

# The Great Conspiracy:

## Lesson 2



Discovering God's Word

Bible Study Series

# The Great Conspiracy

## Lesson 2

Learn about some areas in which Satan has been successful deceiving religious people and how you should choose to pursue New Testament Christianity today

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### Discovering God's Word Bible Study Series

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**About the author:** My name is Eric Krieg. I am a disciple of Jesus, a Bible student, a truth seeker, and an evangelist. My interest is in using the Bible as my only guide in my faith. My desire is to help others understand the message of the Bible and pursue true, New Testament Christianity.

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**My plea:** It is my hope and prayer that you are searching for the truth that is contained in God's word, the Bible. My desire is to help you understand and obey these truths God has revealed in the pages of His word. It is to that end that I write this material. Please observe all of the Scripture references and evaluate whether the conclusions I have drawn are in harmony with God's word. If they are, I ask that you make honest application of those truths to your life and obey God's instructions.

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# The Great Conspiracy:

## Lesson 2

Satan is conspiring with false religious teachers to use “Christianity” to accomplish his purposes. In doing so, he has successfully deceived millions who thought they were “Christians” and thought they were following the Lord.

Fortunately, Jesus not only has warned you about the reality of this great conspiracy; but, He has told you how you can not succumb to this deception! Look again at Matthew 7:15-20. “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them.”

What if you have believed a lie? What if you have fallen victim to this great conspiracy and do not know it? Would you (upon learning the truth that God's word teaches) be willing to forsake the ways of religious error and stand in the truth – no matter what the consequences of standing in the truth were?

In this second lesson, I want to examine some of the common lies that false teachers are promoting in this world and examine each of them by the true teachings of God's word. While the things we will discuss will not (by any means) be an exhaustive list of false teachings, we will be evaluating some of the most common lies that are told – that affect a great number of people. However, I also want you to learn how we need to be evaluating everything we are taught by the standard of God's word (even as I want you to evaluate what I am teaching you by God's word).

Remember, it is only the truth that will set you free from your sins. In John 8:32, Jesus said, “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” You are capable of knowing the truth of God's word when you read and study it. Realize that the doctrines and traditions of men will not save you. For instance, Jesus said that some worshiped Him in vain and violated the commandment of God by holding to their own man-made religious traditions and doctrines (see Matthew 15:1-14).

Therefore, let's be very diligent in considering some of the most popular doctrines in “Christian” churches today. Let's search the Scriptures to know whether these doctrines represent the truth or whether they represent error.

### ***False Teachings About God***

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One avenue false religious teachers have deceived is by teaching false doctrines about God. Consider two prominent false teachings about God with me.

#### **“God is a loving God who will not condemn anyone to Hell”**

There are many who believe and teach that God's nature of love will prohibit Him from condemning anyone to Hell. Or, even if some teach that God will condemn *some* people to Hell, they often believe that Hell is reserved for the very worst of sinners (i.e. murderers, rapists, etc.). However, let's evaluate what the Bible teaches on this matter.

First, there can be no doubt that God is a loving God. 1 John 4:8 simply says that “God is love.” John 3:16 explains that God loved the world so much that He sent His only begotten Son (Jesus Christ) to die for the sins of the world – so that those who would believe in Him would not perish in Hell because of their sins, but have everlasting life in Heaven. Furthermore, we discover (from passages like Ephesians 2:1-10) that God is rich in grace and mercy. That is, He will provide salvation and forgiveness to those who do not deserve it. Salvation

truly is the gift of a loving God through Jesus Christ (Romans 6:23)!

Second, the Bible also teaches that God is a severe God who will punish those who sin against Him. God's nature is not *only* love, grace, and mercy. Instead, Romans 11:22 tells us to "consider the goodness and severity of God"! This God who is full of love is also described by the New Testament as a "consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:29). And, God's book teaches us that it is a "fearful [terrifying] thing to fall into the hands of the living God" because of His vengeance (Hebrews 10:30-31). You see, though God gives all people the opportunity to be saved from their sins and experience His goodness, God also promises to punish those who disobey Him. In fact, God's holiness requires that He punish those who die in their sins. Therefore, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 promises that vengeance will be taken when Jesus Christ returns on those who "do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power."

