

EXECUTED

TO SUPPRESS

HIS MESSAGE



Suppressing the Words of Christ

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Introduction

Have you ever wondered why the Jewish religious leaders had Jesus Christ executed?

- The Lord was not guilty of any crime;
- The Roman prefect Pontius Pilate personally examined Jesus and found no fault in Him;
- When Pilate discovered how Jesus was a Galilean who lived in the province of Galilee, he sent Him to the provincial governor Herod. But Herod also determined that Jesus had committed no crime, and sent Him back to Pilate;
- Then finally, Pilate decided to set the Lord free.

And this should have been the end of the story.

But the Jewish religious leaders stirred up a crowd of worshipers that appeared before Pilate, demanding that Jesus be crucified. Pilate was the appointed ruler over the Roman province of Judea (the area around Jerusalem). And since the Romans were quite intolerant of civil unrest, Pilate's primary concern was to gain control over this crowd of riotous Jews. So after much consideration, he granted the crowd's wish that Jesus be crucified, even though our Lord had done nothing wrong.

Why the Jews Wanted Jesus Killed

Many Christians can repeat the above story from memory. But after 50 years of being a Christian, I've known few whom were able to explain precisely "why" the Jewish religious leaders wanted Jesus killed.

So let's examine that reason.

After performing many miracles and even raising Lazarus from the dead, Jesus had acquired a large following. But the Lord's teachings were unique. For example, Jesus told people that God does not allow human beings to exercise spiritual authority over His people. Then Jesus announced how He is God's only spiritual teacher, guide and leader — and that worshipers must follow Him, rather than human religious

leaders. And finally, the Lord publicly condemned the religious authorities for demanding money from God's people.

Of course, modern church-attending Christians never hear about our Lord's prohibitions against spiritual teachers exercising authority over God's people. Neither do they hear the Scriptures where Jesus condemns those who accept money for sharing the gospel. And why? Because just like the ancient rabbis, Christian preachers suppress many of our Lord's teachings, so they can claim spiritual authority over Christians, then order them to pay financial offerings and tithes.

And this suppression of our Lord's teachings is not limited to the subjects of ministerial authority and the use of money within the church. In order to encourage church attendance and create a dependence upon institutionalized religion, church leaders routinely withhold or modify many other biblical teachings. And this is why most Christians have no knowledge of what the Bible teaches about the salvation of humanity, eternal life and the destiny of Christ's Church.

The Suppression of Christ's Teachings

As an introductory example of how institutionalized Christianity suppresses the teachings of Christ, let's review a few of our Lord's teachings that are almost never heard from church pulpits.

Subject: Eternal Life

Most pastors teach that everyone has eternal life — and that salvation only determines whether one goes to Heaven or Hell. But let's compare this common teaching with what Jesus said:

“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand” (John 10:27-28).

“He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him” (John 3:36).

Our Lord was quite clear on this subject: God will not grant His gift of eternal life, unless one is saved by Jesus Christ.

Subject: How People Are Saved

Many churches teach that God will grant salvation if one follows the following steps: hear the gospel, accept Christ, repent of your sins, and then be baptized. But here again, Jesus disagrees:

No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day (John 6:44).

And He was saying, "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father" (John 6:65).

Contrary to the doctrines of most churches, hearing the gospel and accepting Christ will save no one, unless God the Father has granted that person a relationship with their Savior.

Subject: What Jesus Expects of Christians

Most pastors teach that Jesus wants Christians to believe that He exists, to accept Him as Lord and Savior, repent of their sins, and then regularly attend church. But something vital is missing from this formula:

So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "*If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free*" (John 8:31-32).

According to Christ, those who call themselves "Christians" are not truly His disciples, until they set their will to learn and follow His commandments and teachings.

Subject: Destiny of the Church

Many pastors teach that God has a kingdom, and the saved will be allowed to dwell forever in that kingdom. But notice what Jesus revealed about the Church and God's Kingdom:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, *for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*

(Matthew 5:3).

All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right, "Come, you who are blessed of My Father, *inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*" (Matthew 25:32-34).

Do not be afraid, little flock (Christ's Church), *for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom* (Luke 12:32).

According to Jesus, those called into His Church will not just dwell in the Kingdom of God – they are destined to take possession of and actually own God's Kingdom!

Subject: Who Should Teach Doctrine

Every Christian church claims that Jesus raised up a specially-called ministry to teach and lead His Church. But here again, Jesus disagrees:

But do not be called Rabbi; for one is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. Do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ (Matthew 23:8-10).

Contrary to the teachings of most churches, a Christian's one and only spiritual teacher and leader is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Subject: Paid Preachers

In today's world, almost all pastors and preachers receive a salary. But here again, Jesus revealed a fundamental problem with paying preachers:

I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. *He flees*

because he is a hired hand (Greek: salaried employee) and is not concerned about the sheep (John 10:11-13).

No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. *You cannot serve God and money* (Luke 16:13 — ESV, where Jesus was addressing His apostles).

Contrary to the practices established by modern Christian churches, Jesus condemned preachers who accept money for sharing His gospel.

With the above-quoted statements, Jesus outlined some of the most fundamental doctrines of Christianity:

- Eternal life
- How people are saved
- What God asks of Christians
- The destiny of the Church
- Who should teach Christian doctrine
- Paying those who share the gospel

And yet, even though you may have attended Christian churches for many decades, you've probably never heard any of these doctrines at church.

Prove It Yourself

By conducting a simple experiment, you can personally observe how churches withhold much of what Jesus taught.

Try this: listen to ten sermons from one or more churches. Then as you hear each sermon, write down all the Scripture references, keeping a running total for each of the following categories: 1) Scriptures quoting the words of Jesus; 2) Scriptures quoting the words of the apostles and disciples; 3) Old Testament Scriptures.

After you have finished your experiment, you will notice that as a general

rule, less than 20% of the total Scripture references will contain the words of Jesus Christ.

And this should get your attention. Why?

Because the New Covenant gospel message did not originate with the Old Testament prophets; neither did it start with the apostles and disciples. Instead, God's New Covenant message originated with God the Father, who gave it exclusively to His only begotten Son, to share with humankind ([John 7:16](#)).

Christianity is all about Jesus Christ — and His message.

Author's Results

What follows are the results of my own experiment, obtained by listening to 52 sermons preached by five nationally-broadcast radio pastors and six local church pastors:

- Number of sermons: 52
- Total biblical passages: 153
- Hours of preaching: 39
- Passages containing the words of Christ: 20
- Ratio of passages quoting Christ to other passages: 1 in 8
- Average number of sermons for one Jesus Quotation: 2.6
- Percent of passages quoting Christ: 13.1%

Summary: Throughout 39 hours of preaching that equate to a full year of weekly church sermons, there were only twenty Scripture quotations containing the words of Jesus Christ.

Now let's focus on what we should learn from these statistics. In John 5:24, Jesus summarized the path to salvation as follows:

Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but

has passed out of death into life.

Human beings escape God's judgment and pass from death into eternal life by hearing and believing the words of Jesus Christ. And therefore as Christians, our highest spiritual priority should be that of learning the teachings of our Lord and Savior.

Think About This

If your church shares the words of Christ according to the statistics shown above (2.6 sermons for each quotation) — and your preacher is careful to share three new verses containing Jesus' words with every quotation — you will have to sit through 1,768 weekly sermons for a period of 34 years before you hear all of our Lord's teachings.

Are you willing to wait that long?

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Why Preachers Do Not Share Christ's Words

According to biblical scholars, the Bible contains over 31,000 words spoken by Jesus Christ. So there's no shortage of our Lord's teachings to share in sermons. So why don't modern preachers simply reverse the numbers, with 80% of their Scriptures quoting Jesus, and the remaining 20% from all the other biblical sources? In other words, why don't preachers use Jesus as their primary source of spiritual information?

And here's the surprising and carefully concealed answer: *All too often, the words of Jesus Christ contradict the doctrines and creeds of Christian churches!*

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## 1 — Sources of Information

In Matthew 26:18, Jesus called His followers “disciples.” And here the New Testament Greek means *pupil* or *learner*. And then in [John 8:31-32](#), our Lord declared that Christians are not “truly” His disciples, unless they are learning and following His words. Thus the issue of “where” we obtain our spiritual information is far more important than most Christians believe.

So let’s expand on the above statement by reading the views of six distinguished Christians, as they discuss church leaders who would dare to preach their own versions of the gospel, rather than the precise words of Jesus Christ.

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### The Apostle John On Christian Leaders

The apostle John wrote strong words against Christian leaders who preach their own variations of Christ’s gospel, along with those who consider such preachers their spiritual leaders:

*Anyone who goes too far [Greek: [becomes a leader<sup>100</sup>](#)] and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son (II John 1:9).*

John wrote how even in His day, Christian preachers were turning their backs to Christ’s teachings in order to promote their own versions of Christianity. And notice how the Bible translators rendered the Greek stating “becomes a leader” as “goes too far” – a change that reveals how the translators were trying to hide the fact that John was condemning self-appointed preachers.

John then went on to caution those who might consider following such people:

*If anyone comes to you and does not bring this (Christ’s) teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds (II John 1:10-11).*

The apostle John was *very* concerned about “where” his brothers and sisters were getting their spiritual information.

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John also explained how spiritual leaders share a dishonest message, when they suggest that Christians require “specially trained” preachers to understand the gospel:

These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you. As for you, the anointing (the Holy Spirit) which you received from Him abides in you, *and you have no need for anyone to teach you*; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him (Christ) (I John 2:26-27).

According to the apostle John, with the words of Jesus Christ and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Christians will learn everything they need for salvation and entrance into God’s Kingdom.

*Professional preachers are not required.*

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### The Apostle Paul On Christian Leaders

The apostle Paul also wrote about Christian leaders who would purposely preach their own variations of the gospel:

I know that after my departure *savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse [Greek: perverted, distorted, made crooked] things, to draw away the disciples after them* (Acts 20:29-30).

Just like John, Paul understood how the future would bring preachers whom would distort our Lord’s gospel, so they could gather a following to themselves. And even though Paul labeled such preachers “savage wolves,” he predicted how God’s people would actually view these preachers as “apostles” of Christ:

*For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. No wonder, for even Satan*

disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds (II Corinthians 11:13-15).

But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes and proclaims *another Jesus* than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a *different spirit* from the one you received, or if you accept a *different gospel* from the one you accepted (from the original apostles), you put up with it readily enough (II Corinthians 11:3-4 — ESV).

