti-Pope.

*St. Francis of Assisi* (died 1226): There will be an uncanonically elected pope who will cause a great Schism ...

*Priest E. Sylvester Berry* (published 1920): It has been a matter of history that the most disastrous periods for the Church were times when the Papal throne was vacant or when anti-popes contended with the legitimate head of the Church. Thus shall it be in those evil days to come.

*Roman Catholic writer and priest P. Huchedé* (19<sup>th</sup> century): ... the false prophet ... will not be a king, nor a general of an army, but a clever apostate, fallen from episcopal dignity. From being an apostle of the Gospel he will become the first preacher of the false messiah ...

*Roman Catholic Priest Herman Kramer (20<sup>th</sup> century):* This false prophet possibly at the behest of Antichrist usurps the papal supremacy.

*Roman Catholic writers Ted and Maureen Flynn (1993):* Catholic prophecy warns us of severe problems threatening the papacy in these end times ... An Antipope will seize papal authority ...

*Roman Catholic Priest Paul Kramer reported:* In 1999 ... Malachi Martin stated ... that Our Lady's words were very dry and specific and they foretold of a future "pope" (not the true Pope, but a heretical antipope) who would be completely under the control of the devil.

*Priest Paul Kramer (21<sup>st</sup> century):* **The errors of Orthodoxy and of Protestantism will be embraced by that false church, it will be an ecumenical church because the Anti-Pope will be recognized by the world** — not by the faithful, but by the world — by the secular world and the secular governments. The Anti-Pope will be recognized as the legitimate Pope of the "church," and the legitimate head of the Vatican State. That "church" will be united with all the false religions.

*Priest Paul Kramer (21<sup>st</sup> century):* The counterfeit "Catholic" Church — the counter-church, the anti-church — the mystery of the dragon, whose tail swept down a third of the "stars of Heaven," i.e. one third of the Catholic hierarchy under the leadership of a heretical antipope.

*Roman Catholic author and collector of prophecies D. Birch (20<sup>th</sup> century):* Many, many, of the prophecies refer to an Antipope for sometime in the future during which great calamities occur to the Church.

Even the Roman Catholic saint "Pope Gregory the Great" warned that he believed that the time would come when most Roman Catholics would fall for a changed church (which he called a "schism") in the time of the end. Unless Rome changed to the original faith as Jude wrote (Jude 3) (and we know some will convert before Jesus returns per Revelation 7:9-14), would this not take a leader that would be, or at least be like, an antipope or the final Antichrist?

As the list above shows, there are many Greco-Roman Catholic writers/saints who have warned of some type of an antipope, maybe even the False Prophet, who could be ecumenical, would lead a compromised church, and may listen to the powers of governments in Europe and, possibly, elsewhere.

### **Antichrist Pontiff?**

The final Antichrist would also appear to be the one warned about as the antipope in various Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox writings. Also, note the following:

*Priest A. Maas (20<sup>th</sup> century):* Nearly all commentators find Antichrist mentioned in the Apocalypse ... many scholars identify Antichrist with the beast which had "two horns, like a lamb" and spoke "as a dragon"... the Abbot really believes that Antichrist will overthrow the Pope and usurp his See ...

*Helen Tzima Otto (2000): The anti-pope – Episcopal of the Beast, alias the false prophet ...*

*Barbara Newman (1998): But as early as Scivias, Hildegard shockingly portrayed Ecclesia {the Roman Catholic Church} as giving birth to Antichrist himself ... Some other early works of Hildegard's, written before 1159, show a similar sourness of tone with respect to the institutional church.*

The above comment about posing as a lamb and having two horns is a reference to the Beast of the earth of Revelation 13:11-16 — which also ties in with Satan the devil being “the god of this world” (2 Corinthians 4:4, DRB).

Notice also:

*Priest Herman Kramer (20<sup>th</sup> century): This false prophet possibly ... usurps the papal supremacy ... His assumed spiritual authority and supremacy over the Church would make him resemble the Bishop of Rome ... He would be Pontifex Maximus, a title of pagan emperors, having spiritual and temporal authority. Assuming authority without having it makes him the False Prophet ... **Though he poses as a lamb, his doctrines betray him** ... His principles and dogmas to be accepted ... **it will comprise emperor-worship** ... with the persecution of true believers.*

Note that the Bible clearly teaches that the two-horned Beast of the earth of Revelation 13:11 (which looks to be a pope, as popes are the head of a religion as well as a head of state) will push people to worship the Beast (Revelation 13:14-17), who will be a type of European emperor.

Furthermore, notice that the commentators of the *Rheims New Testament* seem to agree with my assessment that the final Antichrist could be from the Roman Catholic Church:

Antichrist, if he ever were of or in the Church, shall be an Apostate and a renegade out of the Church, and he shall usurp upon it by tyranny, and by challenging worship, religion, and government thereof, so that himself shall be adored in all the Churches of the world which he list to leave standing for his honor. And this is to sit in the temple or against the Temple of God, as some interpret. If any Pope did ever this, or shall do, then let the Adversaries call him Antichrist. (Annotations on The Second Epistle of Saint Paul to the Thessalonians. The Original and True RHEIMS NEW TESTAMENT of Anno Domini 1582 , p. 423)

Thus, from biblical and other perspectives, it appears that the False Prophet/final Antichrist seems to be a future demonically influenced “pope.”

The final Antichrist is likely to be one who changes — though he does not clearly seem to be changing (at first as he will turn against it later) — the ‘Catholic’ religion. It seems that this is the individual who has been warned against in both biblical and private Greco-Roman Catholic prophecies.

**The Bible Identifies that the Antichrist Will Perform Signs and Lying Wonders**

In the final end times, the Bible shows that there will be signs and lying wonders. These signs will be performed by the False Prophet, and some may also appear to be performed by the Beast of the Sea of Revelation 13:1-9 (cf. Daniel 8:24).

Notice some passages that many theologians (Greco-Roman Catholic or otherwise) believe are related to the final Antichrist:

<sup>8</sup> And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. <sup>9</sup> The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, <sup>10</sup> and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. <sup>11</sup> And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, <sup>12</sup> that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. (2 Thessalonians 2:8-12)

<sup>11</sup> Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon. <sup>12</sup> And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. <sup>13</sup> He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. <sup>14</sup> And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived. <sup>15</sup> He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed. <sup>16</sup> He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, <sup>17</sup> and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. (Revelation 13:11-17)

As far as the two horns go, horns are often used in biblical prophecy to refer to leadership. Notice that the beast from the earth has two horns. So, he is a leader in two ways.

The popes have two leadership roles.

First, they head the Roman Catholic Church and other churches in communion with it. Second popes are the head of state for the 'Holy See,' Vatican City. Both biblical and Roman Catholic prophecies look to be pointing to a pope to be the beast from the earth, the False Prophet, and the final Antichrist.

Let it be noted that Roman Catholic writings also point to a pope who will do miraculous appearing signs:

*Abbott Joachim* (died 1202): A man of remarkable sanctity will be his successor in the **Pontifical chair**. **Through him God will work so many prodigies that all men shall revere him.**

*Bl. Anna-Maria Taigi* (19th century): He is the Holy Pontiff, chosen by God to withstand the storm. At the end, **he will have the gift of miracles**, and his name shall be praised over the whole earth.

If we see a pontiff that performs “great signs” and calls fire down from heaven, then he would be the final Antichrist (cf. Revelation 13:11-15). But also notice that this says that “at the end, he will have the gift of miracles.” That suggests that the final Antichrist will not start off with performing miracles. And that is likely to be the case.

### **Could Cardinals Elect an Antipope?**

Many Roman Catholics believe that an antipope could not be elected as they have confidence that the Roman Cardinals will do what is right. Yet, even some of its clergy considered Pope Francis to be an antipope (Glatz C. Italian priest excommunicated for calling Francis ‘antipope usurper’ during Mass. Catholic News Service, January 3, 2024; Di Giorgia V. Fourth priest excommunicated for denying that Francis is Pope. Zenit, February 6, 2025).

While some might consider that the Roman Cardinals are at least believers in Jesus and should be qualified, there have been a couple of statements that suggest that various Roman Catholic leaders are aware of problems within the Vatican as well as among various cardinals.

Notice the following from 1972:

Pope Paul VI spoke on June 29 at St. Peter’s Basilica and said: “By means of some fissure, the smoke of Satan has entered the temple of God ...”

Thus, it would seem that Pope Paul VI was warning that Satan had influenced various Vatican-related leaders.

Notice also the following, which was reported on March 10, 2010:

Sex abuse scandals in the Roman Catholic Church are proof that “the Devil is at work inside the Vatican”, according to the Holy See’s chief exorcist.

Father Gabriele Amorth, 85, who has been the Vatican’s chief exorcist for 25 years and says ... the consequences of satanic infiltration included power struggles at the Vatican as well as “**cardinals who do not believe in Jesus, and bishops who are linked to the Demon**”.