Third, Jesus taught that most people will not be saved. And, if they will not be saved, this means that they will be condemned to an eternity in Hell (since there are only two options for eternity – eternity in Heaven or eternity in Hell). In Matthew 7:13-14, Jesus said, "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it." Therefore, to claim that God's love will prevent Him from condemning anyone (or most people) to Hell is directly contrary to the teachings of God's word and Jesus Christ, Himself!

### **"Jesus is not God"**

There are some who profess to follow God who claim that Jesus does not possess the nature of being God. This doctrine usually says that Jesus Christ was the first of God's creation. Although those who hold to this doctrine are typically viewed as being outside of "mainstream Christianity," there are still a large number of people who hold to this false

teaching (i.e. Jehovah's Witnesses). However, let's evaluate what the Bible teaches on this matter.

First, the Scriptures plainly teach that Jesus is God. John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Instead of translating this passage in this way, those who hold to this doctrine will pervert this text and make Jesus out to be a god rather than God. However, this is not what the passage says. This passage teaches that Jesus Christ possesses all of the characteristics of being God. And, there are many other passages that also teach that Jesus is God. For instance, Colossians 2:9 says that the "fullness of the Godhead" dwells in Jesus. Philippians 2:6 teaches that Jesus Christ was in the "form of God" and was "equal with God." Other passages could even be added to these.

Second, the Bible teaches that nothing was made without Jesus. It is common for those who do not believe that Jesus is God to cite Colossians 1:15, which references Jesus as "the firstborn over all creation." They interpret this to mean that Jesus Christ was the first of God's creations and, therefore, is not eternal in nature. However, this phrase is only being used to indicate Jesus' supremacy over creation (as explained by verse 17). In fact, Colossians 1:15-17 teaches that Jesus was *not* a created being. Verse 15 says that He "is the image of the invisible God." Then, verse 16 teaches that "by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible...All things were created through Him and for Him." Similarly, John 1:3 says that "All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made." Now, if He is the image of God and nothing was made without Him, how could Jesus have been the first of God's creations?

Third, God called Jesus "God." While there are many people who will not call Jesus "God," God does call Jesus "God." Hebrews 1:8 says, "But to the Son He [God, the Father] says: 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom.'" Therefore, you should not listen to those who refuse to call Jesus Christ "God"!

# ***False Teachings About Salvation***

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One of the most common avenues false religious teachers have used to deceive is by teaching false doctrines about salvation (particularly, about what God requires people to do in order to be saved from their sins). Consider some prominent false teachings about salvation with me.

## **“All morally good, religious people will be saved”**

It is often said that everyone who is a “good” person and those who are religious will be saved eternally. Therefore, whether or not an individual has been obedient to the instructions of the Bible are not, necessarily, important to the salvation of a soul – as long as these other criteria are met. Closely connected with this is the teaching of “live according to the direction of your own conscience.” While this sort of teaching may make folks feel good about themselves – and cause them to feel saved, this teaching is a lie that Satan and his allies have successfully employed to deceive many! Let’s evaluate what the Bible teaches on this matter.

First, being a moral, good, and religious person is important. Titus 2:11 says that the “grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.” Then, verse 12 says that God’s grace teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts – and that we “should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age.” So, God does expect that we live according to His standard of morals (not according to the world’s standard of morals) and that we be religious.

Second, there are Bible examples of morally good and religious people who were not saved. One example is Cornelius. Acts 10 introduces this man as “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 10:2; also see verse 22). However, an angel of God appeared to him in a vision to give him instructions to send for the apostle Peter, who would tell Cornelius words by which he

and his household would be saved (read Acts 10-11). This good man was, therefore, not in a saved condition – despite being morally good and religious. Also, the Bible demonstrates this point through Saul (who later became known as the apostle Paul). Saul was devoutly religious as a Jew. He even was convinced in his own conscience that he needed to persecute and kill Christians in order to please God (see Acts 8:1-3; Acts 9:1-2; Acts 22:3-5; Acts 23:1; Acts 26:9-11). However, he too had to be taught what he needed to do in order to be saved and be baptized in order to have his sins washed away (see Acts 9:3-19; Acts 22:16). His religion and zeal for God was not enough to make him pleasing to God.