According to Paul, those who suppress and misrepresent our Lord's teachings present an extraordinary danger to Christians.

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### The Apostle Peter On Christian Leaders

The apostle Peter wrote about Christian teachers in II Peter 2:1-2 (KJV):

But there were false prophets also among the people, *even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily [Greek: secretly] shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying [Greek: contradicting] the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.*

Just like Paul, Peter warned how false preachers would come out from among Christian fellowships. Then he went on to describe how such people would actually speak evil of God's truth.

*Even back in the earliest years of Christianity, worshipers were sitting in their assemblies believing they were hearing the gospel, as their preachers spoke against the teachings of Jesus Christ.*

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### The Disciple Jude On Christian Leaders

The disciple Jude (a brother of Jesus) also worried about Christian leaders who were promoting false teachings:

Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints. *For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny [Greek: contradict, disavow, reject] our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ (Jude 1:3-4).*

As early as 60-80 CE when Jude probably wrote this epistle, preachers were sneaking into Christian fellowships to share private gospels that contradicted the teachings of Christ.

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### The Apostle James on Christian Teachers

The apostle James also addressed those who considered themselves Christian teachers:

Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment. For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well (James 3:1-2).

So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; *the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body ...* (James 3:5-6).

With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing My brethren, these things ought not to be this way (James 3:9-10).

Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. For where

jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing (James 3:13-16).

James wrote about those who were boasting to be Christian teachers, while they defiled Christian congregations by speaking with tongues like flames of fire. Overcome by selfish ambition, these self-appointed preachers had turned aside from God's ways of kindness and love to embrace teachings laced with bitterness, ambition and jealousy. Their preaching actually pronounced curses on other Christians. And worst of all, James said these people were inspired by demons.

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### Jesus Christ on Christian Leaders

After taking His disciples up to a high mountain, the Lord shared some important instruction about Christian teachers:

*Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves (Matthew 7:15).*

Jesus cautioned His followers to beware of preachers who look and sound like legitimate disciples; while in actuality, they are ravenous spiritual wolves in disguise. And here the Greek translated into the phrase "ravenous spiritual wolves means "aggressively greedy for money."

Then a short time later, Jesus again called the disciples together for instruction and repeated a similar warning:

*Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves (Matthew 10:16).*

And this time, Jesus warned His followers to be "shrewd as serpents" when dealing with those who claim to be Christian preachers. And here the Greek is *fron'-ee-mos*, which means *thoughtful, wise and cautious*.

So contrary to today's practice where Christians pick a church based on the preacher's style, the music, the activities, or a friendly atmosphere — Jesus warned us to be "cautious and shrewd" about where we obtain our spiritual information.

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## Protection from Spiritual Wolves

In John 10, Jesus gave His brothers and sisters a strong and absolute defense against those who would pervert His gospel:

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; *and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand* (John 10:27-29).

Each and every Christian has an absolute promise of spiritual protection. But there are two prerequisites:

- Christ's sheep must listen to what Jesus said;
- Christians must believe and follow what Jesus commands them.

Yet today, few Christians ever take advantage of this promise.

And why?

Because even though God's people may spend a great deal of time on their knees telling God what they want from Him, *few open their Bibles in private study to learn what Jesus wants from them.*

### **Think About This**

Although Jesus and His apostles warned us to never trust human preachers, modern Christians usually prefer the teachings of church pastors and preachers over opening their Bibles and actually reading the words of Jesus Christ.

It seems that most Christians actually consider their pastors a better source of spiritual information than the Lord Jesus Christ!

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## Christians Must Be Careful

In the previously-quoted Scriptures, we saw how Jesus and His apostles warned how false preachers constantly battle for our spiritual allegiance. Therefore as Christians, it's important that we ask ourselves, "Who or what has the greatest influence on my spirituality?"

- The doctrines of my church?
- My pastor?
- My favorite televangelist?
- The writings of Christian authors?
- Christian radio programs?
- Or the words of Jesus Christ?

Unfortunately, few Christians have chosen to obtain their spiritual information from the teachings of Jesus, as recorded in the Bible. Just as Jesus said in John 5:43:

*I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, you will receive him.*

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### Modern Christianity: An Unhealthy Mixture of False Doctrines and Beliefs

Today's Christian religions, whether they be Baptist, Catholic, Methodist, Presbyterian, Adventist, Pentecostal, Evangelical or Mormon — are as different from one-another in doctrines and beliefs, as night is different from day. Nevertheless each Sunday (or Saturday), members of these various denominations happily attend their worship services, completely unaware of how Jesus and His apostles warned that their doctrinal differences are symptomatic of extraordinary spiritual danger.

And thus modern Christians present an amazing enigma: on the one hand they sing hymns and praise Jesus as the one who provides the divine miracle-working powers of repentance, salvation, and eternal life. While on the other hand, they place their trust in the teachings of human preachers and writers, rather than the words of their Lord and Savior.

*But to understand “why” modern Christians have so little interest in the words of Jesus, we need to go back to the beginning of Christianity — to the time when Jesus turned the Old Testament religious world upside-down.*

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2 — Christianity Attacked

Approximately 2,000 years ago, the Roman government executed the Lord and Savior of New Testament Christianity. And at the time of this execution, two criminals were crucified alongside Jesus. Both of these men were guilty of violations of Roman law; yet the authorities never found Jesus guilty of anything.

So why was Jesus executed?

Many Christians will answer by stating that Jesus had to die for the sins of humanity. And certainly this is true. However, this answer evades the real question:

Why did the Roman Empire sanction executing Jesus?

Shortly before our Lord's execution, the Old Testament high priest declared, "It is expedient that one man should die for the people." Then somewhat later, the religious authorities had Jesus arrested and brought before their Council. Accusations were made. False witnesses gave testimony. But only one accusation was found factual: Jesus admitted to being the Messiah. And for this reason alone, the Council declared Jesus worthy of death.

After their death sentence, the religious officials brought Jesus before the Roman governor Pontius Pilate, where they made a case for His execution. But Pilate found no fault in Jesus. In fact, the governor tried to set Jesus free.

But the Jewish authorities had stirred up crowds of worshipers demanding Jesus' death. And when Pilate realized his efforts to free Jesus were fueling a potential riot, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowds saying, "I am innocent of this Man's blood; see to that yourselves."

So again: *Why* was Jesus executed?

The apostle John recorded the answer, when he described a meeting between the chief priests and the Pharisees:

If we let Him go on like this, all men will believe in Him, *and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.* (John 11:48).

Jesus threatened the positions and authority of the Jewish religious leaders. And as we shall shortly see, He threatened their source of political power and financial wealth.

Jesus Threatens Institutionalized Religion

Decades before, the Romans had granted the Jewish Sanhedrin great authority over the civil government, except for the power to execute criminals. And under the umbrella of the Sanhedrin, these religious leaders exercised almost total control over God's worshipers – especially since they were backed by Jerusalem's civil rulers and judges (the Sanhedrin), which in turn were supported by the Roman Empire.

And what the religious leaders wanted most was political power over the people — and money.

So along comes Jesus, preaching that God does not allow human beings to exercise spiritual authority over His people. Then the Lord announces that He is God's *only* spiritual teacher, guide and leader — and that all worshipers must follow Him rather than human religious leaders. And finally, Jesus had the audacity to declare it immoral for religious leaders to accept money from God's people.

And if these teachings of Jesus were allowed to persist, they would have literally dismantled the 1st Century Old Covenant religions. So the Jewish authorities had Jesus executed, because maintaining the status of their religious institutions was more important than following the commandments of their prophesied Messiah¹⁰¹.

The Teachings of Jesus Suppressed

Unfortunately for the Jewish religious leaders, our Messiah's teachings continued on through the words of His disciples. Christ's execution did not stop His followers from sharing what He taught, and the knowledge of

our Lord's prohibitions against money and human leaders continued to spread.

Those who desired wealth and prestige through the power of religion needed another solution.

And so within a few decades of Christ's death, we find the disciples documenting a new kind of Christian preacher: one cut from the same cloth as the ancient Rabbis. The Bible tells us that just like the Rabbis, these new "Christian" preachers desired preeminence over God's people ([III John 1:9-11](#)) and monetary payments for their services ([Jude 11](#)). And just like the Rabbis, they justified their self-appointed authority and demands for money by contradicting the words of Jesus ([I John 2:19-23](#)).

Years later, history would record how these false preachers collaborated with civil authorities to create money-funded church institutions that suppressed most of what Jesus taught, in order to construct a "revised" Christianity based upon humanly-derived church authority.

By suppressing the teachings of Jesus and promoting doctrines derived through human imagination, self-appointed preachers were able to exercise authority over God's people — and even more importantly, extract money from them.

And now after 2,000 years of promoting theologies and doctrines created by human institutions, Christianity has become a money-driven religion fundamentally at odds with the teachings of Jesus Christ. By suppressing Christ's words and promoting doctrines He never taught, institutionalized religions have grown their memberships and harvested vast sums of financial resources — but at the cost of hiding our God of infinite love and forgiveness, and replacing Him with a fictional god of judgment, harshness, and punishment.

Think About This

Just like the 1st Century religions Jesus condemned, modern Christian institutions constantly remind worshipers of how God *requires their money* in order to carry out His work.

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The Theme of This Book

This book explains why the teachings of Jesus Christ were a threat to 1st Century religions — and our Lord's teachings remain a threat to institutionalized Christianity today.

This first volume documents how religious institutions suppressed our Lord's teachings in order to promote the false doctrine of ministerial authority, so they could justify demanding money from God's people. Subsequent volumes will reveal other suppressed doctrines, along with exposing organized Christianity's efforts to hide a loving, merciful and sacrificing God — a God who loves His enemies, blesses those who hate Him, and is busy trying to usher every human being into His Eternal Kingdom.

An appalling and horrible thing Has happened in the land: The prophets prophesy falsely, And the priests rule on their own authority ...

And My people love it so! (Jeremiah 5:30-31).

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### 3 — Follow the Money

“Follow the money.”

This catchphrase was popularized by the 1976 motion picture *All The President's Men*. It suggested that by following the flow of money, one can discover corruption in high office.

But few people realize that Jesus did this very thing. During His ministry, one of the Lord's primary missions was to expose widespread corruption throughout the Jewish Temple leadership, which was stealing vast amounts of money from God's people.