He added: “When one speaks of ‘the smoke of Satan’ [a phrase coined by Pope Paul VI in 1972] in the holy rooms, it is all true – including these latest stories of violence and paedophilia.” (Owen R. Chief exorcist Father Gabriele Amorth says Devil is in the Vatican. Time Online, March 10, 2010)

There are cardinals, and presumably bishops who later became cardinals, that do not believe in Jesus and/or have demonic ties **according to that Vatican-related source**.

Perhaps it should be mentioned that was reported that there were irregularities that resulted in Pope Leo XIV being elected pope in 2025 (Cardinal denies controversial conclave interview in Iraq imbroglio. The Pillar, May 2025).

## Only Four Verses in the Bible Mention Antichrist

What type of person is the final Antichrist?

The terms 'antichrist' and 'antichrists' are only used in the Bible five times (four and one respectively) and are found in four verses of the Bible, all written by the Apostle John Those verses are 2 John 7, 1 John 2:18, 1 John 2:22, and 1 John 4:3. And since all of them discuss some aspect of theology, it is clear that the final Antichrist is mainly a religious figure.

Let's examine all the "antichrist" verses, starting with 2 John:

7 For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. (2 John 7)

This scripture says that antichrist is a deceiver who does 'not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh.'

This may have several applications.

Jesus is to live His life in us (as taught in Galatians 2:20) and did come in the flesh.

John also wrote:

1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because **many false prophets have gone out into the world**. 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world. (1 John 4:1-3)

This scripture states that the 'spirit of Antichrist' is not confessing that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh and that apparently some of antichrist's teachings began when John was still alive. These verses also tie in the idea that false prophets have the spirit of Antichrist. Thus, it would seem that the final Antichrist would be a false prophet (like the one mentioned in scriptures such as Revelation 16:13). Again, these are religious leaders that John identifies with Antichrist.

Now was John trying to say that 'spirit of Antichrist' is not acknowledging that there was a person named Jesus?

This seems highly unlikely as even most atheists acknowledge there was one referred to as Jesus Christ who lived in the flesh.



Might this spirit of Antichrist have something to do with a teaching that denies that a member of the Godhead actually emptied Himself of His divinity to become human? Even though that is what happened according to Philippians 2:6-7?

In addition, John also wrote,

18 Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now **many antichrists have come**, by which we know that it is the last hour. 19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for **if they had been of us, they would have continued with us**; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.

20 But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things. 21 I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth.

22 Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. (1 John 2:18-22)

This scripture says that antichrists appear to have been believers yet they do not keep the same practices as the Apostle John, while they also somehow deny the Father and the Son. These verses are talking about religious, not political, leaders.

How can people appear to be believers, yet deny the Father and the Son?

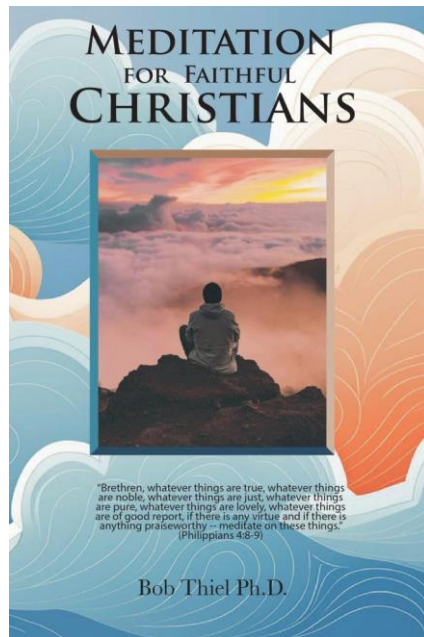
One by not accepting that they need to obey God. Another is to not accept what scripture teaches about Jesus.

Furthermore, the Apostle John points out that people who look to be Christian, but do not follow his practices, are not true Christians. And it is a matter of historic record, to cite one example, that in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, Bishops of Rome stopped following the Apostle John's example when it came to observing Passover (which they later renamed to Easter).

While there have been at least multiple thousands of antichrists throughout history, the one this article is referring to as the final Antichrist, looks to have to be a pope according to the Bible.

He is also, in a sense, an antipope as he will betray the Church of Rome. He will betray the Church of Rome by pushing people to worship the coming European Beast power. But, since he does not get disposed of until after Jesus returns in Revelation 19, he must support the betrayal of the church of seven hills that gets eliminated by supporters of the European Beast as shown in Revelation 14:15-18.

# Biblical vs. Eastern Meditation



**By Bob Thiel**

*This is the first part of a two-part series covering information on meditation.*

Prayer, Bible study, fasting, and meditation, these are all areas that faithful Christians should be involved in.

One could say that Christian meditation is the process of deliberately focusing on specific thoughts (such as a Bible passage) and reflecting on their meaning in the context of the love of God and the wisdom of His commandments.

Living in California, you often run into people who meditate or advise meditation.

In general, the more common types of meditation that are suggested are Eastern forms, such as those that may be associated with yoga.

While there is value in meditation, is that the type that the Bible endorses?

If not, why not?

This article will go over some aspects of Eastern meditation, numerous scriptures as well as various Church of God perspectives on meditation.

The New King James Version of the Bible has the terms meditate, meditates, and meditation 29 times. Plus, the word think and thinks 69 times. What goes on in your mind is important to God.

By reading and praying about meditation, you should have many reasons why faithful Christians should meditate as well as some tips to learn about things you can, and even should, meditate upon.

What about thinking or meditating as promoted by Eastern sources?

Well, Eastern meditation tends to focus on self and often a word or expression called a mantra. Technically, a mantra is a word or sound repeated for the intent aid concentration during meditation.

Encyclopedia.com has the following in its article on Eastern meditation:

In all the meditation traditions originating in ancient India, emphasis is placed on finding a quiet, solitary place (the wilderness, a monastery, or an ashram or retreat) and assuming a sitting posture that will be conducive to meditation. The most famous of these postures, or *asanas*, is the “lotus position,” whereby the meditator sits with legs folded and feet resting on the thigh or knees. The hands are kept folded in the lap or in a special gesture called a *mudra*, and the eyes are kept closed or slightly open in an unfocused, downward-looking gaze. The back is kept straight to enhance alertness and to help the “inner channels” of the mystical body open up and run smoothly.

Various techniques for “fixing” the attention (*trataka*) were developed in later esoteric Hindu traditions, all of which were meant to induce the trance state called *samadhi*. In some cases the practitioner was instructed to fix his or her attention on certain places in the body – the crown of the head, the spot between the eyebrows, the tip of the nose, the navel, and so on – in order to gather one's mental energy at a single point. In other instances, the practitioner was instructed to focus on a small object such as a speck on the wall or a mustard seed, or to stare at a distant object to the exclusion of all others in one's purview, or to focus on one or another of the Sanskrit letters or some other image. Meditation on those powerful, sacred sounds known as mantras (the most famous of which is “om”) was especially common. ...

Other Mahayana traditions are more devotional in their emphasis. Here, meditation takes the form of fixing the mind on the Buddha or bodhisattva to whom one is devoted and whom one asks for help. In these traditions, prayers or *mantras* become the centerpiece of meditation practice, or the name of one of the Buddhas or bodhisattvas is invoked repeatedly. (Meditation, Eastern. Encyclopedia.com  
<https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/dictionaries-thesauruses-pictures-and-press-releases/meditation-eastern> viewed 05/23/24)

Although nominal professors of Christ get involved with such things, real faithful Christians do not wish to put themselves in some type of pagan-related trance.

Here is some information about meditation from Calm.com:

A mantra is a sound, word, or phrase that's repeated during meditation. It can serve as a focal point for your mind, helping to anchor you in the present moment and quiet the

chatter of thoughts. Mantras are sometimes derived from spiritual traditions, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and yoga, but they can also be simple, even nonsensical, sounds or phrases that resonate with you. ...

Mantra meditation can cultivate a deeper understanding of your thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations. By observing your mind without judgment, you can gain valuable insights into your inner workings and foster self-acceptance and personal growth. ...

Mantra meditation may cultivate a deep sense of inner peace and tranquillity, even when it feels like there's chaos all around you. The repetitive practice can help you detach from the rush of daily life, so you can find moments of stillness and serenity amidst the hustle and bustle. (<https://www.calm.com/blog/mantra-meditation> accessed 05/16/24)

How focusing on a word, particular a pagan or nonsensical one fosters 'self-acceptance,' is not clear to me. That said, that is not biblical meditation. The New Testament tells faithful Christians to judge themselves (1 Corinthians 11:31), which is contrary to what some associated with Eastern meditation promote.