Third, the Bible connects obedience with salvation. Both of the previous examples (and many other Bible examples) demonstrate that these individuals could not be pleasing to God without being obedient to God. Jesus taught us the same thing in Matthew 7:21-23. In this text, Jesus says that *not* everyone who professes Him as Lord and does many good works in His name will be saved. Instead, Jesus said that it is the one who does the will of the Heavenly Father who will be saved. Therefore, it is good for you to be morally good and religious. However, you must listen to and obey what God instructs you to do for salvation. In fact, the Bible teaches that those who do not obey the gospel of Jesus Christ will be punished with everlasting destruction (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9) – because Jesus Christ is only the author of eternal salvation to those who obey Him (Hebrews 5:9).

## **“All you have to do is believe in Jesus”**

The overwhelming majority of “Christian” churches claim that simply believing in Jesus Christ is the only thing God requires of you in order to be saved. Typically, it is believed that there are certain “core” doctrines about Jesus Christ that you must believe (i.e. His deity, virgin birth, sinless life, death, burial, resurrection, etc.). Then, when you believe in Jesus, they will often tell you to say a “Sinner’s Prayer” to ask Jesus into your heart. These individuals will usually tell you that there are no works that accompany salvation. However, let’s evaluate what the Bible teaches on this matter.

First, the Bible does teach belief as being an essential part in salvation. There are many Bible passages that teach the essential nature of faith. For instance, Jesus said, “Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins” (John 8:24). Hebrews 11:6 also states that it is impossible to be saved without faith. So, the question is not about whether faith is necessary for salvation. It undoubtedly is. Rather, the question is about whether “faith only” is enough for salvation.

Second, true faith is accompanied by works of obedience. Is the faith that pleases God a faith that only mentally accepts certain facts as being true – or is it a faith that is obedient to whatever God has commanded? The Scriptures consistently teach that acceptable faith is a faith that is accompanied by works of obedience. For instance, Hebrews 11 records many examples of faith. However, you should read this chapter and observe the connection between their works and their faith. Certainly, none of them would be examples of faith without their works. Then, James 2:14-26 ought to settle this issue entirely. Three times in this passage, James states and demonstrates that “faith without works is dead.” Then, consider the language of James 2:24. “You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.” Now, please realize that these are not meritorious works (i.e. works by which we earn salvation). Meritorious works cannot save us (see Ephesians 2:8-9). Instead, these are works of obedience. These works of obedience to the instructions of God are necessary for salvation. Faith only is not enough to make us right in God’s sight (according to God’s word)!

Third, God has required more of you than just belief. Not only does the Bible directly say that “faith only” is not enough to make us right with God; but, the Bible also provides other commandments that are identified as being essential for salvation. In order for an individual to be forgiven of his/her sins, God’s word teaches that he/she must: (1) Hear God’s word (Romans 10:17), believe (John 8:24), repent (Acts 17:30), confess Christ (Romans 10:9-10), and be baptized (Acts 2:38). Then, after becoming a Christian, God requires that an individual be faithful and obedient to Him throughout his/her earthly life

(Revelation 2:10). Remember, Jesus taught (in Matthew 7:21-23) that it is *not* enough just to believe in and profess Him as Lord. Instead, you must be obedient to the will of the Father!

Fourth, the practice of the “Sinner’s Prayer” cannot be found in the Bible. Usually, those who believe and teach “faith only” for salvation will also teach that you must ask Jesus into your heart through prayer. However, there is no Bible passage that teaches such a practice! Yes, there are examples of sinners who pray (i.e. Saul, Cornelius). And, those who have already become Christians are taught to ask God for forgiveness whenever they sin (Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:8-2:2). But, the Bible does not teach that asking Jesus into your heart through prayer has any part in becoming a Christian!

### **“You are once saved, always saved”**

Popular doctrine says that once an individual becomes a Christian (is saved), he/she cannot fall away so as to lose his/her salvation. It is often said that the one who would fall back into sin was never really a Christian to begin with. While this is a very comforting doctrine, it is a deceitful doctrine that is promoted by Satan and his allies. Let’s evaluate what the Bible teaches on this matter.