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The gospel of John explains how Jesus began His ministry after being baptized and receiving the Holy Spirit. Then after His baptism, our Lord's ministry took a surprising turn: while attending the Passover festival, Jesus had a monumental confrontation with the Temple religious officials.

During their yearly festivals, millions of Israelites presented themselves at the Jerusalem Temple to offer sacrifices. But instead of serving and supporting God's people, the Temple officials used these celebrations as opportunities to extract large sums of money from worshipers. Through the selling of animals, incense, flour and other items worshipers required for their sacrifices, the officials reaped immense monetary profits. And when the officials exchanged foreign currencies for those who traveled from remote areas, they placed large surcharges on the transactions. They also imposed a recurring tax on worshipers.

And the officials had far less honorable methods by which they extracted money from God's people. In [Mark 7:8-13](#), Jesus mentions one of the worst when He described the rabbinical practice of commanding worshipers to turn over money they had saved to care for their elderly parents.

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A Place of Business

So as Jesus began this first phase of His ministry, He entered the Temple grounds and emphatically accused the scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees of violating God's precepts by making the Temple "a place of business" ([John 2:16](#)). Jesus knew the Old Testament condemned religious leaders, priests and prophets who received money for their duties ([Micah 3:5-11](#)). And He knew how the prophets commanded that God's truth must be shared freely, without any monetary cost to worshipers ([Isaiah 55:1](#), [Isaiah 52:3](#), & [Proverbs 23:23](#)).

So using a whip, Jesus drove out the money changers and those who were selling oxen, sheep and doves. Then He poured out the money changer's coins and overturned their tables ([John 2:13-15](#)).

*As Jesus began His ministry, the first issue He addressed was Old Covenant monetary practices.*

The Jewish historian Josephus documented how over three million worshipers attended the Passover festival. And the Temple officials required most of these people to pay money for the privilege of worshiping and sacrificing to God. Historians would later record how at the time the Romans destroyed the Temple in 70 CE, the religious authorities had accumulated over 50 tons of gold, silver and other treasures within the Temple compound. And the Temple leadership extracted all this money and treasure from God's worshipers dishonestly, through the use of practices explicitly prohibited by God's prophets.

### **Think About This**

The phrase "sweet deal" is American slang for a very good business arrangement. And the 1st Century religious leaders had one of the sweetest deals ever conceived by humans: they collected unheard of sums of currency and treasures from God's people, by claiming they were God's personal representatives ...

Until Jesus came along.

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### **Thieves and Robbers**

But Jesus had a lot more to say to these dishonest officials. He continued on by discussing how those who desire to lead God's people have a habit

of calling themselves “shepherds,” similar to how [Psalm 23:1](#) refers to the Lord as the Shepherd of God’s people. So starting with John 9:41 which introduces Chapter 10, Jesus condemned the religious authorities on this matter. Especially notice John 10:7-10:

So Jesus said to them again, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. *All who came before Me are thieves and robbers*, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly*” (also see [Jeremiah 12:10](#), [Jeremiah 23:1](#), [Ezekiel 34:2](#) & [Ezekiel 34:8](#)).

Jesus voiced these statements directly to the Pharisees, declaring that “all” who had granted themselves spiritual authority over God’s people (which included the scribes, Sadducees, Pharisees and religious elders) were nothing but common criminals who wanted to steal and destroy.

*And this shook the very foundation of 1<sup>st</sup> Century religion!*

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But Jesus was not yet finished. He continued on with more denunciations against the religious leadership:

I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. He who is a *hired hand*, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. *He flees because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep* (John 10:11-13).

With the above statements, Jesus directly attacked the 1<sup>st</sup> Century practice of religious leaders accepting money for their services — also observing how these leaders took control of sheep that belonged to someone else (Christ). Jesus also explained how these spiritual “hired hands” had no legitimate interest in the welfare of His sheep: they were only interested in acquiring money.

Then Jesus added the scribes to His criticisms:

Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and

love respectful greetings in the market places, and chief seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets, *who devour widows' houses*, and for appearance's sake offer long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation (Luke 20:46-47).

The Lord held nothing back from these people. The scribes were “honor seekers” who possessed little humility. They loved to exercise authority over their brethren, then used that authority to steal homes from elderly widows. And while they acted the part of being religious, their real objective was to acquire power, prestige and financial gain.

*And this time, Jesus voiced His condemnations directly to the crowds of Temple worshipers.*

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On another occasion when Jesus spoke before the crowds, He addressed the hypocrisy of Temple leaders. The apostle Matthew related what Jesus said:

They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger. *But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men;* for they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels of their garments. They love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues, and respectful greetings in the market places, and being called Rabbi by men. (Matthew 23:4-7).

Woe to you, *blind guides*, who say, 'Whoever swears by the temple, that is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple is obligated.' *You fools and blind men!* Which is more important, the gold or the temple that sanctified the gold? (Matthew 23:16-17).

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, *hypocrites!* For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, *but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence* (Matthew 23:25).

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! *For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.* So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are

full of hypocrisy and lawlessness (Matthew 23:27-28).

### **Think About This**

In John 10:16 Jesus said to the Pharisees: “I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd.” Thus Jesus condemned the 1<sup>st</sup> Century religious leaders for claiming His title of spiritual “Shepherd,” so they could demand prestige and money from God’s people.

And yet in spite of what Jesus said, modern preachers have continued to use the title “shepherd.” Open any Bible concordance and you will discover how the biblical word “pastor” is derived from the Greek word ποιμήν, which precisely means “shepherd” — the singular title Jesus clearly and specifically reserved to Himself. And in exactly the same manner as the 1<sup>st</sup> Century spiritual leaders Jesus condemned, modern-day preachers are paid as salaried employees (hirelings).

Nevertheless, the average Christian seems quite comfortable with these human shepherds supplying their spiritual knowledge and leading their moral lives — even though many of them have accumulated multiple millions of dollars of personal wealth from God’s people, just like the 1<sup>st</sup> Century religious leaders Jesus condemned.

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4 — Preachers Have No Authority

After discussing these monetary and personal character issues with the Jews, Jesus went on to address another matter: the 1st Century religious officials were exercising authority they did not have. And once again, Jesus voiced His criticisms before crowds of worshipers:

But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. Do not be called leaders; *for One is your Leader, that is, Christ* (Matthew 23:8-10).

Talk about stirring the proverbial pot!

Let's review what Jesus said:

Point 1: Jesus condemned the practice of God's people calling their religious leaders "Rabbi." In the Hebrew language, this term means "my master" or "my teacher." And according to Jesus, God's people should never use this title when addressing human beings¹¹⁴.

Which was bad news for the wealthy rabbis.

Jesus went on to explain His reasoning: "... for One (Jesus Christ) is your Teacher, and you are all brothers." Thus according to our Lord and Savior, God's people have co-equal status as spiritual relatives, which prohibits them from exercising spiritual authority over their brothers and sisters.

And this removed the rabbis' authority.

Point 2: Jesus condemned the common practice of worshipers calling certain people their spiritual "Father." Some biblical scholars believe Jesus was referring to the Sanhedrin, which was a council of seventy-one Jewish sages who constituted the Judean supreme court and legislative body during the Roman period. Presiding over the Sanhedrin was a prince who sat in the midst of two rows of senators or elders. On this prince's right hand sat a person termed *ab-beth-din*, which meant "father" of the Sanhedrin. Thus Jesus condemned the concept that God's government has some kind of human "second in command." Instead, our Lord taught that only He is in charge, while

perfect equality must exist between all of God's worshipers.

Which was more bad news for the rabbis.

Point 3: Jesus prohibited the practice of worshipers calling another human being their spiritual "leader." Here the Greek is *kath-ayg-ay-tace'*, which specifically means *guide* or *teacher*. And so once again, Jesus made it clear that He is the only source of spiritual guidance, leadership and teachings for God's people.

And this was a lot more than just bad news for the Rabbis, for here Jesus told God's worshipers they should fire their spiritual leaders!

Think About This

Jesus made it clear that He is the only spiritual leader and teacher of God's people. Furthermore, the Lord commanded His followers to never call a human being their spiritual father, teacher or leader.

So why don't Christians obey what Jesus said?

Jesus Threatened Organized Religion

So visualize the situation: the Temple leadership was doing just fine, making obscene profits, and acquiring power and personal wealth that vastly increased their standard of living. But then this Jesus character begins preaching to the crowds, challenging the leadership's authority, and labeling them common criminals. The religious officials were accustomed to receiving respect and honor from worshipers. But the miracle-working Jesus openly disapproved of their behavior. And worst of all, Jesus condemned the practice of accepting money and other treasures from God's people.

The leadership's "sweet deal" was in great jeopardy!

So the Temple authorities assembled together and discussed how to solve their Jesus problem:

Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, "What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs. *If we let Him go on like this, all men will believe in Him,*

and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation” (John 11:47-48).

Clearly, Jesus had frightened the religious authorities. And if the crowds of worshipers actually believed what Jesus was saying, the scribes, Sadducees, Pharisees and elders would soon be out of a job.

Then later near the end of His ministry, Jesus again marched into the Temple and cast out those who were buying and selling, turned over the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves, then prevented the Temple staff from carrying vessels of sacrificial products such as wine, oil, and incense ([Matthew 21:12-13](#), [Mark 11:15-17](#), & [Luke 19:45-46](#)).

And once Jesus was inside the Temple compound, He accused the religious leaders of making God’s Temple a “robbers den!”

Time to Get Rid of Jesus!

Sometime earlier, Jesus had ignored Jewish traditions by allowing His disciples to gather food on the Sabbath. And since that time, the religious leaders had plotted how they might destroy Him ([Matthew 12:14](#)). And now that Jesus was criticizing the spiritual leadership in front of thousands of Temple worshipers, that time had come.

Suddenly, the Temple authorities grasped the magnitude of their problem: Jesus was going around calling Himself the God of the Old Covenant, performing genuine miracles, and negating the leadership’s authority. But worst of all, the Lord publicly condemned the Temple “money machine” that provided the religious leaders with a life of luxury, great treasures and political power.

The leadership’s lifestyle was in grave danger. So they assembled together and agreed to take immediate action:

*Then the chief priests and the elders of the people were gathered together in the court of the high priest, named Caiaphas; **and they plotted together to seize Jesus by stealth and kill Him** (Matthew 26:3-4).*

The Temple authorities had to put a stop to the Lord’s condemnation of

their unholy behavior. If the power and money were to keep flowing, they felt they had no choice but to *suppress* what Jesus was saying.