The idea of repeating a mantra does not foster true personal growth. Related to the most common mantra, the sound "Om" is composed of three syllables: A-U-M (or A-Uṁ in Sanskrit). Each syllable is claimed to represent a different aspect of existence:

- "A" represents creation, birth, or the beginning of the universe.
- "U" represents preservation, sustenance, or the continuation of the universe.
- "M" represents destruction, dissolution, or the end of the universe.

To repeatedly state this — basically meaning begin, continue, and end — makes no sense for a Christian (nor others for that matter) to do. Jesus, Himself, taught, "do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do" (Matthew 6:7).

*The Yogic Encyclopedia* falsely asserted that AUM represents the Holy Spirit of Christianity (AUM: What Is the Meaning of AUM? <https://www.ananda.org/yogapedia/aum>. (accessed 05/24/24). That is wrong to believe, hence another reason to not focus on AUM.

As far as the self-orientation of worldly meditation, the Bible warns:

<sup>4</sup> The wicked in his proud countenance does not seek God; God is in none of his thoughts. (Psalm 10:4)

<sup>3</sup> For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. (Romans 12:3)

Our faith is not to be in mindless or pagan-oriented words — the true God is to be in our thoughts.

Notice also the following from Calm.com:

## Mantra meditation FAQs: What is mantra meditation?

Mantra meditation is a form of meditation that involves repeating a sacred sound, word, or phrase to focus the mind and promote relaxation. In giving your mind a simple task to focus on, you allow your thoughts and worries to fade away.

What is the 5-word mantra meditation?

One popular mantra is “Om Mani Padme Hum,” which is believed to bring compassion, wisdom and peace. It means {AUM} “The jewel in the lotus.”

What are the 3 mantras?

There are many mantras to choose from. Try out three common mantras to aid your meditation.

1. **Om:** Said to represent the primordial sound of the universe, this is a sacred sound in many spiritual traditions. It’s often chanted to begin and end meditation sessions.
2. **So hum:** This mantra is believed to harmonize the body's energy flow, promoting wellbeing and vitality. It means “I am that.”
3. **Lokah samastah sukhino bhavantu:** This mantra translates to “May all beings be happy and free from suffering.” It's a powerful expression of compassion and well-wishing for all living things. (<https://www.calm.com/blog/mantra-meditation>)

The above type of meditation is not biblical. The mantras advised are not sacred.

The Apostle John wrote:

<sup>2</sup> Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers. (3 John 2)

His writings and others in the Bible teach how to live, so that can be accomplished.

However, simply repeating a Hindu expression that calls for people to do better or that there is a “jewel in the lotus” does not accomplish that.

Calm.com also posted:

Is there a right or wrong way to do mantra meditation?

The beauty of mantra meditation lies in its simplicity and flexibility — there's no right or wrong way to do it. (<https://www.calm.com/blog/mantra-meditation>)

There are right and wrong ways to meditate as far as the Bible is concerned. Christians are to be able to “discern both good and evil” (Hebrews 5:14) and realize that non-Christians are not as concerned about avoiding evil.

Demons are most likely pleased when people repeat pagan or non-sensical mantras.

Remember the Apostle James wrote:

<sup>14</sup> What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? <sup>15</sup> If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, <sup>16</sup> and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? <sup>17</sup> Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

<sup>18</sup> But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. <sup>19</sup> You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe — and tremble! (James 2:14-19)

Repeating mantras does not provide what others need.

And while some may argue that the same is true for biblical meditation, that is not the case.

Why?

Because proper biblical meditation should lead to actions that help the meditator as well as others.

Here is something that the old Worldwide Church of God (WCG) published on Eastern Meditation:

There are many Eastern meditation traditions, but by far the most popular in the West is Transcendental Meditation promulgated by Guru Maharishi Maheshi Yogi. ...

The technique involves the meditator sitting upright in a comfortable position, closing his eyes, and silently repeating a mantra, a few syllables drawn from the Vedas (Hindu holy books) and chosen for the effect of the sound rather than for the meaning. Each meditator is given his own special mantra, and he is not supposed to divulge it to others.

If the meditator is proficient, his mantra will eventually become so refined that the sound will cease and so will his thoughts. The mind will "transcend" the divided consciousness of everyday awareness and achieve a higher consciousness where one can experience the "pure awareness." (Graunke PD. Meditation and Mantras - Paradise Regained? Good News, December 1976)

So, there have been warnings since last century about mantras and Transcendental Meditation (TM). WCG also noted:

Penetrate the outward facade of scientific jargon, and you find that Hindu religious traditions are the foundation and superstructure upon which the TM movement is built.

The first clues come when you are told to bring a clean handkerchief, some sweet fruit, and some flowers to the initiation ceremony, along with your course fee. At the ceremony

itself, the teacher performs a ritual that includes the singing of a song in praise to Guru Dev (the Maharishi's teacher), earlier teachers, and sundry Hindu deities. Then the initiate is given his mantra, chosen from the Vedas, and told not to divulge it to others. If TM is strictly a science, why the insistence on Hindu ritualism? Why bow before a picture of Guru Dev and a representation of the Hindu Trimurti of gods, Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva? Why recite a hymn in Sanskrit? Why select syllables from the Vedas? Why keep your mantra a secret?

The influence of Hindu religious thought goes far beyond the matter of the initiation ritual. Beneath the Western terminology and scientific jargon of the TM philosophy is a concept of mind and existence also derived from Hindu theology.

The Maharishi believes in a concept of seven states of consciousness that one must tentatively accept to operate and advance within the TM framework. Dreamless sleep, dreaming, and wakefulness constitute the first three. Transcendental consciousness, the state of pure awareness, is the fourth state and the first one novitiates of TM enter. But to achieve complete enlightenment, the Maharishi believes it is necessary to ascend to the seventh state — Unity with the Absolute. This absolute is defined by some as a mass of undifferentiated, universal consciousness.

In TM literature, it is called by the quasi-scientific term of “the field of pure intelligence.”  
...

The Bible teaches that enlightenment and spiritual growth is a matter of a state of grace, not a state of consciousness. Spiritual insight comes through the gift of the Holy Spirit, and Christians are to be united with Christ, not an absolute. The Bible speaks of meditation — but it is totally different from TM. In biblical contexts, meditation is focused on God's laws and ways — not a mantra. (Graunke PD. Meditation and Mantras — Paradise Regained? Good News, December 1976)

The Apostle Paul warned:

<sup>20</sup> Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons. <sup>21</sup> You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons. <sup>22</sup> Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He? (1 Corinthians 10:20-21)

Don't think you can well handle incorporating pagan mantras and related demonically influenced practices into your life and not suffer spiritually.

The Apostle Paul also warned:

<sup>1</sup> Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, (1 Timothy 4:1)

Pagan forms of meditation can be demonic, and many have fallen for it — they are spiritually harmful. Furthermore, studies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century have also reported that about 10% of people who practice a type of Buddhist-based meditation called ‘mindfulness’ report increased anxiety and depression (Farias M. Meditation And Mindfulness Have a Dark Side We Don't Talk About. Science Alerts, October 25, 2024).

In the Old Testament, the prophet Elijah mocked the possible meditation of a pagan god (1 Kings 18:27).

Consider also the following in regard to Eastern meditation:

<sup>5</sup> For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. <sup>6</sup> For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. <sup>7</sup> Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. <sup>8</sup> So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. (Romans 8:4-8)

Among other things, the Apostle Paul is saying that it is God's ways, not the ways of the world that truly bring peace.

The way of the world is focused on the wrong things and will end in destruction:

<sup>18</sup> For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross {stake, Greel *stauros*} of Christ: <sup>19</sup> whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame — **who set their mind on earthly things**. <sup>20</sup> For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup> who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself. (Philippians 3:18-21)

We want to focus on the things of the true God, as the world's focus is wrong.

One of the Psalms states:

<sup>14</sup> Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer. (Psalm 19:14)

Repeating nonsensical words or pagan expressions are not the type of meditation that the Bible supports.

*More on biblical meditation is planned to be in the next edition of this magazine. For more information now, check out the free e-book [Meditation for Faithful Christians](http://ccog.org) available at [ccog.org](http://ccog.org).*



# STUDY THE BIBLE COURSE



## Lesson 26: Avoid A Counterfeit Baptism!

**Bob Thiel, Editor-in-Chief**

Published 2025 by the Continuing Church of God

Preface: This course is highly based upon the personal correspondence course developed in 1954 that began under the direction of the late C. Paul Meredith in the old Radio Church of God. Various portions have been updated for the 21<sup>st</sup> century (though much of the original writing has been retained). It also has more scriptural references, as well as information and questions not in the original course. Unless otherwise noted, scriptural references are to the NKJV, copyright Thomas Nelson Publishing, used by permission. The KJV, sometimes referred to as the Authorized Version is also often used. Additionally, Roman Catholic-approved translations such as the New Jerusalem Bible (NJB) are sometimes used as are other translations.