First, God requires faithfulness through the point of death for salvation. When Jesus was giving instructions to churches in the region of Asia Minor (in Revelation 2-3), He told a congregation of people who had become Christians (who were about to experience persecution) that they needed to be “faithful until death” in order to be given the “crown of life” (Revelation 2:10). The implication is, that they would not be given this crown of life if they would be unfaithful to Him.

Second, the Bible gives examples of individuals who became Christians, but then sinned and lost their salvation. In fact, five of the seven churches addressed in Revelation 2-3 were not being pleasing to God. Now, these churches were composed of individuals who had become Christians. But, they were not being faithful to God. Then, another example is given in Acts 8:12-24. This passage records the conversion of Simon (who had previously practiced sorcery). However, this passage

also records a sin that this man committed after he became a Christian. And, the apostle Peter condemned him for his sin (indicating that he would perish, vs. 20). Then, Peter told him what he needed to do in order to be saved from the sin he had just committed.

Third, sin is just as deadly after someone becomes a Christian as it is before he/she becomes a Christian. The Bible teaches that all sin is equal – and that it all results in the everlasting punishment of Hell (see Romans 6:23 and Romans 1:18-32). Now, sin does not cease to be spiritually harmful once you become a Christian. Instead, sin still separates the sinner from God (Isaiah 59:1-2) and requires the sinner to find forgiveness from God (as in Acts 8:22 and 1 John 1:8-2:2).

Fourth, God says that people can fall from grace. While there are many who claim that it is impossible to fall from the grace of God after you have been saved by it, God’s word directly teaches that it *is* possible to fall from His grace! For instance, the book of Galatians discusses a situation in which many who had become Christians previously were attempting to go back to the Law of Moses. In doing so, Paul told them, “You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace” (Galatians 5:4). Now, they could not fall from grace unless they had once been saved by it – and they could not become estranged from Christ unless they had once been united with Him. Therefore, this one example plainly states and demonstrates that it is possible for those who become Christians to fall from God’s grace. This means that those who become Christians must be faithful throughout their earthly lives in order to be saved (Revelation 2:10).

## ***False Teachings About Baptism***

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Baptism is clearly a Bible subject. In fact, most churches practice something called “baptism.” However, false religious teachers have deceived many people about the true purpose and action

involved in Bible baptism. As we will see, in perverting the Bible’s teaching on this one subject, many people have failed to do what God has required for salvation. Consider two prominent false teachings about baptism with me.

### **“You don’t have to be baptized to be saved”**

Nearly every religious organization teaches that baptism is a good thing to do; but, that it is not necessary for salvation. Instead, they almost always teach that an individual is saved first (typically through “faith only”) – and then should be baptized later. They almost always teach that baptism is *not* necessary for the forgiveness of sins. However, let’s evaluate what the Bible teaches on this matter.

First, being baptized does not earn a person’s salvation. Those who object to the necessity of baptism for salvation will typically say that baptism cannot be necessary for salvation because it is a work – and works do not save. However, remember what we’ve already considered in this lesson. Yes, it is true that we cannot do anything to *earn* (merit) salvation (Ephesians 2:8-9). However, we must do the works God tells us to do in order to obey Him (James 2:24). Therefore, baptism is *not* a work that is done in order to merit salvation. Instead, it is a work that is done in order to be obedient to God’s requirements for salvation.

Second, God says that baptism is necessary for salvation. Everything that God says is necessary for salvation is necessary for salvation. As stated earlier, this includes hearing God’s word (Romans 10:17), belief (John 8:24), repentance (Acts 17:30), and confessing Christ (Romans 10:9-10). And, this also includes baptism. For instance, Jesus said, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:16). Also, 1 Peter 3:20-21 says that baptism “now saves us” – just as Noah and his family were saved through water! God says that you cannot be saved until you have believed *and* been baptized!

Third, God says that baptism is necessary for the forgiveness of sins. Sin cannot be forgiven until everything God says is necessary for forgiveness has been done. Specifically, consider that God has given

baptism as a requirement for the forgiveness of sins. Acts 2:38 says, “Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’” Furthermore, Saul was instructed, “And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). Now, consider this: How can you have your sins washed away and be forgiven unless you have been obedient to God’s command to be baptized? You simply cannot be!