Jesus would be executed to protect the religious establishment.

Think About This

The Jewish religious leaders had Jesus murdered, in order to suppress His prohibitions against human spiritual authority and the use of money within God's religion.

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## **5 — If it Looks Like a Duck**

Well-known physician and author Robin Cook wrote, “If it looks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it’s a duck!” Dr. Cook reminded us how we often can determine what something is through its outward appearance and behavior. And we can do the same with religion.

Around 1950 BCE, God revealed His religion to the patriarch Abraham. Then approximately 2,000 years later, Jesus walked into the Temple and condemned 1<sup>st</sup> Century religious practices. But now Christianity has been around for about the same period of time. And what do we find after 2,000 years of human management over the New Covenant? The very same problems Jesus identified within the Old Covenant religions.

Here is the evidence:

1) Even though Jesus explained how His “single” church has only one Shepherd ([John 10:16](#)) and one Christian Teacher and Leader ([Matthew 23:8-10](#)), institutionalized Christianity has replaced God’s spiritual Teacher and Leader with multiple instances of church systems, with each having their own hierarchical arrangement of humanly-ordained shepherd-teachers (Remember: the New Testament Greek translated into the English “pastor” means *shepherd*).

2) In the same manner as the 1<sup>st</sup> Century scribes, Sadducees, and Pharisees, modern Christian leaders expect honor and prestige from worshipers. Ministers prefer to be addressed as mister, pastor, reverend or father — with some even wearing special clothing like the religious leaders of Jesus’ day. Lay brethren look up to their ministers. Pastors retain a reserved space in the parking lot and a special seat in the meeting hall, with some handed a cup of coffee as they arrive at church. Christians do not view their preachers as ordinary and spiritually equal brothers and sisters.

3) Christian leaders have declared authority over Christ’s religion in exactly the same manner as the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Temple leaders. Modern Christian ministries establish doctrine, determine who gets baptized, and even decide who can get married. This was precisely the kind of authority claimed by 1<sup>st</sup> Century religious leaders — the same kind of authority

Jesus condemned.

4) Almost every Christian congregation passes an offering basket at services, with many commanding their members to tithe ten percent of their gross income. So just like the ancient 1<sup>st</sup> Century religions, modern ministries extract vast sums of money from God's people by claiming they are God's personal representatives.

5) In an exact mirror-image of the practices condemned by Jesus, many Christian churches violate [Proverbs 13:22](#) by suggesting that members should will their estates to the church, instead of passing their wealth on to children and grandchildren.

In virtually every area of modern Christian worship, churches and their self-appointed leaders have declared authority over God's people. And this is a huge problem, because Jesus said these spiritual leaders should not even exist!

*“Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?”*

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### Modern Christian Fellowship

Today's Christian fellowship is nothing like the simple home meetings of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Church. Modern fellowship takes place in expensive complexes of dedicated meeting halls and auditoriums, with larger institutions incorporating classrooms, kitchens and administrative offices. Even small churches are staffed with full-time pastors and administrative assistants; while larger denominational congregations hire accountants, engineers, audio-visual technicians, researchers, attorneys, computer programmers, and clerical personnel.

A typical senior pastor receives a full-time median salary of \$100,891 a year (reference: Salary.com “Pastor Salary in the United States,” dated 12/3/21”). Pastors and other church staff are provided with pension plans, health insurance, home subsidies, automobiles, paid vacations and holidays, expense accounts, reimbursements for continuing education, and travel/moving expenses. While many churches carry out national and world-wide evangelical campaigns through television, radio and printed media — efforts that demand vast sums of money.

So it's not unusual for a medium-sized congregation to extract over a million dollars a year from its members; while larger denominational institutions receive tithes and offerings in the billions of dollars, with all of this revenue taken from God's worshipers in direct contradiction to the instructions of Jesus Christ!

Proverbs 23:23 instructs us: "Buy truth, and do **not** sell it." And this proverb profoundly accurate, when it predicted how Christians would have to pay for God's truth, while condemning those who demand money for preaching.

With collective yearly incomes in the hundreds-of-billions of dollars, modern Christian churches have brought new meaning to the phrase "Sweet Deal."

### **Think About This**

Institutional Christianity incorporates the same hierarchical ministerial structure used by the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Temple religions Jesus condemned. So instead of the "one church" raised up by Jesus Christ, there now exists tens-of-thousands of church denominations, each having their own unique set of doctrines and beliefs. And just like the disobedient spiritual leaders of Jesus' day, modern Christian preachers routinely assume the Lord's title by calling themselves "pastor," an old-English word that specifically means "shepherd."

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6 — Another Gospel Introduced

For 1st Century Jewish religious authorities that desired power and money gained through ruling over God's people, it was not enough that Jesus had been executed. These spiritual authorities also had to suppress our Lord's teachings about money and corrupt religious leaders.

So less than 30 years after our Savior's death, we find the Biblical writers documenting how preachers were introducing a new and different gospel — one that emphasized church organizations and especially their leaders, rather than Jesus Christ and His teachings:

I am amazed that you (Christians) are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, *for a different gospel*; which is really not another (it was not good news); only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ (Galatians 1:6-7).

For if one comes and preaches *another Jesus* whom we have not preached, or you receive a *different spirit* which you have not received, or a *different gospel* which you have not accepted (from the original apostles), you bear this beautifully (II Corinthians 11:4).

Before the religion of Jesus Christ was even fifty years old, the suppression of His gospel was well under way.

Evidence of a Changed Gospel

Have you ever wondered what made Christ's message so compelling? As Jesus traveled and met people, He challenged them to follow Him. Some listeners literally dropped what they were doing, left their homes and jobs, and immediately went off to be His disciples (students).

Then after Jesus was crucified, His followers kept sharing His message, which continued to have a profound impact on the population. The apostle Peter preached just one sermon and 3,000 listeners were baptized and committed their lives to Christ.

What fascinating inspiration and power is found within the teachings of Jesus Christ!

Now compare the above to what happens today. We moderns live in a world literally peppered with hundreds of thousands of Christian churches, where each Sunday (or Saturday) worshipers attend their favorite Christian fellowship. Churches entertain with live music, video presentations and electronic stage lighting. The brethren hear announcements about numerous church activities, which is usually followed by a 30 to 45 minute sermon.

Baptisms are few, so pastors schedule these every few months when four, five, or six new converts are “ready” for baptism. Today we see none of the zeal of those who immediately dove into the water after hearing Peter’s sermon. Instead, modern conversion is a slow, structured process of hearing many sermons, reading church literature, counseling with pastors, and then coming to a point where the new convert makes the “hard decision” to repent and commit his or her life to Christ. 1st Century conversions were matters of instantaneous joy and great personal commitment; while today’s conversions often are long and difficult spiritual struggles.

Thus the evidence seems clear: Our modern “gospels” are not producing the same spiritual fruit as Christ’s 1st Century message. But why the difference? What happened to all that fascinating power and inspiration in Jesus’ gospel message?

Over the last 1,800 years, institutionalized Christianity has suppressed the most important and inspirational teachings of Jesus Christ, so it could substitute a humanly-derived gospel that emphasizes church organizations and their leaders, rather than Jesus Christ and His teachings.

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## 7 — A Conspiracy of Suppression

Once Christ's disciples realized how the religious authorities had engineered their Lord's execution, they migrated away from institutionalized Temple worship and began to assemble in their homes. The early Christians rejected Jewish traditions of self-appointed, salaried religious leaders, and followed their Lord's instruction that He alone is their spiritual guide and teacher.

And so we find the apostle Paul writing about fellowships where ordinary Christians were sharing inspired messages during their home assemblies:

What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. If anyone speaks in a tongue, it should be by two or at the most three, and each in turn, and one must interpret; but if there is no interpreter, he must keep silent in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God. Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment. But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, the first one must keep silent. *For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted* (I Corinthians 14:26-31).

Paul describes how people were interrupting sermon messages with questions and new ideas. And once a speaker finished his or her presentation, the fellowship held a group discussion to critique what the speaker said.

*Christ's new religion was very successful and rapidly gaining ground!*

But the enemies of Christ were not asleep. We already saw how the apostle Paul wrote about preachers who were promoting false gospels. And then just a few years later, we find the apostle John warning the brethren about "Christian" preachers whom were corrupting Christ's message with new ideas:

Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that Antichrist is coming, even now *many* antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were

not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; *but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us* (I John 2:18-19).

Certain people from within Christian fellowships were leaving (“they went out from us”). And there were many such people — not just a few. John referred to these people as “antichrists.” And here the Greek is *an-tee’-khris-tos*, meaning “one who opposes Christ.”

Let’s continue by reading what John wrote about these antichrists, noting some important points:

But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know. I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie is of the truth. *Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son.*

Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also. As for you, let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life. *These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you* (I John 2:20-26).

John makes four major points, as follows:

Point 1: Rather than the evil end-time prophet we hear about today, John wrote how antichrists (plural) were *false brethren* who were actively trying to deceive Christians into giving up what they already knew to be true (John is the only biblical writer who uses the term “antichrist”).

Point 2: The Greek translated into the English “denies” means *to contradict, disavow, reject*. So even though these antichrist people called themselves Christians, they contradicted and rejected what Jesus taught.

Point 3: John observed how those who confess the Son also have the Father. But here the Greek translated into the English “confesses” actually means *to be of one mind: to agree with*. Therefore genuine

Christians agree with what Jesus said; while antichrists disagree with and contradict our Savior.

Point 4: The brethren needed to get back to what they had heard in the beginning: the teachings of Jesus Christ.

### **Think About This**

Within just a few decades of Christ's death, Christians were hearing radically different "gospels" from those who claimed to be Christian teachers — gospels that openly contradicted the teachings of Christ. Moreover, church history would record how John's antichrists were just the first wave of many such self-appointed, power and money-hungry preachers.

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#### More Changes to New Covenant Doctrine

For almost 300 years after the death of Jesus, Christianity experienced varying levels of persecution. The infamous Nero targeted Christ's disciples and put many to death. While historians recorded how over 20,000 Christians were martyred during the reign of the Roman emperor Diocletian. Such persecution continued unabated until 313 CE, when the Roman emperor Constantine legalized Christianity.

Then with Constantine's "Trojan Horse" involvement in Christianity, the nature of the religion began to change. The Emperor took charge of religious issues and especially matters of doctrine. Constantine developed the concept of an "integrated" Church and State, known as Constantinism. This was a pivotal point in Christian history, because Constantine assigned the responsibility for establishing and approving Christian doctrine to agents of the Roman government.