DID YOU KNOW that most of the world's churches today do NOT baptize their members the way Jesus commanded?

The churches of this world are in utter confusion regarding baptism. Most are actually employing COUNTERFEIT FORMS of "baptism" in place of the ONE TRUE BAPTISM commanded in the Bible!

This lesson reveals the surprising TRUTH. Study it carefully!

## **"Baptism" in the World**

Several conflicting doctrines of "baptism" are being taught and practiced today by professing Christianity.

Some denominations practice INFANT BAPTISM. They sincerely believe infants are eternally doomed if they die unbaptized.

Then there are those who will baptize you "into the church" — their religious sect, or denomination — instead of "into Christ."

Other sects believe one must receive an ADDITIONAL "BAPTISM OF THE SPIRIT" after he has ALREADY received the "spirit." It is claimed that the only evidence proving one has received this special "baptism" is that of speaking in "tongues" — the so-called "power to witness for Christ." BUT IS THIS WHAT YOUR BIBLE SAYS?

Another religious movement insists that you must receive the "BAPTISM BY FIRE" in order to be "saved." Do you want it?

One church even teaches its members to be BAPTIZED ON BEHALF OF their dead FRIENDS AND RELATIVES who died unconverted!

ARE these ideas and practices REALLY scriptural? Or are they merely the INVENTIONS — the doctrines and commandments — of MEN? Let's learn the TRUTH from the Bible!

But first, let's be sure that we go about this study CORRECTLY.

## **Origin of Infant Baptism**

Where did the practice of infant baptism originate? Was it commanded by God? Or is it a "commandment" of MEN? Let us examine HISTORY and learn the TRUTH!

The common practice of infant baptism gradually evolved from the false pagan concept that all are born with the inherent sin ("original sin") of Adam, and unless baptized, the individual is eternally lost because of Adam's sin.

Infant baptism actually makes God appear as unfair because it implies that sin and the resultant death penalty are due to ONE MAN AND WOMAN — Adam and Eve — and have been passed on to all their descendants. THAT IS NOT THE CASE!

Through Adam "sin ENTERED into the world" because Adam was the FIRST MAN to sin. But the death penalty has come on everyone because "ALL have sinned" (Romans 5:12, KJV).

## **Where Did Infant Baptism Originate Among Early Professors of Christ?**

Actually, Origen, a third century Alexandrian who was later condemned as a heretic by the Roman Church, was one of the first to declare that infant baptism was a tradition (many odd traditions were claimed to have apostolic origin in Alexandria, Egypt). Other third century Greco-Romans did as well.

Some Greco-Roman Catholic accepted leaders raised questions about infant baptism. If infant baptism was strongly encouraged by the Bible, it is not likely Tertullian (a 3<sup>rd</sup> century historian) would have written (late second/early third century):

But they whose office it is, know that baptism is not rashly to be administered ... God's approbation sends sure premonitory tokens before it; every "petition" may both deceive and be deceived. And so, according to the circumstances and disposition, and even age, of each individual, the **delay of baptism is preferable; principally, however, in the case of little children** ... The Lord does indeed say, "Forbid them not to come unto me." Let them "come," then, while they are growing up; let them "come" while they are learning, while they are learning whither to come; **let them become Christians when they have become able to know Christ**. Why does the innocent period of life hasten to the "remission of sins? ... If any understand the weighty import of baptism, they will fear its reception more than its delay: sound faith is secure of salvation. (Tertullian. On Baptism, Chapter 18. Translated by S. Thelwall)

Infants are incapable of possessing a sound faith. Hence it is clear that infant baptism was not widely understood to be a biblically encouraged practice as late as the beginning of the third century. The only thing that seems to be realized is that Jesus blest little children (which is what that passage related to "Forbid them not" is related to).

### Original Sin?

Notice also the following from chapter V of Alexander Hislop's book *Two Babylons*:

It is in consequence of, and solemnly to declare, that "holiness," with all the responsibilities attaching to it, that they are baptised. That "holiness," however, is very different from the "holiness" of the new nature; and although the very fact of baptism, if Scripturally viewed and duly improved, is, in the hand of the good Spirit of God, an important *means* of making that "holiness" a glorious reality, in the highest sense of the term, yet it does not in all cases necessarily secure their spiritual regeneration. God may, or may not, as He sees fit, give the new heart, before, or at, or after baptism; but manifest it is, that thousands who have been duly baptised are still unregenerate, are still in precisely the same position as Simon Magus, who, after being canonically baptised by Philip, was declared to be **"in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity"** (Acts 7:23). The doctrine of Rome, however, is, that all who are canonically baptised, however ignorant, however immoral, if they only give implicit faith to the Church, and surrender their consciences to the priests, are as much regenerated as ever they can be, and that children coming from the waters of baptism are entirely purged from the stain of original sin. Hence we find the Jesuit missionaries in India boasting of making converts by thousands, by the mere fact of baptising them, without the least previous instruction, in the most complete ignorance of the truths of Christianity, on their mere profession of submission to Rome.

This doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration also is essentially Babylonian. Some may perhaps stumble at the idea of regeneration at all having been known in the Pagan world; but if they only go to India, they will find at this day, the bigoted Hindoos, who have never opened their ears to Christian instruction, as familiar with the term and the idea as ourselves. ... even in the Far West, Chalchivitlecue, the Mexican "goddess of the waters," and "mother" of all the regenerate, was represented as purging the new-born infant from original sin, and "bringing it anew into the world."

So, even the doctrine of "original sin" came from paganism. But it is used to encourage the non-biblical doctrine of infant baptism.

### **Infant Baptism Hesitation?**

In his "History of the Christian Church", the church historian Neander accounts for the early introduction of infant baptism as follows:

"... from the want of duly distinguishing between what is outward and what is inward in baptism — the baptism by water, and the baptism by the Spirit — the opinion (of the Roman Church) became more fully established, that without external baptism no one could be delivered from that inherent guilt ("original sin"), or could be saved from the everlasting punishment that threatened him, or raised to eternal life; and when the notion of MAGICAL INFLUENCE, a CHARM connected with the SACRAMENTS, continually gained ground, the theory was finally evolved of the unconditional necessity of INFANT BAPTISM. About the middle of the third century this theory was generally admitted in the North AFRICAN Church ... but while in theory the necessity of infant baptism was admitted, still in practice it was very far from being generally prevailing." (Vol. 1, pp. 313-14 — Torrey's Translation)

MANY OF THE 3<sup>RD</sup> AND LATER CENTURY "FATHERS" OF THE EARLY GRECO-ROMAN CHURCH, who believed in various pagan traditions and beliefs, PROMOTED THIS PAGAN THEORY OF INFANT BAPTISM! Among them were Origen, Chrysostom, Clement of Alexandria, Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage in North Africa, and Augustine, who was its chief defender and promoter. Christ and the apostles never baptized infants. It is a pagan idea spawned by carnal men!

Rheinwald, in "The Christian Review", says: "Though its (infant baptism) necessity was asserted in Africa and Egypt in the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, it was, even to the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, by no means universally observed — least of all in the Eastern Church. Notwithstanding the recommendation of it by the fathers, it had never become a general ecclesiastical institution until the age of Augustine." (Vol. 3, p. 193)

Notice something else from *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (**bolding** mine):

The tradition of Christian antiquity as to the necessity of infant baptism is clear from the very beginning. We have given many striking quotations on this subject already, in dealing with the necessity of baptism. A few, therefore, will suffice here.

- Origen (in cap. vi, Ep. ad Rom.) declares: "The Church received from the Apostles the tradition of giving baptism also to infants".
- St. Augustine (Serm. xi, De Verb Apost.) says of infant baptism: "This the Church always had, always held; this she received from the faith of our ancestors; this she perseveringly guards even to the end."
- St. Cyprian (Epistle 58) writes: "From baptism and from grace ... must not be kept the infant who, because recently born, has committed no sin, except, inasmuch as it was born carnally from Adam, it has contracted the contagion of the ancient death in its first nativity; and it comes to receive the remission of sins more easily on this very account that not its own, but another's sins are forgiven it."
- St. Cyprian's letter to Fidus declares that the Council of Carthage in 253 reprobated the opinion that the baptism of infants should be delayed until the eighth day after birth.
- The Council of Milevis in 416 anathematizes whosoever says that infants lately born are not to be baptized.
- **The Council of Trent solemnly defines the doctrine of infant baptism (Sess. VII, can. xiii). It also condemns (can. xiv) the opinion of Erasmus that those who had been baptized in infancy, should be left free to ratify or reject the baptismal promises after they had become adult.** (Fanning, W. Baptism. The Catholic Encyclopedia. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1907)

Yet, this claim from 'antiquity' is very misleading. Origen, who the Church of Rome condemned in the sixth century, did not write until the late second/early third century. He cites no source, but claims a tradition not found in the Bible nor in the writings before him.