Fourth, God says that baptism is necessary to come to Jesus Christ. According to 2 Timothy 2:10, salvation is “in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.” Therefore, you must be “in Christ” (in His church) in order to be saved. Galatians 3:26-27 explains that baptism is necessary for this. “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” Only as many of them as were baptized into Christ had put on Christ. No more, no less. The same thing is true today. You cannot be in Christ (where salvation is) until you are baptized into Christ and receive the forgiveness of your sins. Similarly, 1 Corinthians 12:13 says that we are all “baptized into one body” (i.e. into one church). Therefore, if you want to be saved, you must be baptized!

### **“Sprinkling and pouring are acceptable modes of baptism”**

There are many religious organizations and teachers who claim that the action of Bible baptism can be rightly accomplished through having water sprinkled or poured on an individual’s head. They often claim that the method of baptism is not important to God and that it is up to each individual to decide how he/she desires to be baptized. However, let’s evaluate what the Bible teaches on this matter.

First, the Greek word for baptism means immersion or overwhelming. Now, the New Testament was originally written in the Greek language. And, whenever you look up the meaning of the original Greek word used for “baptism,” credible scholars will always define the action involved as immersion, dipping, submersion,

overwhelming, etc. Therefore, if you had lived during the time the New Testament was being written, you would have understood the instruction to be baptized as an instruction to be immersed. The actions of sprinkling and pouring were not involved in this word whatsoever. In fact, there were other Greek words that were used to designate these actions.

Second, Bible examples of baptism demonstrate that it is an immersion in water. Even if you did not know anything about the meaning of the Greek word for baptism, you could know that it was accomplished by being immersed in water because of the examples given in the Bible. For instance, whenever Jesus had been baptized, He “came up immediately from the water” (Matthew 3:16). Then, whenever the man of Ethiopia was baptized, the Scriptures teach that he “went down into the water,” was baptized, and then “came up out of the water” (Acts 8:38-39). What pictures do these passages paint? Do they paint pictures of immersion, sprinkling, or pouring? Clearly, they are pictures of immersion. In fact, there is no Bible example of sprinkling or pouring for the action of baptism.

Third, the Bible calls baptism a burial. Romans 6:3-4 compares becoming a Christian with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Just like Jesus died, was buried, and then rose from the dead, we must die to sin, be “buried” with Jesus “through baptism,” and be raised to walk in newness of life. Similarly, Colossians 2:12 says that we are “buried” with Jesus in baptism. Now, what is the action of a burial? Is it accomplished by sprinkling or pouring dirt over a dead body? Certainly not! It is a complete covering. Therefore, baptism is also a complete covering (a complete covering of water).

Fourth, anything other than immersion in water does not accomplish what God commands. Since immersion is the true meaning and application of God’s command to be baptized, anything other than full immersion is not sufficient to accomplish baptism. Therefore, without being immersed in water, an individual does *not* receive the blessings that come from being baptized (as we saw earlier – salvation, forgiveness, and being in Christ).



## ***False Teachings About The Church***

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A final point of false teaching we will consider in this lesson concerns the church. Not only has the false teachings of individuals led to the creation of many different churches; but, there has also been false teaching about the church. Consider some prominent false teachings about the church with me.

### **“Join the church of your own choice – since all roads lead to Heaven”**

Many religious teachers and organizations make the claim that there are many different ways to serve God. Many also claim that the church you belong to doesn't make any difference to God (as long as it believes in Jesus). Instead, many teach that it is just a matter of personal opinion which church you should belong to. Therefore, they claim that an individual should just join the church of his/her own choice, the one that best suits that individual's needs. After all, they claim that all of these different churches are part of Christ's church and they will all lead to Heaven (though they take different routes to get there). However, let's evaluate what the Bible teaches on this matter.

First, notice that Jesus only promised to build one church. In Matthew 16:18, Jesus told Peter, “And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.” Now, how many churches did Jesus promise to establish? Only one! Therefore, Jesus was not the one who was responsible for the establishment of thousands of different churches (as there are today). Instead, as we discussed in lesson 1, this has been largely accomplished through the work of false religious teachers being influenced by the devil to deceive others. So, you must make a choice. Will you choose to be part of Jesus' one church that you can read about in the Bible (the church that will be saved), or will you choose to be part of a man-made church?