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Let's review two examples of what was going on during this era. In 316 CE, a sect of Christians called Donatists asked Constantine to settle a dispute with a church in North Africa over the person-hood of Christ. Then in 325 CE, Constantine called together and presided over the Council of Nicaea, attended by over 300 government-sponsored

“bishops.” This Council dealt with what is known as the Arian Controversy, yet another segment of a continuing debate over Christ’s nature. Eventually, the Council issued an official statement affirming Jesus’ divinity by drafting the Creed of Nicaea — a predecessor to the Nicene Creed, which is the same creed used by numerous Christian denominations today.

So consider what had occurred in a period of less than 20 years:

- 1) Constantine’s new state-sponsored Christianity established an authoritative church hierarchy that never existed under Christ’s apostles.
- 2) As part of this new church hierarchy, a council of bishops, led by a worldly emperor, established most of the doctrines embraced by modern Christian churches today.

In less than 300 years, the religion known as “Christianity” had changed such that it would not be recognized by the apostles. Instead of a unified spiritual church meeting in homes to study and learn the teachings of their Lord and Savior, there now existed multiple state-sponsored denominations, with each promoting different and contradictory doctrines, established through the oversight of government-sponsored church officials.

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### The New “Worldly” Church

These newly-created denominations determined Christian doctrine through formal debating councils, attended by hundreds of government-approved “religious experts.” And these debates opened up highly-divisive controversies between God’s people. What follows are some of the more famous disagreements and their resulting denominational divisions:

- 1) In 431 CE, the Roman Emperor Theodosius II convened the Council of Ephesus over a doctrine called “Nestorianism.” This was yet another attempt to define the nature of Christ. The result was a large doctrinal division with many Christians leaving Constantine’s Catholic Church and forming the Assyrian Church.

2) In 451 CE, institutionalized Christianity convened the Council of Chalcedon, which continued discussions over the nature of Christ. This council marked a significant turning point in these debates, and led to a separation that produced the Western Roman Empire Church, along with a large defection to the Oriental Orthodox Church.

3) In the 11th Century, the Catholic Church experienced what is known as "The Great Schism," when the King of France decided he did not approve of the Italian Pope and elected one of his own. This prompted the Catholic Church to split into Eastern and Western divisions, with many brethren and their leaders leaving to form Eastern Orthodox Churches.

4) The 16th Century saw the Protestant Reformation. Various objections were made over abuses within the Catholic Church, the most famous posed by Martin Luther. Again there were disagreements over doctrine. And these fueled still more church splits, with the formation of new denominations such as Restoration, Anabaptism, Protestantism, and Anglicanism.

And similar doctrinal disagreements and church divisions would continue long into the future.

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8 — Modern Christianity: Built on Sand

Today we're approximately 400 years beyond the Protestant Reformation. And one would hope that by now, most of the issues relating to Christian doctrine would be resolved. But nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, throughout the last four hundred years, continued arguments and divisions over doctrine have literally exploded over the Christian landscape.

According to United Nations statistics, in Year 1989 there were over 23,000 "competing and often contradictory Christian denominations."¹⁰² And just 25 years later in 2014, the Pew Forum reported that the Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary reported 45,600 separate Christian denominations.

So the pattern is very clear: Christ's religion — which started out with one church, one Leader, and one set of doctrines — has divided into thousands of highly-divisive groups, each promoting and protecting their own doctrines, beliefs and administrative procedures, along with their respective financial assets and real estate properties.

Christian denominations have literally swept aside the teachings of Jesus Christ, to embrace the money-generating doctrines of human theologians.

Perhaps you remember what Jesus said in John 10:16:

I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear **My voice**; and they will become **one flock** with **one shepherd**.

This verse *should* cause those who attend any of today's thousands of Christian denominations to at least momentarily pause, and consider whether they are hearing the words of Jesus Christ from their church pulpits.

And yet no one seems to care.

So Christians continue to attend a church every Sunday (or Saturday),

praying they will hear God's truth – while in the same town, several other groups of Christians sit before their pastors, eager to hear their version of Christianity. And every week this happens in hundreds-of-thousands of churches, as church leaders preach doctrines based on their unique denominational beliefs, all created by elite committees, staffed by flawed human beings.

Think About This

The gospel and teachings of Jesus Christ have been swept aside, to make room for doctrines and teachings created by human institutions.

Breaking the Bonds of Suppressed Doctrine

The controversy surrounding Jesus' message was actually quite simple. In John 8:13, a group of Pharisees told Jesus:

“You are testifying about Yourself; Your testimony is not true.”

For the reasons already mentioned, 1st Century religious authorities chose to disbelieve what Jesus taught. And most lay worshipers agreed with their spiritual leaders, to the point that great crowds of them screamed that Pilate should crucify Jesus. Like the parents of the blind man Jesus healed ([John 9:18-22](#)), these people were more concerned about being put out of the Synagogue, than being obedient to their Messiah.

During the First Jewish–Roman War (66–73 CE), the Roman historian Tacitus numbered the Jerusalem population at 600,000 persons; while the Jewish historian Josephus estimated as many as 1,100,000 Jews died in the war. Josephus also wrote that during the yearly religious festivals — the very times when Jesus preached and turned over tables in the Temple — Jerusalem's population swelled to almost three million. But even though hundreds-of-thousands of people may have heard Jesus and His message, [Acts 1:15](#) tells us that shortly after His death, *only 120 people actually believed what Jesus said.*

Through the continuous repetition of false doctrine, God's worshipers were literally brainwashed into following their human leaders and religious institutions, as they turned their backs to the Creator of all that

exists.

Regarding these 1st Century worshipers and their leaders, Jesus said:

You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition (Mark 7:9).

And modern Christianity suffers from the same problem.

Restoring Belief in Jesus Christ

Therefore, it's long overdue that dedicated, well-meaning Christians should rediscover the pure teachings of Jesus Christ – straight from the Bible. So if you are not afraid to break with the crowd and learn what your Lord and Savior actually taught, then fasten your seat belt and continue reading.

In the next chapter, we will review Christ's prohibitions against preachers and congregations accepting money. Then after this doctrinal discussion, we will review a prophecy from the Book of Revelation, where Jesus' actually predicted how His disciples would turn aside from His commandments, preferring human spiritual leaders over their Lord and Savior.

Finally, we will close with a discussion of how modern Christians literally "miss the mark" of our Lord's calling, because they refuse to follow the Lord's instruction to make Him their only spiritual guide, teacher and leader.

Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock (Jesus Christ).

Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell — and great was its fall (Jesus Christ, Matthew 7:24-27).

Think About This

Modern Christianity has become dull and ineffective, because many of Christ's teachings are virtually unknown to Christians and potential converts. While some of the most inspirational teachings of Jesus Christ are never even heard in modern Christian churches.

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## 9 — Jesus Said “No” to Money

Christ’s apostles regularly traveled great distances in order to fellowship with disciples in their homes. Back in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century, there were no Christian church buildings; neither were there multiple denominations. And yet today, even the smallest of cities host numerous churches, with most having their own meeting hall serving hundreds and sometimes thousands of parishioners. Modern churches have worship centers, private meeting rooms, classrooms, administrative offices, kitchens, dining rooms, and even complete school facilities — holdings that were completely unknown to 1<sup>st</sup> Century Christians.

So what happened to make today’s Christian assemblies so different from 1<sup>st</sup> Century home fellowship?

*Christians decided to fund their religious practices with money.*



And many of today’s Christian churches indeed do demand a great deal of financial capital to support their varied operations. There are salaries to pay, employee health benefit and retirement plans, real estate mortgages, utility payments, building maintenance and landscaping costs, legal and insurance fees, along with publishing, advertising and electronic media costs. Thus it’s not uncommon for a medium-sized church to have a yearly budget exceeding a million dollars.

Now consider the numerous “mega-church” organizations. These host hundreds and sometimes thousands of satellite churches, with some establishing their own colleges to train their ministry. Structured like large corporations, these institutions have yearly incomes in the hundreds of millions of dollars, as they employ large staffs of ministerial and administrative personnel, along with full-time lawyers, accountants, telephone operators, computer programmers, media technicians, editorial staffs, college professors, and employees of various other occupations.



### Christianity’s Dramatic Change

Soon after the Temple leadership had Jesus executed, Christians began

to migrate away from Temple assemblies and embraced smaller fellowships in their homes. Thus in [Acts 2:46](#) and [Acts 5:42](#) we see early references to home-based assemblies. And then in [Acts 20:20](#), we find the apostle Paul teaching the brethren “house-to-house.”

Then in [I Corinthians 16:19](#), Christians are meeting in the home of Aquila and Priscilla; while in [Philemon 1:2](#), assemblies are taking place in the house of Apphia and Archippus. And over a decade later as the apostle John wrote his second epistle, the disciples still were assembling in their homes ([I John 1:10](#)).

*Following the instructions of their Lord and Savior, the early church rejected fellowship with the corrupt Old Covenant Temple religions and migrated to smaller home-based assemblies.*

But modern Christians have traveled an entirely different route, evolving their assemblies into large corporate entities. Using a business model that trades religious knowledge and fellowship in return for monetary offerings and tithes, today’s churches receive vast sums of financial capital, while holding assets valued in the millions (and sometimes even billions) of dollars.

*And even though this business model may seem logical in our day and age, Jesus plainly and pointedly prohibited His followers from operating His Church in this manner.*

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### The Church That Jesus Built

In Matthew 16:18 Jesus said, “I will build my church.” But it’s clear that our Lord did not raise up numerous competing Christian assemblies, all divided by differences in doctrine. Instead, Jesus created a single spiritual body of like-minded followers, all of whom believed and followed the specific doctrines He taught. And this is why in I Corinthians 1:12-13, the apostle Paul made this observation about Christians who were dividing into separate groups to follow various leaders:

Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, “I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ.” *Has Christ been divided?* Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you

baptized in the name of Paul?

Obviously, Paul did not want the disciples dividing into separate assemblies or churches, each led by a pastor preaching his or her own set of beliefs and doctrines. And this means that modern Christians must face this reality:

*Today's corporation-like Christian worship bears little resemblance to the humble, home-based fellowships established by the apostles and documented in the record of the New Testament.*

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### Money and the Church of Jesus Christ

Most Christians find it hard to accept that Jesus prohibited the practice of paying preachers. In fact, if you are reading about the Lord's prohibitions against money for the first time, you might be saying to yourself, "Well, how could preachers survive without monetary income? And how would they buy their food? And where would they live?" Yet strange as it may seem, Jesus and His apostles strictly prohibited the practice of collecting money for preaching the gospel.