It is clear from the beginning that the Bible never records that the Apostles baptized infants – infant baptism is not stated in the Bible. Oh yes, some have made assumptions and claims, but the Bible and early church writings do not support it.

It was not until the 6th CENTURY that infant baptism became a universal practice.

Also notice what [Eastern Orthodox](#) Archbishop Gregory Nazianzen taught in the fourth century:

Be it so, some will say, in the case of those who ask for Baptism; what have you to say about those who are still children, and conscious neither of the loss nor of the grace? Are we to baptize them too? Certainly, if any danger presses ... But in respect of others I give my advice to wait till the end of the third year, or a little more or less, when they may be able to listen and to answer something about the Sacrament; that, even though they do not perfectly understand it, yet at any rate they may know the outlines; and then to sanctify them in soul and body with the great sacrament of our consecration (Oration 40: The Oration on Holy Baptism, Chapter XXVIII. Preached at Constantinople Jan. 6, 381)

In other words, unless some child was about to die, even into the late fourth century, baptism of infants and small children was not a universal practice, nor requirement. And actually, what was still advocated is that the person (even if a small child) should be able to "be able to listen and to answer something about" baptism.

*The Catholic Encyclopedia* clearly admits that infant baptism was a practice that eventually *became* customary — in other words it was not part of the original faith. Notice:

Further, **when infant baptism became customary**, confirmation was not administered until the child had attained the use of reason. This is the present practice, though there is considerable latitude as to the precise age. (Scannell T.B. Transcribed by Charles Sweeney. Confirmation. *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Volume IV. Published 1908. New York: Robert Appleton Company. Nihil Obstat. Remy Lafort, Censor. Imprimatur. +John M. Farley, Archbishop of New York)

One needs to be able to decide for oneself if they should be baptized — infants do not do that.

### **Infant Baptism Became Important Centuries After Christ, But Was Disputed**

Infant baptism probably did not become widely practiced until the third or fourth centuries (and not universally done in the Roman/Orthodox faiths until even later). If infant baptism existed from the beginning, then there would have not been various controversies. And once infant baptism became the norm, throughout history, those associated with the Church of God have opposed it.

John Ogywn (a late COG leader) made the following comments:

In the eighth and ninth centuries, many Armenian Paulicians were forcibly resettled in the Balkans by Byzantine emperors. They were placed there as a bulwark against the invading Bulgar tribes. Relocated to the Balkans, the Paulicians came to be called Bogomils.

What did these Bogomils teach? "Baptism was only to be practiced on grown men and women ... images and crosses were idols." (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th ed., "Bogomils")

*The Catholic Encyclopedia* noted:

Infant baptism has, however, been the subject of much dispute. The Waldenses and Cathari and later the Anabaptists, rejected the doctrine that infants are capable of receiving valid baptism, and some sectarians at the present day hold the same opinion. (Fanning, William H.W. Transcribed by Charles Sweeney, S.J. Baptism. *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Volume II. Published 1907. New York: Robert Appleton Company. Nihil Obstat, 1907. Remy Lafort, S.T.D., Censor. Imprimatur. +John M. Farley, Archbishop of New York)

Some affiliated with the Waldenses, Cathari, and even the Anabaptists were part of the Church of God.

Furthermore, *The Catholic Encyclopedia* also recognizes:

Persons rejecting infant baptism are frequently mentioned in English history in the sixteenth century. (Weber N.A. Transcribed by Robert H. Sarkissian. The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume II. Published 1907. New York: Robert Appleton Company. Nihil Obstat, 1907. Remy Lafort, S.T.D., Censor. Imprimatur. +John M. Farley, Archbishop of New York)

Yet, some of the most important Protestant reformers embraced infant baptism and condemned those who opposed it.

Martin Luther taught:

"Why are babies to be baptized? Babies are to be baptized because they are included in the words 'all nations'. (Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, 1986, p.202)

Martin Luther also got these statements confirmed:

Article IX: Of Baptism. Of Baptism they teach that it is necessary to salvation, and that through Baptism is offered the grace of God, and that children are to be baptized who, being offered to God through Baptism are received into God's grace. They condemn the Anabaptists, who reject the baptism of children. (The Confession of Faith: Which Was Submitted to His Imperial Majesty Charles V. At the Diet of Augsburg in the Year 1530. by Philip Melanchthon, 1497-1560. Translated by F. Bente and W. H. T. Dau. Published in: Triglot Concordia: The Symbolical Books of the Ev. Lutheran Church. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921, pp. 37-95)

Thus, Martin Luther not only encouraged infant baptism, his supporters condemned those who opposed infant baptism.

"The administration of baptism to infants was subsequently rendered compulsory by an edict of Emperor Justinian, who reigned over the Eastern Roman Empire from A.D. 527 to A.D. 565. He enacted 'that such pagans as were yet unbaptized, should present themselves, with their wives and children, and all that appertained to them, in the church; and THERE THEY SHOULD CAUSE THEIR LITTLE ONES IMMEDIATELY TO BE BAPTIZED.' " (Cole's Archaeology of Baptism, p. 120)

The evidence of recorded history alone proves that infant baptism is merely a doctrine of men which was inspired by pagan Egyptian beliefs and practices!

### **Why Infant Baptism Is Not Commanded**

It is actually a mockery of God's Word to submit newly born infants to water baptism. Infants cannot even begin to think for themselves, let alone REPENT OR BELIEVE!

God reveals in His divine Word that before one may be baptized, he must fully repent of having broken God's laws. He must thoroughly ABHOR, be sorry for, his past sinful life! Then he must BELIEVE the true GOSPEL of the KINGDOM OF GOD and believe on Jesus Christ as his personal

Saviour. Even older children have not reached the maturity and stability of judgment where they have the self-discipline to fully repent and believe. The average mind does not mature until about age 25 — though there are exceptions. Only a very few mature and become sober and serious in outlook by age 16.

An immature mind may experience an emotional feeling of TEMPORARY remorse. This may often be falsely construed as repentance, when it is only momentary, and soon forgotten. It is much like "puppy love." How many youngsters, 13 to 18, have a number of temporary emotional experiences of feeling sure they are "in love" and cannot be talked out of it. They usually grow out of it, but in rare cases, of course, they may really "know their minds" — though this is the rare EXCEPTION, and NOT the rule. So, it is with repentance and belief.

The immature child baptized around age 12 to 15 may be ever so serious about it at the time. But when the child reaches the age between 16 and 20, he or she comes under "teenage" influences which are quite different today than one or two generations ago. The young adult must meet many temptations characteristic of energetic, dynamic, reckless, excitement-craving youth in the blossoming flower of sex appeal. Experience shows that perhaps not one in a hundred can be truly "converted" prior to this age and still remain converted and constantly growing spiritually closer and closer to Christ and His kingdom through these trying years.

Some present the argument that the infants and older children of Cornelius' household were baptized by Peter (Acts 10). This is merely an ASSUMPTION. The Scriptures nowhere indicate whether or not Cornelius' "household" included any children under adult age. Those baptized in Cornelius' house must have been MATURE ENOUGH TO UNDERSTAND the conditions of salvation and able to truly repent and believe! Children, if any were present, would NOT have been baptized. The same explanation applies to the baptism of the Philippian jailor's "household" (Acts 16:27-33).

Some claim that because the New Testament records that some households were baptized that this proves that infants were also baptized. But this is reading something into the Bible that is not there. Let's look at the first example of this in the Book of Acts:

1 There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, 2 a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always. (Acts 10:1-2)

13 And he told us how he had seen an angel standing in his house, who said to him, 'Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon whose surname is Peter, 14 who will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved.' 15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning. 16 Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, 'John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' 17 If therefore God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?" (Acts 11:13-17)

Thus, since the household was also fearing God, and infants obviously cannot do that, the term household should not be concluded as proof that infants were baptized. Using passages like Acts 11 is not a solid foundation; and few would insist that infants started speaking then. Furthermore,



if that was the case then early Christians would have accepted infant baptism and there would not have been controversies associated with it. Thus, early Christians did not understand that the baptism of households in the New Testament authorized infant baptism.

If infant baptism was a New Testament need or practice, why, then, does the Bible nowhere command us to baptize children? While circumcision was required for infant boys in the Old Testament (Genesis 17:12), there is no similar requirement for the baptism of infants in the New Testament. In those days infant mortality rates were high, one would expect Scripture to mandate infant baptism if it was essential to a child's salvation.

To the contrary, there is not a single clear example of a child being baptized in the New Testament.

### **Those Who Held to the Teachings of the Early Church Have Been Unjustly Condemned**

In spite of the fact that infant baptism was not done originally, eventually those who opposed infant baptism were considered heretics by Roman, Orthodox, and Protestant leaders.