Second, notice that those who are part of this church are those who obey God's true plan of salvation. The Bible tells us how individuals join the church Jesus Christ established. And, it tells us that those who join His church are those who obey God's plan of salvation and become Christians (according to the Bible's teachings). That plan of salvation is to hear God's word (Romans 10:17), believe (John 8:24), repent (Acts 17:30), confess Jesus Christ (Romans 10:9-10), and be baptized (Acts 2:38). The Bible teaches that those who were obedient to these commandments were added by the Lord to the church (Acts 2:41, 47). However, most “Christian” churches don't teach individuals to obey this plan of salvation (as we've already discussed). Therefore, those people who obey false “plans of salvation” cannot be part of Christ's church (though they may be part of a man-made church)!

Third, there is still only one church. Not only did Jesus Christ only establish one church; but, there is still only one church He has authorized to exist. Remember (as was identified in lesson 1), there is only “one body” (Ephesians 4:4). Since the body is the church (according to Ephesians 1:22-23 and Colossians 1:18), there is only one church! Christ still only has one church (body/collection) of saved people. Those who obey Him are part of this church and those who do not obey Him are not part of His church.

Fourth, God commands unity between those who follow Him. While there is only one church (in a universal sense), the Bible does speak of local churches. However, these local churches are *not* different denominations. Instead, these local churches are just locally organized groups of Christians (members of Christ's universal church) who are devoted to working and worshipping together in local geographic areas. Numerous Bible passages teach that God expects and demands unity among those who follow Him. Jesus prayed for unity in John 17:20-23. 1 Corinthians 1:10 speaks about the degree to which God's people must be united, saying they must be all speaking the “same thing,” that there be “no divisions” among them, and that they be “perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.” Furthermore, Philippians 1:27 says that Christians are to “stand fast in one spirit,

with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.” Therefore, these passages help us to understand that God does not approve of the religious division that exists among those who profess to follow Him.

### **“Church doctrine doesn’t matter”**

One of the main reasons that many folks claim you can join the church of your own choice is that (in their view) church doctrine doesn’t matter. Again, they say that believing in Jesus is the only thing that matters. However, consider what the Bible says about the essential nature of believing and following right doctrine.

First, there is a pattern of sound words you must cling to. 2 Timothy 1:13 says, “Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.” Notice that there is a pattern. Then, notice that this pattern is one that contains sound (uncorrupt, healthy) words. This is a reference to all of God’s teachings (as recorded now in the pages of the Bible, particularly the words of the New Testament). Finally, this pattern must be firmly adhered to. That is, whatever God teaches must be believed and obeyed. Now, it is not possible for every church to be holding fast to the pattern of sound words – because many churches believe contradicting doctrines. So, you must choose a church that holds fast to the pattern of sound words.

Second, all perversions made to the gospel’s message are condemned by God. This also can be demonstrated from the fact that we must hold fast to the pattern of sound words. God does not permit any changes to be made to His teachings. In fact, Galatians 1:6-9 says that the one who preaches a different gospel besides the true gospel of Christ is to be accursed. Then, Revelation 22:18-19 teaches that nothing is to be added to or subtracted from God’s word. Therefore, a church that has added to what the Bible teaches believes and practices too much. And, a church that has subtracted from what the Bible teaches believes and practices too little. It is the church that believes and practices exactly what the Bible teaches that He approves. You need to seek to be part of a local church that believes and practices exactly what the Bible teaches!

Third, if you do not abide in the doctrine of Christ, you do not have God. Consider 2 John 1:9-11 again. “Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.” Does doctrine matter to God? Obviously, it does. God says that a person who does not abide in His doctrine (His teaching) does not have Him. The same thing would be true about a church. If the church you join does not hold fast to the pure teachings of God’s word, you must not be part of it! This passage implies that if you join a church that is not following the teachings of God’s word, you share in the “evil deeds” of those false teachers!

## ***Choosing New Testament Christianity***

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As you consider all of these lies Satan has used false religious teachers to spread – and the great damage that these lies have accomplished, you need to realize that you are not helpless in your fight against Satan! Remember, Jesus said that you can “know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). You do not have to be manipulated and misled by these false teachers. You can break free by studying the Scriptures and determining that you will only practice New Testament Christianity.