As an introductory example, let's review Matthew 10:8-10, which records the instructions Jesus gave before He sent His apostles out to preach:

Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give. *Do not acquire gold, or silver, or copper for your money belts, or a bag for your journey, or even two coats, or sandals, or a staff; for the worker is worthy of his support [Greek: nourishment].*

According to Jesus, since the apostles had received God's truth freely, they had an obligation to freely share it with others. And did you notice how the translators slipped in the word "support" when the original Greek was "nourishment?"

Now look at how another disciple recorded this conversation in :3-4:

And He said to them, "Take nothing for your journey, neither a staff, nor a bag (for food), nor bread, *nor money*; and do not even have two tunics apiece. Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that city."

Clearly, Jesus prohibited His disciples from asking for, accepting and even carrying money. Furthermore, these men were not even allowed to carry a bag for their food! And even though the Lord declared the workman worthy of his nourishment, He specifically prohibited the disciples from accepting money to purchase that nourishment.

Now let's re-read verse 4:

*Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that city.*

Rather than going about and asking for money to pay for their living expenses, Jesus commanded the apostles to acquire their meals, housing, and other necessities from those to whom they preached.

*Jesus prohibited the practice of seeking or accepting financial reimbursement for sharing the gospel.*

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### Jesus Said “No” to Paid Preachers

Modern-day preachers often justify taking money from worshipers by quoting part of Luke 10:7, where Jesus said: “the laborer is worthy of his wages.” And indeed, the Greek word translated “wages” does mean *pay for service*. But such preachers always manage to leave out what Jesus said immediately before this statement. So let's look at this verse in its context:

*Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not keep moving from house to house.*

Clearly, the apostles' “wages” were food and drink — and Jesus made no mention of money.

Then somewhat later in His ministry, Jesus further explained His views about mixing money and service to God:

*No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money (Luke 16:13 — ESV).*

To Jesus, the problem with salaried preachers was simple: when one receives monetary payments for preaching, their allegiance must be to the

employer, rather than to God.

Now look at John 10:11-13, where Jesus reveals another problem with teachers who want to be paid:

I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. *He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them.*

*He flees because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep.*

And here the Greek for “hired hand” specifically means a *paid employee*.

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### Robbing God’s People

Now let’s return to what we read in Chapter 3, where we saw our Lord’s views on monetary transactions occurring within the Jewish Temple:

And He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. And He made a scourge of cords, and drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables; and to those who were selling the doves He said, *“Take these things away; stop making My Father’s house a place of business”* (John 2:14-16).

This is one of the few recorded incidents where Jesus expressed anger. And did you notice the cause? Jesus said, “Stop making My Father’s house *a place of business*.” And here the Greek means “a place of trading where people exchange goods for money.”

Then near the end of His ministry, Jesus again marched into the Temple and cast out those who were buying and selling, along with turning over the money changers tables and the seats of those who were selling doves. Then He prevented the Temple staff from carrying vessels of products such as wine, oil, and incense. And once Jesus was inside the Temple area, He informed God’s worshipers of how their religious leaders had made the Temple a “robbers den” by asking for money ([Matthew 21:12-13](#), [Mark 11:15-17](#), & [Luke 19:45-46](#)).

*According to Jesus Christ, by operating God's religion as a money-funded business, the religious authorities were "robbing" God's people!*

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### Jesus Was Enraged By the Use of Money

Earlier we saw how Jesus voiced harsh criticisms against the religious authorities of His day. Yet the manner in which He addressed these monetary issues was spectacular. To Jesus, what these officials were doing was not simply inappropriate or wrong, it was incredibly evil.

So when Jesus addressed these matters, He dropped completely out of character. He became animated, boisterous, angry and even violent. Jesus turned over tables and chairs. He forcibly prevented the Temple staff from carrying out their duties. And He publicly accused them of being common criminals.

Finally, Jesus took a whip and drove the animals out the Temple courtyard and poured the money changers coins onto the ground. And Jesus did these things twice: once at the beginning and once at the end of His ministry. To Jesus, what these religious authorities were doing was profoundly evil — and what He witnessed in the Temple set Him off like a rocket.

So again, what had angered Jesus?

*The Temple officials were operating God's religion as a business — that is, an institution that extracted money from worshipers in return for providing a place to practice their faith.*

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### The Root of Business

There are many kinds of sin, but there's a particular type of sin that is totally opposed to all that God represents. And this is what Jesus witnessed in the Temple: a total and violent opposition to God — an especially intense evil, something similar to [Mark 3:29](#), where Jesus addressed blaspheming the Holy Spirit.

We can trace this great evil back to Ezekiel 28:13-16, where the prophet discusses how sin first entered God's creation:

You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your covering: The ruby, the topaz and the diamond; The beryl, the onyx and the jasper; The lapis lazuli, the turquoise and the emerald; And the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets, Was in you. On the day that you were created They were prepared. You were the anointed cherub who covers, And I placed you there. You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked in the midst of the stones of fire.

Consider who was present in the Garden of Eden: *Adam, Eve, God* and *Satan*. And only one of these beings was a created and anointed cherub (angel).

Obviously, Ezekiel was writing about the Devil.

Now continue:

You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created until unrighteousness was found in you. *By the abundance of your **trade** you were internally filled with violence, And you sinned*; Therefore I have cast you as profane From the mountain of God. And I have destroyed you (the Hebrew more properly means “caused to wander away”), O covering cherub, From the midst of the stones of fire.

Through the prophet Ezekiel, we learn how sin first entered God’s perfect creation through a system called “trade,” which the Hebrew language defines as merchandising: *the exchanging of products and services for money*.

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But there’s more to this story. Ezekiel noted how God cast out Satan as “profane.” Here the Hebrew is *khaw-lal*. And in the Bible, this word often refers to someone who becomes polluted or desecrated. Such a person has been dishonored. They are no longer considered special. They have become common, losing that which had set them apart from others. And this is important, because the Hebrew word for holy means “set apart” for a sacred purpose.

So when Lucifer invented and then experimented with trade — the

exchanging of products for money — something within him changed. His business practices caused him to become polluted, soiled, and common. Lucifer no longer reflected the “set apart” holiness of God. And because of this transformation, God changed his name from Lucifer (meaning *light-bearer*) to something that portrayed his new nature: *Satan, the Adversary*.

And why are these facts important?

*Because the practice of exchanging money for Christian teachings and fellowship (trade) is the foundation of **all** institutionalized Christian religions.*

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### **Think About This**

Most Christian churches instruct their members to “pay God” via monetary offerings and/or tithes. And in doing so, pastors convey a message that says, “Look church members, it’s your job to give God His offerings and tithes. And then in return, the church will provide you with God’s instruction, lots of activities, and great fellowship.”

And this same business model where worshipers exchange money for instruction and fellowship is at the core of most every institutionalized Christian religion. It’s how churches fund their various operations. And it’s the same business model the 1st Century Old Testament religions were using – the business model Jesus condemned.

Satan’s profane business practices — what God labeled as the very first “sin” — are practiced in the midst of almost every Christian worship service.

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So when it comes to financing church operations with money, there’s a dramatic parallel between modern Christianity and the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Old Covenant religions. And in this regard, the apostle Paul wrote this:

Now these things happened to them *as an example*, and they were written *for our instruction* ... (I Corinthians 10:11).

Paul wrote that Old Covenant practices should serve as examples of

what Christ's Church should not be doing. Nevertheless, instead of heeding our Lord's instruction and running away from the monetary practices of ancient Rabbis, Christians have energetically embraced these practices.

*When today's pastors implement financial practices like those of the ancient Rabbis, modern Christians applaud their success.*

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### Christianity: Corrupted by Money

Now let's return to Ezekiel 28 and read verses 4 & 5, which also address Satan's first sin:

By your wisdom and understanding You have acquired riches for yourself And have acquired gold and silver for your treasuries. By your great wisdom, by your trade You have increased your riches. *And your heart is lifted up because of your riches.*

Note how Satan's sin of pride was the direct result of acquiring riches and treasures through business practices. So there's a profound lesson here:

*Money corrupts moral character.*

And if money corrupted the great archangel Lucifer, it will most certainly corrupt mortal human beings. Those who seek after money are almost always debased by the power of that money. As I Timothy 6:10 states:

For the love of money ***is a root of all sorts of evil.***

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### Praying to God — While Counting on Money

So consider the senior pastor who has a yearly command of one, five, or even ten million dollars. What does such financial power do to a person? Is this pastor's mind focused on God's spiritual power? Or does he concentrate on his ability to use tithes and offerings to expand his ministerial staff, construct buildings, produce printed materials, and acquire radio and television time?

In Matthew 11:30 Jesus said, "For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." But money coerces Christians into the trappings of Satan's

business world, where it's easy to lose sight of the simple ways of Christ – which is why the Lord sent His disciples out with explicit instructions to never collect, use or even carry money.

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We can imagine what would have happened if the early apostles had started asking for money. By accepting money from worshipers, the apostles could have built schools for training pastors to preach the gospel. Then they could have stopped traveling and allowed the trained ministry to evangelize in remote areas. The increasing flow of money would have allowed them to hire scribes to publish their writings. And then they could have constructed large church buildings, each staffed with their newly trained ministry. Simply put, they could have done what Christian churches do today.

But if the apostles had done these things, they would have ceased their *personal witness* of Christianity. Christ sent His apostles out, not just with the knowledge He gave, but also as witnesses of how God's calling had changed their lives. Potential converts had one-on-one relationships with Christ's disciples. The apostles slept and ate in listeners' homes. They required food and occasionally asked for a change of clothing. Potential converts had *real fellowship* with people who were changed by the power of God's Spirit.

But since none of this happens when new converts read religious tracts or sit in an audience and listen to sermons from salaried ministers, the money that supposedly magnifies God's work usually ends up dramatically reducing its effectiveness.

### **Think About This**

Money begins to contaminate Christ's Church when the average Christian gives his or her offering or tithe to their chosen ministry — and then a few individuals that desire to teach God's ways, realize that they can build an organization that magnifies a personal ministry, rather than placing their trust and faith in Christ to lead, direct and feed His church.