The Bogomils, who opposed infant baptism were condemned by the Catholics. Notice this from *The Catholic Encyclopedia*:

The heresy of the Bogomili was started in the tenth century ... followers called themselves Christians and considered their faith the only true one. (Klaar K. Transcribed by Joseph E. O'Connor. Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume II. Published 1907. New York: Robert Appleton Company. Nihil Obstat, 1907. Remy Lafort, S.T.D., Censor. Imprimatur. +John M. Farley, Archbishop of New York)

Notice that a pope also condemned the Bogomils and Paulicians:

The pope in 1096 described the Valley Louise in Dauphiny, France, as infested with "heresy." It was a result of Paulician and Bogomil evangelization of the Alpine regions. About 1104, a man from this valley, called Peter of Bruys, began at Embrun to preach REPENTANCE throughout Languedoc and Provence ... One of the definitions of the Greek word Thyatira is "sweet savor of contrition," in other words, "real repentance." Peter of Bruys taught that infant baptism was useless. He only baptized persons old enough to know and mean what they were doing — that is, only AFTER REAL REPENTANCE. He further rejected the Catholic MYSTERY teaching that the priest in the Mass produced the literal flesh of Christ ... For "nearly twenty years" Peter preached. Then the false church would no longer stand for this open rejection of its authority. He was taken and burned alive at the stake ... (LESSON 51 (1968) AMBASSADOR COLLEGE BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSE "And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place ..." Rev. 12:6)

Around the time of the "Reformation," Anabaptists repeatedly stood up for the fact that infants should not be baptized. But they were not listened to.

Furthermore, the so-called early "Protestant Reformers" were so supportive of the non-biblical practice of infant baptism, that they had opponents of it killed. Notice the following:

An example of the Reformers' intolerance toward Anabaptists is the trial and execution of Felix Manz, a Swiss leader of the movement. At his trial in January 1527, Felix Manz freely confessed to being a teacher of adult baptism, forbidden in Switzerland: "We bring together those who are willing to accept Christ, obey the Word, and follow in His footsteps. We unite them by baptism, and leave the rest to their present conviction."

The Clerk of the Courts wrote this explanatory comment in the records: "They do not allow Infant Baptism. In this way they will put an end to secular authority." This revealing comment shows the concern of the local government to preserve the practice of infant baptism in order to ensure the commitment of the people to secular authorities that controlled the state church. Being baptized as an infant into the state church meant being loyal and committed to the state for the rest of one's life.

Even more extraordinary is the outburst of Manz's accuser, Ulrich Zwingli, one of the leading Swiss Reformers. Speaking at the trial of Anabaptist Manz, Zwingli shouted: "Let him who talks about going under [the water by immersion] go under." What seemed to be poetic justice was carried out literally by the local authorities who condemned Felix Manz to death by drowning.

"Led into the boat, he was forced to sit up and his arms were passed around his bent knees and bound at the wrists. Next a stick was pushed between the knees and elbows to secure him in this position. The boat was rowed to the center of the [Limmat] river, and the helpless prisoner was thrown overboard, to choke in the dark, deep waters."

One wonders, how could Protestant spiritual leaders kill fellow Christians for the crime of obeying their understanding of biblical teachings regarding baptism or other doctrines? How could Calvin influence the Geneva's Council on October 24, 1553, to sentence to death by burning Michael Servetus for denying the Trinity and infant baptism? Regarding infant baptism, Servetus said: "It is an invention of the devil, an infernal falsity for the destruction of all Christianity." Servetus was well-known not only for his theological treatises, but also for his scientific discoveries. He was the first European to describe the function of pulmonary circulation of the blood — a discovery that was largely rejected at that time.

One wonders, how could such outrageous criminal acts happen just few years after the beginning of the Reformation in Europe? An answer is to be found in the prevailing misconception that fighting and suppressing "heretics" was more important than loving them. As the church of Ephesus in Revelation lost its first love in the process of fighting those "who call themselves apostles but are not" (Rev 2:2, 4), so Christians with a passion to fight perceived heretical teachings, often became heartless and brutal in the suppression of alleged heretics. (Bacchiocchi S. ENDTIME ISSUES NEWSLETTER No. 198 . "INFANT BAPTISM: Part 1, April 2008)

And the truth is that these "Protestant Reformers", simply were not true Christians. True Christians do not kill. Nor do they endorse infant baptism.

Also notice what the Roman Catholics, in the Council of Trent ("the nineteenth ecumenical council opened at Trent on December 13, 1545, and closed there on December 4, 1563") declared as heretical:

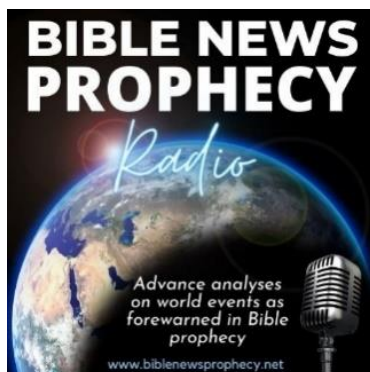
Infants, not being able to make an act of faith, are not to be reckoned among the faithful after their baptism, and therefore when they come to the age of discretion they are to be rebaptized; or it is better to omit their baptism entirely than to baptize them as believing on the sole faith of the Church, when they themselves cannot make a proper act of faith. (Fanning, William H.W. Transcribed by Charles Sweeney, S.J. Baptism. The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume II. Published 1907. New York: Robert Appleton Company. Nihil Obstat, 1907. Remy Lafort, S.T.D., Censor. Imprimatur. +John M. Farley, Archbishop of New York)

Thus, the Council of Trent actually seems to be condemning (or at least minimizing) infant baptism.

Strangely, it does not seem to matter to Roman Catholics/Orthodox (and many Protestants) that since infants are not able to make an act of faith, they should not be baptized.

Sadly, as history shows, those who have remained faithful to the biblical practice of not baptizing infants have been clearly condemned by Greco-Roman Catholic and Protestant leaders.

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By Bob Thiel

**Q: Are people lost because of Adam's Sin?**

**A. No.**



*Adam about to sin (Pixabay)*

To provide more information on this, the following is the answer by Herbert W. Armstrong from his article, *Are People Lost Because of Adam's Sin? (Plain Truth, February 1957 — note this is in the public domain)*.

Millions who profess the Christian religion believe that everyone today needs SALVATION only because of what ADAM did! But IS THAT TRUE?

"WHY IS IT," some people will ask, "that this WHOLE WORLD has to suffer so much now, because of ADAMS SIN?"

There's a common belief that as a result of the original so-called "FALL of MAN" — meaning the transgression of ADAM — that all people are BORN LOST — consigned straight to an ever-burning torment of HELL FIRE!

But IS THAT true?

Let's LOOK AT this ancient event that is called the "FALL OF MAN!" We take a lot of things for granted — we unquestioningly accept and assume a lot of things we hear or read — or that have been generally accepted and believed. And when we take out some of these things and take a good LOOK at them, we receive some shocking surprises!

### **Was Adam Created Spiritually Perfect?**

The common idea in the CHRISTIAN-PROFESSING world is that God originally created Adam, the FIRST MAN, an Immortal, PERFECT, spiritual character. The Bible expression: "God created man In His own image" has been interpreted to mean that God made man immortal and spiritually PERFECT — and created of the SAME COMPOSITION AS God — that is, out of SPIRIT. The BODY is interpreted to be merely the material GARMENT the spiritual man wears — or the physical HOUSE which an immortal soul inhabits. And thus, it is commonly believed, God has COMPLETED HIS CREATION. The man was perfected, completed, immortal, PERFECT in character!

And then, this theory continues, along came Satan. The Devil succeeded in WRECKING this perfect creation — this man that God had perfected, causing him deliberately to SIN! And this SIN of Adam is supposed to have somehow affected a CHANGE in the man's NATURE. He was now a FALLEN man — he now had a DIFFERENT and a FALLEN NATURE than he had had previously. He and all his descendants were now automatically consigned, upon the experience that we call DEATH, to be plunged into the eternal torment of HELL FIRE.

Here had stood, in the man ADAM, the SUPREME MASTERPIECE of all God's creation. But Satan succeeded in WRECKING what God had created — THWARTING God's purpose — UPSETTING God's Plan!

And so, as this prevailing idea pictures it, God had to start all over again and think out some NEW Plan for REPAIRING THE DAMAGE!

It is looked upon something like an automobile manufacturer who had manufactured one very far-advanced, perfectly provisioned automobile — His SUPREME MASTERPIECE — only to find that, on its first drive out of the factory, an enemy had come along and WRECKED that car. The idea is that the manufacturer would have it towed back in and would set out to REPAIR THE DAMAGE.

### **Is Salvation Merely to Repair the Damage?**

And so, the commonly accepted idea of CHRISTIANITY seems to be that Christian REDEMPTION is an effort on the part of God to repair the damage which Satan inflicted in that original SIN, that is, to make us as GOOD AS Adam was, before the so-called "fall."