### **Introducing New Testament Christianity!**

It is my hope that you have a burning desire within your heart to do what is right – regardless of the persecutions or afflictions it may bring! Perhaps you have looked around the religious world for the truth, but, you have found that the denominations are simply not practicing New Testament Christianity. But, what if I told you that you can be a New Testament Christian today? What if I told you that you could be part of a New Testament church today? Would you be interested?

You might wonder if that is even possible today – as we are nearly 2,000 years removed from the writing of the New Testament. However, consider a very simple illustration. In Luke 8:5-18, Jesus taught a parable about a sower who went out to sow his seed. This seed, Jesus said, is the word of God (Luke 8:11). Our hearts are represented in the parable by the different types of soils. Now, it is a fundamental law of agriculture that seed produces after its own kind (Genesis 1:11-12). Therefore, you expect to plant corn and reap corn. You would not expect to plant corn and reap tomatoes.

Now, suppose that we were to preserve corn seed planted in Tyler County, West Virginia, this spring – and plant it in Africa 2,000 years from now. If the climate and soil conditions were right, what would it produce? Quite simply, it would produce the same kind of corn which was harvested in West Virginia in the fall! In the same way, whenever the original seed of God’s word is planted in honest and good hearts in any community and in any age, it will produce Christians identical with those we read about in the New Testament!

In the same way, New Testament Christianity is dedicated to accomplishing this purpose of holding fast to the pattern of sound (uncorrupt) words contained within the message of the New Testament!

### **One faith and one church**

We have already established that there is only one faith and one church (Ephesians 4:4-6). God’s word reveals exactly what God wants us to believe, teach to others, and practice in His name. There is nothing that we need to know that God has not revealed to us. For instance, 2 Peter 1:3 says that God’s “divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness.”

Therefore, if you want to believe, teach, and practice what God approves, you must believe, teach, and practice exactly what the Bible instructs. You must do everything according to Bible authority. Colossians 3:17 says, “And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him” (Note that to do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus is to do everything by His authority). If there is no Bible

authority for a teaching or a practice, determine to stay away from it! Always consider, “If I had lived during New Testament times, would I have been taught ‘this’ by the apostles? Would the apostles have taught the church to be involved in ‘this’?”

Those who are obedient to this one faith are part of Jesus’ one body (church). You must be part of this one church established by Jesus Christ in order to be saved. You do that by being obedient to His plan of salvation (as identified earlier in this lesson). Then, when you join a local church, you should join a church that believes, teaches, and practices exactly what you can read about in the pages of the New Testament!

## ***Conclusion***

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False religious teaching and practices abound in the world! These lessons have attempted to expose the religious error that is common today. We have only been able to specifically discuss a very, very small percentage of religious error. My primary objective has been to expose you to the Bible’s warnings about religious error so that you can realize the dangers and evaluate everything you believe, teach, and practice – by the things that are written in the Bible.

As we close this study, I invite you to evaluate whether the things I have taught in these lessons are according to the word of God. If they are not, do not listen to me. If they are, please make the necessary applications to your life so that you can live in a way that is approved of God and be saved eternally in Heaven!

# ***Study Questions***

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Would you (upon learning the truth that God’s word teaches) be willing to forsake the ways of religious error and stand in the truth – no matter what the consequences of standing in the truth were?

## **1. False Teachings About God**

Explain why the following teachings about God are false.

A. “God is a loving God who will not condemn anyone to Hell” –

B. “Jesus is not God” –

## **2. False Teachings About Salvation**

Explain why the following teachings about salvation are false.

A. “All morally good, religious people will be saved” –

B. “All you have to do is believe in Jesus” –

C. “You are once saved, always saved” –

## **3. False Teachings About Baptism**

Explain why the following teachings about baptism are false.

A. “You don’t have to be baptized to be saved” –

B. “Sprinkling and pouring are acceptable modes of baptism” –

## **4. False Teachings About The Church**

Explain why the following teachings about the church are false.

A. “Join the church of your own choice – since all roads lead to Heaven” –

B. “Church doctrine doesn’t matter” –

## **5. Choosing New Testament Christianity**

What is New Testament Christianity?

Has God told you exactly what He wants you to believe, teach, and practice? Explain.