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10 — Suppressed Truth

Way back in Exodus 30:12, God enacted a yearly monetary ransom [Hebrew: *price of life*] from all male citizens to protect them against plagues that might result from counting males during a census. And since Numbers Chapter 1 documents how the Israelites always took a census of male citizens in preparation for war, some Bible commentators believe this ransom served as a continual reminder of how the power of God had brought the Israelites out of Egypt, rather than their own military might.

But then hundreds of years later, the Jews misapplied this ancient command to justify collecting a tax to support their Temple facilities. So notice what happened when the Jews asked Peter if Jesus paid this Temple tax:

When they came to Capernaum, those who collected the two-drachma tax came to Peter and said, “Does your teacher not pay the two-drachma tax?” He said, “Yes.” (Matthew 17:24 and the first part of verse 25).

Christian churches have used this passage to suggest that members should support their church with financial offerings. However, preachers always leave out the rest of what Jesus said — and for good reason. Notice how Jesus specifically exempts Christians from paying for anything associated with God’s religion:

And when he came into the house, Jesus spoke to him first, saying, “What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth collect customs or poll-tax, from their sons or from strangers?” When Peter said, “From strangers,” Jesus said to him, “***Then the sons are exempt.***” (the rest of Matthew 17:25 and verse 26).

Jesus wanted His disciples to understand that kings do not take tribute from their own children – and thus the king’s children remain free from all types of monetary payments. And this was important information, because Christians are the children of God, the ultimate King.

Therefore according to Jesus Christ, God never exacts any form of taxation, offering, tribute, or monetary tithe from His New Covenant children.

And then in verse 27, Jesus explained His reason for instructing the apostles to pay the Temple tribute:

“However, so that we do not offend them, go to the sea and throw in a hook, and take the first fish that comes up; and when you open its mouth, you will find a shekel. Take that and give it to them for you and Me.”

The Lord paid the Temple tax because He didn't want to offend the religious authorities. Remember, it was these same authorities that eventually had Him put to death. And therefore, Jesus did not want to unnecessarily offend them at this point in His ministry.

And especially note this: Jesus did not ask His disciples to pay the tax from their own financial resources. Since it was Jesus that did not want to offend the religious officials, He provided the money for the tax. The disciples remained exempt from the tax.

Think About This

According to Jesus Christ, Christians have no obligation to provide financial support to church organizations and their employees.

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So let's pause and summarize what Jesus said about paying money to churches and preachers:

- 1) God's truth must be shared freely, without any monetary cost to the listener;
- 2) Those who preach should receive food, drink and lodging as their pay for service;
- 3) The Lord forbid the practice of preachers receiving money for their work;
- 4) God's house (which is now the church) must never be operated as a place of business; that is, an entity that trades its services in return for money;
- 5) God's children are exempt from paying taxes and tributes to their King (God).

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## 11 — Christ's Church and Money

Let's re-read the apostle Peter's position on paid preachers, beginning with II Peter 2:1-3 (KJV):

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying [Greek: *contradict, disavow, reject*] the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. *And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you*: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.

This should be a shocking verse in our day and age! Bauer's Greek-English Lexicon states the Greek translated into the English "merchandise" means *to carry on business*. While Strong's Concordance defines it as *traveling around as a peddler*. Thus Peter predicted how preachers would make a business out of traveling around and peddling Christianity as a business to make money. And Peter warned that such preachers would use "feigned" words to trick Christians into paying for their preaching products.

Now look at what Peter said in Acts 3:6:

But Peter said, "I do not possess silver and gold (forms of 1st Century money), but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene — walk!"

How much money did the hard-working, gospel-preaching Peter have?

*None.*

Finally, let's read what Peter wrote about the older people in Christ's church:

Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd [Greek: *tend*] the flock of God among you, exercising oversight [Greek: *watching over*] not under

compulsion, *but voluntarily*, according to the will of God; and *not for sordid gain* [Greek: *greedy for money*], but with eagerness (I Peter 5:1-2).

Clearly, Peter thought it was *wrong* for Christian elders to make financial gains off of their leadership efforts.

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### Jude Condemned Preachers Who Accepted Money

What follows is a scandalous set of biblical passages: Scriptures you will never hear a salaried preacher mention. Here we find Jude, the brother of Jesus, warning his brethren about Christian preachers who would demand money for their services:

*For some people have slipped in among you unnoticed. They were written about long ago as being deserving of this condemnation because they are ungodly. They turn the grace of our God into uncontrollable lust and deny [Greek: *contradict, repudiate, reject*] our only Master and Lord, Jesus the Messiah (Jude 4 — ISV)<sup>111</sup>.*

Whatever these people do not understand, they slander. Like irrational animals, they are destroyed by the very things they know by instinct. How terrible it will be for them! For they lived like Cain did, *rushed headlong into Balaam's error to make a profit*, and destroyed themselves, as happened in Korah's rebellion.

These people are stains on your love feasts. They feast with you without any sense of awe. *They are shepherds who care only for themselves<sup>112</sup>*. They are waterless clouds blown about by the winds. They are autumn trees that are fruitless, totally dead, and uprooted. They are wild waves of the sea, churning up the foam of their own shame. They are wandering stars for whom the deepest darkness has been reserved forever (Jude 10-13 — ISV).

These people are complainers and faultfinders, following their own desires. They say arrogant things and flatter people in order to take advantage of them [Greek: *reap a benefit or profit*] (Jude 16 — ISV).

Balaam was a pagan prophet of the Moabites and Midianites. He was

willing to accept money for carrying God's words to those who hired him. So Jude used Balaam as an example of those who "sell" their preaching products for money.

Jude also noted how these preachers follow the practices of Korah, who contradicted and opposed Moses. And in the same manner, salaried preachers contradict the words of Jesus, who taught that Christians cannot accept money for sharing of His gospel.

Finally, Jude mentioned how all of these 1<sup>st</sup> Century preachers laced their teachings with arrogance and flattery to gain personal advantages.

*And just like Jesus Christ and the apostle Peter, Jude condemned those who accepted money for preaching.*

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### Paul Refused to Accept Money

Even though Jesus, Peter and Jude taught against preachers accepting money, many pastors claim the apostle Paul allowed them to accept money from God's people. So let's review this assertion to see if it's actually true.

I Corinthians 9:14 is commonly used to claim that Paul authorized ministers to receive salaries:

*So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel.*

Indeed at first glance, Paul's statement does appear to justify paying ministers. However, this verse does not stand alone. It begins with two Greek words that form a "copulative," which is a grammatical link to something previously written. Thus the words "so also" at the beginning of the could be translated "in the same way as" or "in the same manner as."

And this raises the obvious question:

*Preachers should get their living from the gospel in the same manner as what?*

The answer is found in the preceding verse, where the apostle wrote about those who served under the Old Covenant. I Corinthians 9:13:

Do you not know that those who perform sacred services *eat the food* of the temple, and those who attend regularly to the altar *have their share from the altar*?

The Old Covenant Levites made their living by eating the food offered at the Temple altar – *while they never received money from God's people*. Instead, the Levites ate offerings and tithes that consisted of animals and agricultural products.

And so according to the apostle Paul, those who preach the New Covenant should make their living in the same manner as the Temple Levites: *they should receive food for their services*.

And note how none of the above verses say anything about paying salaries to pastors; neither do they support (or even mention) the modern practice of giving monetary tithes and offerings to churches.

Instead, Paul taught that preachers should make their living precisely as Jesus commanded: “Stay in that house, *eating and drinking what they give you*” (Luke 10:7).

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Now let's move on to another statement pastors use when they attempt to justify being paid a salary. I Timothy 5:17-18:

The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, “you shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing,” and “The laborer is worthy of his wages.”

Of course, salaried preachers never mention how these verses refer to [Deuteronomy 25:4](#), where the subject is denying food to a working ox — and [Luke 10:7](#), where the Lord's subject is food and drink. So just as we saw in Matthew 10 and Luke 9, Paul instructed that those who share the gospel should obtain their *nourishment* from those to whom they preach.

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Preachers also use II Corinthians 11:7-9 to suggest the brethren gave Paul money:

Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be

exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you without charge? *I robbed other churches by taking wages [Greek: rations for a soldier] from them to serve you; and when I was present with you and was in need, I was not a burden to anyone; for when the brethren came from Macedonia they fully supplied my need, and in everything I kept myself from being a burden to you, and will continue to do so.*

The claim is made that Paul chose to not collect wages (“without charge”) from the Corinthian brethren, because he was collecting wages from others. But the Greek translated “without charge” simply means *gratuitously*. In other words, Paul wrote that he preached the gospel without receiving anything in return.

And yes, Paul did refer to accepting wages (rations) from other brethren. But we’ve already seen how both Paul and Jesus defined a preacher’s wages as food and drink. And once again, Paul makes no mention of preachers accepting money.

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Modern preachers also use Philippians 4:15-17 to claim the brethren gave Paul money for his personal ministry:

You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, *no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs. Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account.*

Indeed, Paul did write about “giving and receiving.” But there’s nothing here that indicates the brethren gave him money. And we’ve already seen how Paul wrote that preachers should be reimbursed with food and shelter.

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### Paul Explains How He Funded His Ministry

Perhaps we should allow Paul to explain how he met the needs of his ministry. Here is what he wrote to the Thessalonians:

I Thessalonians 2:9: For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, *how working night and day so as to not be a burden to any of you*, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.

II Thessalonians 3:7-8: For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, *because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it*, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you.

Clearly, the apostle Paul was not receiving offerings, tithes or any other kind of financial help from the Thessalonian Christians. And Paul stated that it would have been “undisciplined” to eat another person’s food without paying for it.

And how did Paul have the money to pay for his food? By “working night and day.”

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Finally, let’s read a passage that succinctly summarizes what Paul thought about preachers receiving money:

II Corinthians 2:17: *For we are not like many, peddling [Greek: acting as a retailer] the word of God*, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God.

And if this verse doesn’t get your attention, probably nothing will.

### **Think About This**

If we take an honest look at modern Christianity, we will observe how little has changed since the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians: the “many” continue to peddle and retail the word of God.

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### **Mixing Religion and Money — An Ancient Problem**

Most Christians would be surprised to learn how even under the Old Covenant, God condemned paying preachers. As an example, let’s look at Micah 3:11-12:

Her leaders pronounce judgment for a bribe, *Her priests instruct for*

*a price And her prophets divine for money.* Yet they lean on the LORD saying, “Is not the LORD in our midst? Calamity will not come upon us” Therefore, on account of you (paid preachers and prophets) Zion will be plowed as a field, Jerusalem will become a heap of ruins, And the mountain of the temple will become high places of a forest.