But is a badly wrecked automobile really as good, after it is repaired, as it was before the wreck? Of course not!

This common idea of a professing Christianity IS NOT TRUE AT ALL! It is NOT the teaching of the HOLY BIBLE. It is NOT the Christianity of CHRIST, nor the twelve APOSTLES, nor of the apostle PAUL!

The general false conception is that ever since the so-called FALL OF ADAM, God has been doing His very BEST to get the WHOLE world SAVED — that is, to restore men to a condition AS GOOD AS Adam was

before the so-called FALL. And, further, that there is a great COMPETITION going on between God and Satan. Satan is very cunningly RESISTING God, RESTRAINING and OUT-SMARTING HIM so that only a small fraction of the WHOLE world's population is actually being saved. Now this entire erroneous teaching pictures Satan as more powerful than God — he's getting the best of the competition. It represents Satan as being able to thwart God's purpose, to step in to upset God's plan and then to use his cunning and his deception and his wiles to out-wit God and to prevent God from repairing the damage in the case of more than a very small fraction of the human race.

### **What the Bible Really Teaches**

Now let's go back into the book of Genesis and see just what the Bible itself says about all this.

In Genesis 1:27, it certainly DOES say that God CREATED man IN HIS OWN IMAGE. But it does not say that man's COMPOSITION was the same as God's — that God made man of IMMORTAL SPIRIT!

Notice what it says about what God made man OUT OF — Genesis 2:7: "And the ETERNAL God formed man" — not the HOUSE that man was to enter, not the GARMENT or CLOAK he would wear, but "formed MAN of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man BECAME a living soul."

Not that man HAS an immortal soul, but man BECAME a LIVING SOUL. That is, man is a living soul.

The word "soul" as it was originally inspired and written by Moses in the Hebrew language was NEPESH" and "nephesh" means the life of animals — of animals who receive their life from the BREATH OF AIR. It is the very antithesis of ANYTHING immortal. It means material life sustained by blood and the breathing of air — that's what the very word "nephesh" translated here "soul" means. A number of times in the first chapter of Genesis the various animals were called "nephesh" in the original inspired Hebrew — only the translators in our English version of the Bible translated it "creature" there, and "soul" when it came to man.

The word "breath" — the "breath of life" here — simply means "air" or "wind." Isn't this exactly what every man breathes in and out of his nostrils? Why certainly! It was this same "BREATH OF LIFE" that God caused to be breathed in and out of the nostrils of animals.

Notice the time of the flood in Genesis 7:21-22. It is recorded that "ALL flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of EVERY creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, AND EVERY MAN: ALL in whose nostrils was the BREATH OF LIFE. That includes all of the animals, as well as man, in whose nostrils was the breath of life — "of all that was in the dry land, died." There we see the same identical Hebrew word used that is used for MAN — and God breathed into MAN'S NOSTRILS the BREATH OF LIFE — the same Hebrew word precisely, that is used for breathing in and out of the nostrils of animals.

### **The New Testament Teaching**

We read in 1 Corinthians 15:53, this MORTAL must PUT ON immortality." The Bible says that man is DUST — that man is MORTAL, but that man can RECEIVE immortality and that he must PUT ON immortality at the resurrection of the just. Now turn to Ezekiel 18:4, "... the soul that sinneth, it SHALL DIE." It isn't



immortal! And that's repeated again in the Bible — it's given twice. Sinful man shall not LIVE forever, but DIE!

And what did God say to Adam in the garden of Eden? This was BEFORE the so-called "fall."

Beginning with verse 15 of Genesis 2: "And the Eternal God TOOK the man, and put him into the garden of Eden, to dress it and to keep it. And the Eternal God COMMANDED the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou SHALT NOT eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely DIE!" — (Genesis 2:15-17).

How could that be IF Adam were ALREADY immortal? IF the man were PERFECT in character — if HERE were PERFECTION, the MASTERPIECE OF all God's creation, and God had completed the creation and was THROUGH with it — would He have said, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely DIE?" It wouldn't have been POSSIBLE if the man were perfect — the man couldn't have fallen if he had been perfect, could he? He said, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou SHALT SURELY DIE!" — not LIVE forever. He didn't say, "You'll live forever in some other place or condition — in hell." No, the penalty for sin is DEATH!

### **What Actually Happened**

Satan came along to deceive this human, mortal man, that had been made from the dust of the ground. First, Satan called God a liar when God said that the man was mortal, subject to death if he committed sin. God said, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" — in other words, the man is mortal — subject to death. But you read in Genesis 3:4, that the serpent said, "Ye shall not surely die." He questioned the veracity of God's Word!

Satan argued that the man was ALREADY immortal — an immortal soul that would not die — that he would live forever anyway. But God had said, just as you read in Romans 6:23, that the "wages of sin is DEATH and the GIFT of God is Eternal Life." Satan argued that if we disobeyed God — if we commit sin — that we will be as God — like God. We'll be like gods ourselves — that is, immortal spirit. And so, somehow, ever since, most people have just assumed and gotten into their minds the idea that when Adam was created "in the IMAGE of God" he was created and made of the same COMPOSITION as God — that is, composed of immortal spirit and of PERFECT character, and that he was created in the same character and the same nature of God originally, but that his nature changed and he fell.

In John 4:24 in the New Testament, you read that "God is a Spirit." But nowhere does the Bible say that MAN IS a SPIRIT, or that man is SPIRIT. Rather, the Bible says that man is dust — "unto dust shalt thou return," saith God. In 1 Corinthians 15 of the New Testament, it says that "man is OF the earth, earthy."

### **What Is the IMAGE of God?**

How was Adam made in the IMAGE of God? How could he have been in the image of God if he was of different composition? Just the other day I saw a statue or image of Abraham Lincoln. Now if I would tell you that that statue was composed of flesh and blood, you would tell me I was crazy, I'm quite sure. No, it was composed of iron. I have seen images composed of wood, bronze or stone. Abraham Lincoln was made of flesh and blood, but the statue, made in his image, was made of iron. Almighty God is made of SPIRIT, but the man who was made IN HIS IMAGE was made of the dust of the ground — he was made

flesh and blood. God Almighty is NOT flesh and blood, God Almighty is SPIRIT. Jesus Christ said, "That which is born of the flesh IS flesh" — plain flesh and blood of the dust of the ground — "that which is born of the Spirit," He said, "IS SPIRIT." He said also that man can be born of the Spirit he SHALL BECOME Spirit and then he will be Spirit, but he is not Spirit now.

Jesus was explaining to Nicodemus, in John the 3rd chapter, how man is mortal — man is flesh — but that he may be born again, and he MUST be born of God before he can become immortal. Eternal Life is the GIFT of God.

How can man be in the IMAGE of God and still not be of God's composition? Turn back to 1 Corinthians 15:45, "So, it is written, the first man Adam was made a LIVING soul" — that's a living "nephesh" which means material, MORTAL life — "the last Adam" — which was Christ — "was made a QUICKENING spirit" — that's an energizing, or an immortal spirit. Verse 47, "The first man is OF the earth, EARTHY:" — that's the first Adam, made of the earth. It's the man, not the GARMENT he wore, not the HOUSE he was in, not the body he was inside of. The "man was OF the earth, earthy: but the second man" — Christ — "is the Lord from heaven." Now in verse 49:

"And as we HAVE borne the image of the earthy we SHALL also bear the image of the heavenly." Here it's talking about COMPOSITION — here it's talking about one man being made of the DUST of the ground, another being of SPIRIT. And, we have only borne the image of the dust of the ground, but we SHALL bear the image of the heavenly. We are only in the form and shape of God now, but NOT of the radiant composition, NOT of the same character. We're merely the clay model and God Almighty is the Master Potter. He made us of matter so that He, the Master Potter, could reform and shape us into the final image that it was His purpose originally to make us.

### **Is God Competing with Satan?**

There wasn't any competition between God and Satan. The "fall" of man wasn't what you have been supposing. God put the very nature in man that CAUSED the man to fall. God KNEW that redemption would be necessary, and it was planned long before that very first man had been created. God has a GREAT purpose, and the world has lost sight of that purpose. It couldn't have been brought about in ANY OTHER WAY than the way that God is doing. Satan was NEVER more powerful than God — he never frustrated God's purpose, and he never will.

Now the Bible reveals that the heart of man is above all things deceitful and DESPERATELY wicked, and that's absolutely true.

What is wickedness or sin? The Bible definition is, "Sin is the TRANSGRESSION of the Law" (1 John 3:4).

That's the LAW of God, and it's a law that God created — it's a law God set in motion — it's a LIVING Law — it's an inexorable Law — it's the Law of LOVE. It's a WAY of life. It's the Way of PERFECT character. It's the WAY of SPIRITUAL character. LOVE is the fulfilling of that Law but it takes the SPIRITUAL LOVE of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit to fulfill that Law, and to establish that character in us.

How do we transgress that Law? By lust of the flesh, by pride and vanity, by our tempers of resentment, hatred, envy, malice, jealousy. The most common sins which transgress God's Holy, Spiritual Law, are those of yielding to the desires and the appetites of the FLESH, and these tempers of ours.

## **Why Man Sins**

There are five senses, the sense of seeing, of hearing, tasting, smelling and feeling. When God created Adam, he put IN Adam the same five senses that are in you! And mark this now, the SAME SENSUAL NATURE that CAUSES you to sin! Adam sinned, didn't he? Let's examine that sin and see what CAUSED him to sin — or, let's take Eve, because the account of her sin is described in detail rather than Adam's.

After the devil had tempted the woman, "when the woman saw that the tree was GOOD for food, and that it was PLEASANT to the eyes" — here are her five senses at work — "and a tree desired to make one wise" — there is vanity — "she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat" — that was stealing — "and she gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat" (Genesis 3:6). There is the first sin.

Do you comprehend?

The woman could see, she had the sense of sight — she saw that the forbidden tree was pleasant to the eyes. Now, she had the sense of taste. She realized that the tree tasted GOOD — but God had forbid it. God said it is NOT good for her, it may look good, it might even taste good, but it is poison in her stomach, and there's a bad principle involved — but the woman saw otherwise. She thought otherwise in her carnal mind — her appetite was aroused — she craved the taste of it. Then, vanity was aroused in her — it was, so she believed, desired to make her wise.

And all of these lusts which break the tenth commandment caused her to break the commandment against stealing, and to take the fruit that did not belong to her and that had been forbidden to her and her husband. In so doing, she obeyed Satan — she had ANOTHER god BEFORE the true God, and she dishonored her ONLY parent, so she broke the first and the fifth commandments.

Yes, sin is the transgression of the Law — and God's Law was BROKEN in FOUR distinctive places in that first original sin in the garden of Eden. Four of the TEN COMMANDMENTS. Adam and Eve were ORIGINALLY created with the SAME nature, the SAME five senses, with the SAME pride and vanity, the SAME desires, appetites, nature and vanity that you and I have today.

Now when the first man and woman yielded to those appetites and desires — to the very nature which God had originally CREATED IN them — and transgressed God's Law, committing the FIRST sin, then what happened? Did their nature change? Did they then fall from immortality and become MORTAL all of a sudden? That is ridiculous!

## **Man Was Created Mortal**

Let's notice Genesis 3:7. "And the eyes of them both were opened, and they KNEW that they were naked: and they sowed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons."

Notice, there wasn't any change in their nature — there wasn't any fall in their nature — it was the very nature that had been originally created in them, and their willing YIELDING to it was what caused the sin. What happened was that their eyes were opened as a result of it — now the KNOWLEDGE of evil had come. "They KNEW," it says.

Yes, KNOWLEDGE came — they KNEW!

I always wondered what was meant by the KNOWLEDGE of good and evil before I was converted. Then I found out. To have the knowledge of evil is to know evil — to participate in it — and that means to rebel against God and to break His Commandments. They came to the wrong knowledge. Man's knowledge is mostly a mixture of good and evil. Human nature is a MIXTURE of good and evil. There's good in all people, and there's also evil in every one of us that we need to recognize.

Animals do not sin. Animals don't know enough — they don't have the KNOWLEDGE to commit sin. Animals live and go and proceed by instinct — they do exactly as God intended. But MAN came into the KNOWLEDGE of evil. Man has a mind. Man must make his OWN decisions, and MAN is the only flesh creature that knows how to commit sin.

Did God change the nature of man, or did He pronounce some curse upon him?

Genesis 3:16-17: "Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow, and thy conception ... and unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the GROUND for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life" — there was a curse on the GROUND, but not any change in the nature of the man.

Notice, "And the Eternal God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us" — like God — "to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of LIFE, and eat and LIVE forever" — lest he gain Eternal Life, an immortal life which was offered as God's gift in the garden of Eden — "therefore the Eternal God sent him forth FROM the garden of Eden to TILL the ground from whence he was taken. So, He drove out the man: and He placed at the east of the garden of Eden, cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned EVERY way, to KEEP the way of the tree of life" — lest he go back and BECOME immortal.

No, the man was not immortal. He had the opportunity of becoming immortal, but he spurned it — he turned it down.

### **A Resurrection for All!**

Notice 1 Corinthians 15:22: "For as IN Adam ALL die, even so IN Christ shall ALL be made alive" — the same "ALL" that die in Adam. Why? Simply because Adam was originally MADE mortal — made of the dust, composed of flesh and blood — of matter, not of spirit. Does this say that because Adam fell all die? No, most certainly not. But, as in Adam all die — that's speaking of this first death, so after that, the resurrection. The wages of sin is not just this first death that people die, the wages of sin is an ETERNAL DEATH. "In Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" — that's the good, bad, and indifferent — all people — sinners and saved alike. That is not the ultimate penalty of sin! The final penalty of sin is the SECOND DEATH, from which there will NEVER be a resurrection — it is ETERNAL PUNISHMENT. DEATH is that punishment, forever — eternally.

We were born from our parents, and so on back to Adam who was created MORTAL — formed of the dust — composed of FLESH and BLOOD. IN Adam — as long as we are his children — born of him — we all die this FIRST death. But IN Christ, ALL who are not in the first resurrection will be made alive by another resurrection to mortal life (Revelation 20:5, 12 and 1 Corinthians 15:40).

IN Christ we can be BORN AGAIN and have IMMORTAL life so that we never can die. That comes through the first resurrection.

Notice Romans 5:12 — "Wherefore, as by ONE MAN sin entered into the world, and death BY sin; and so death passed upon ALL men, for that ALL have sinned" — the real death penalty — the second death — passes on you, because YOU have sinned — because ALL have sinned, and NOT BECAUSE of Adam's sin.

Notice, sin entered this world by ONE man — sin is the transgression of God's Spiritual Law. Adam was a mortal-flesh and blood — human. He had the NATURE of sin in him, otherwise, he WOULD NOT have sinned. If he had been perfect, he would NOT have sinned. He had the sensual nature — the sense of sight, of hearing, tasting, smelling, and feeling, and GOD had put that nature in him — God talked to him — preached a sermon to him — TOLD him that the wages of sin would be DEATH. But if he resisted that nature, if he partook, instead, of the TREE OF LIFE symbolizing the HOLY SPIRIT of God, fulfilled God's Law, THEN he could have had the GIFT of Eternal Life.

But Adam rejected that. Adam sinned. He never RECEIVED the precious gift of Eternal Life. He was driven out of the garden of Eden lest he RECEIVED it, and so DEATH passed upon ALL men.

Here's where the death penalty came — NOT because of Adam's sin — that's what most people have thought but look at it in YOUR BIBLE — death is passed up ALL MEN BECAUSE that ALL HAVE SINNED — because WE have sinned, not merely because of Adam's sin.

### **We Bring the Penalty on Ourselves**

No, it says in PLAIN language that DEATH has passed upon ALL men BECAUSE that ALL HAVE SINNED. The DEATH penalty is passed upon YOU — it is passed upon EVERYONE of us, BECAUSE WE have sinned — because WE have lived the wrong way and have not turned to God. The Scripture does NOT say that the penalty of Adam's sin is ETERNAL death for you and for me — but the PENALTY for YOUR sin, of MY sin, of OUR sins, is DEATH! But God so loved this world that he GAVE his only begotten son, Jesus Christ, that whosoever believeth on HIM should NOT perish, but should have the GIFT of Everlasting LIFE (John 3:16).

The way is TO REPENT — to REPENT OF SIN — and ACKNOWLEDGE Jesus Christ as PERSONAL SAVIOUR. Then the promise is, we SHALL receive the GIFT of the Holy Spirit. And then, if we grow in grace and in knowledge — IF WE OVERCOME, overcome the world, overcome ourselves and our own natures, if we endure until the end — then we shall be made immortal — we shall be BORN into the very FAMILY OF GOD at last.

Oh, what a great WONDERFUL and ALL WISE purpose God had in making man as He did. How we will PRAISE Him for it when finally, we understand!

*More on God's plan of salvation can be found in the free e-book, available at [ccog.org](http://ccog.org) titled Universal OFFER of Salvation, Apokatastasis: Can God save the lost in an age to come? Hundreds of scriptures reveal God's plan of salvation.*

# Fulfilling Matthew 24:14 And Matthew 28:19-20

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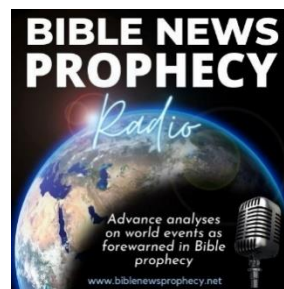
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