More than 700 years before Jesus walked the earth, Micah described the same problem our Lord addressed during the 1<sup>st</sup> Century: *the religious officials were disobeying God by demanding money from worshipers.*

And these officials most certainly knew they were doing wrong, because God’s legitimate prophets have always prohibited spiritual leaders from accepting money. Notice these verses:

For thus says the LORD, “You were sold for nothing and you will be redeemed *without money*” (Isaiah 52:3).

Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; *And you who have no money come, buy and eat.* Come, buy wine and milk *without money and without cost.* (Isaiah 55:1).

Buy [the Hebrew also means: get, acquire] truth, *and do not sell it,* Get wisdom and instruction and understanding. (Proverbs 23:23).

God has never allowed His people to exchange His truth for money – the Scriptures have always prohibited this practice.

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### But Modern Pastors Disagree

In today’s world these monetary teachings of Jesus, His apostles, and God’s prophets have been swept so far under the rug, that Christians are not even aware that they exist. And just as in ancient times, preachers are busy taking Scripture out of context, as they instruct their congregations to financially support their church and its employees.

Let’s look at a few examples of how institutionalized religion misuses the Bible:

### Luke 22:35-37

And He said to them, “When I sent you out without money belt and

bag and sandals, you did not lack anything, did you?" They said, "No, nothing." And He said to them, "But now, *whoever has a money belt is to take it along*, likewise also a bag, and whoever has no sword is to sell his coat and buy one."

Some preachers explain this passage as follows: "Yes, at one time the apostles were forbidden from receiving money for preaching. However, Jesus changed the rules to allow preachers to accept money."

But if you carefully read through the above verses, you won't find a single word referring to Christians paying money to preachers.

Jesus made this statement during the Last Supper, just before He was crucified. And up until that time, the apostle's evangelical missions had been relatively easy. They were able to go from town-to-town and house-to-house facing little resistance, while their listeners provided for most of their needs. But now with Jesus about to be crucified, their circumstances would change — and not for the better.

And just a few days before Jesus made the statement quoted above, He foretold what would happen after His death:

But when you (those who were worshiping at the Temple) see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near. *Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city* (Luke 21:20-21).

So with the Luke 22 statements quoted above, Jesus was warning the apostles and disciples how their future would include Roman persecution and a most horrible war, which occurred in 70 CE. And this was why they would need to gather up their personal possessions (money belts, food bags, swords, etc.) and leave the populated cities for safer locations. In the near future, they would have to flee from the areas around Jerusalem, so they could preserve their lives and continue to share the gospel in other parts of the world.

And now that you know the context of Luke 22:35-37 (quoted above), let's read it again:

And He said to them, "When I sent you out without money belt and

bag and sandals, you did not lack anything, did you?" They said, "No, nothing." And He said to them, "But now, whoever has a money belt is to take it along, likewise also a bag, *and whoever has no sword is to sell his coat and buy one.*"

Question: Was Jesus asking His disciples to sell their coats and then go out and buy *weapons* in order to spread the gospel?

Of course not.

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Now let's examine some of the verses used by preachers who want money from God's people:

#### Galatians 6:6-9

*The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches him. Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.*

Pastors lay serious guilt trips on God's people with this passage, especially when they suggest that Christians are reaping corruption and losing out on eternal life by not giving to their church!

However, those who quote this passage never mention how Jesus prohibited His disciples from accepting money. Neither do they share how the Lord defined a preacher's "wages" as food, clothing, and shelter. And they withhold this information because they don't want you to realize that Paul was instructing the brethren to share food with those who were traveling around and preaching the gospel.

And consider this: would Paul ask Christians to give money to those who preach the gospel, when in I Timothy 6:10 he wrote, "*the love of money is the root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs*"?

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## I Corinthians 9:7-11

*Who at any time serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat the fruit of it? Or who tends a flock and does not use the milk of the flock? I am not speaking these things according to human judgment, am I? Or does not the Law also say these things? For it is written in the Law of Moses, “you shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing.” God is not concerned about oxen, is He? Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written, *because the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher to thresh in hope of sharing the crops*. If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?*

Here again, Paul reminds the brethren how they should support those who preach the gospel. But there’s nothing new here. As we’ve already seen in other passages, Paul’s subject is food: specifically the fruit of plantings, the milk of livestock, and the sharing of crops.

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## II Corinthians 9:6-7

Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, *for God loves a cheerful giver*.

This passage is often included in offertory sermons, because church members certainly want God to see them as “cheerful givers.” But these sermons always manage to leave out verse one, by which Paul explains he was asking for donations to help poor Christians — not funds to support church organizations and ministerial salaries.

So let’s read II Corinthians 9:1, the verse pastors leave out when preaching from this chapter:

*For it is superfluous for me to write to you about this ministry to the saints;*

Notice what theologian John Gill wrote about this chapter:

“It looks at first sight as if the apostle was entering upon a new

subject, though by what follows it appears to be the same; for by 'ministering to the saints', he does not mean the ministry of the Gospel to them; nor that mutual assistance members of churches are to give each other; but either the fellowship of ministering to the saints, which the churches had entreated him, and his fellow ministers, to take upon them, namely, *to take the charge of their collections, and distribute them to the poor saints at Jerusalem; or rather these collections themselves, and their liberality in them: with respect to which he says.*"

At the time Paul wrote II Corinthians, the Jerusalem brethren were in the midst of a severe famine. Therefore, Paul was asking the Corinthians to join with other brethren and donate food for those suffering in Jerusalem.

II Corinthians 9 has nothing to do with giving money to preachers or churches.

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### What Paul Really Taught

Finally, let's take a look at I Corinthians 9:11-18, which is a set of Scriptures you will never hear during a church offertory sermon:

If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? If others share the right over you, do we not more? *Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we endure all things so that we will cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ.*

Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat the food of the temple, and those who attend regularly to the altar have their share from the altar? So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel.

*But I have used none of these things. And I am not writing these things so that it will be done so in my case; for it would be better for me to die than have any man make my boast an empty one.*

For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel. For if I do this voluntarily, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have a stewardship entrusted to me. What then is my reward?

*That, when I preach the gospel, I may offer the gospel without charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel.*

Here again, Paul describes the preacher's right to share in the food and drink of his listeners. But even though Paul affirmed that Jesus had given him this right, *he refused to use it!*

Paul thought it better to not accept food, clothing and shelter from his listeners – and he most assuredly did so because he knew that Jesus said this:

*Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.*

So why don't modern preachers follow Paul's example?

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### The Apostles: How They Really Lived

Most Christian ministries tell us the apostles were collecting tithes and offerings to pay their salaries, construct church buildings and promote evangelical work — while nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, the apostle Paul did just the opposite, as he set a splendid example of how preachers should support themselves. Let's read Acts 20:33-35:

*I have coveted no one's silver or gold (1<sup>st</sup> Century money) or clothes. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my own needs and to the men who were with me. In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."*

Furthermore, Paul's writings document how the apostles accepted very little from those who heard their preaching. I Corinthians 4:9-12 provides the evidence:

*For, I think, God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are prudent in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are distinguished, but we are without honor.*

*To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless; and we toil, working with our own hands ...*

Obviously, people were not giving much of anything to these men.

### **Think About This**

Over and over, the Bible commands that God's truth must be shared freely, without monetary benefit to those who share the gospel. The biblical example is that of those whom were sharing Christ's message providing for their own physical needs, or living off the food, clothing, and shelter provided by their listeners. Jesus established His Church in this manner to remind us that all Christians are New Covenant priests with each having his or her own special gifts that should be shared with their spiritual brothers and sisters free of charge.

Furthermore, Christ's Church has the structure of a family. And in the same manner as human brothers and sisters, God's children have co-equal status. Certainly, there are those who possess gifts of spiritual understanding and teaching abilities. But Jesus commanded that such people should never try to claim authority over their brethren, while He strictly forbid them from earning monetary reimbursements for sharing God's truth.

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### **Money in the Modern Church**

We've seen how some early preachers claimed authority over God's people, so they could extract money from them. But modern Christian leaders have taken this money-driven evangelism to an entirely new level. With literally millions of dollars at their disposal, preachers are funding operations the early church never imagined.

Modern Christian organizations construct expensive architectural edifices having worship facilities, auditoriums, meeting rooms, administrative offices, and sometimes even schools and colleges. These facilities are then staffed with salaried theological researchers, professional writers, teachers, attorneys, engineers, media technicians, accountants, computer programmers, and clerical personnel – all of which are

necessary for spreading the gospel through radio, television, and media campaigns.

And because of what these organizations can purchase with the money stolen (Jesus' word) from God's people, they present a polish and professionalism that was completely unknown to 1st Century Christians.

Thus the average church member thinks: "Surely God has blessed us by raising up these fantastic organizations and staffing them with some of the most inspired and talented people the world has ever known." Church members look up to their church leaders as more knowledgeable and spiritual than average Christians, never realizing that these people seem "bigger than life," because they've been trained, packaged and shaped by seminary, research and media professionals.

And most Christians are so impressed by these money-driven presentations of Christianity, they cannot imagine that Jesus might not approve of operating His church in this manner.

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### Repeating the Same Old Mistakes

Unfortunately, today's entertainment-style churches with their "super star" preachers bear no resemblance to the simple, home-based fellowships of equal brothers and sisters raised up by Jesus and His apostles. Christians have allowed the worldly system of merchandising to enter their religion, where it has divided Christ's flock into thousands of competing groups – each busy advertising and attracting new members, as it "trades" church attendance and activities for offerings and tithes.

So as new converts flock to the professionalism of institutionalized money-driven churches, the average Christian concludes that his or her "gifts of the Spirit" consist of little more than giving offerings and tithes to their chosen church organization – while their own spiritual gifts lay unrecognized and untapped.

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### We Were Warned

Two thousand years ago, Jesus said these words to those who were

following Old Testament religious leaders:

“You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition” (Mark 7:9).

And modern Christianity has traveled down the very same road. During the first six months of Year 2017, the Christian establishment collected the unbelievable sum of 340 billion dollars from God’s people (reference: Gordon Conwell University’s “Status of Global Christianity”) – as it literally ushered Jesus out the door, so it could preach doctrines and commandments designed to promote it’s corporate institutions.

The sad truth is that pastors have corrupted the Christian religion by accepting money for preaching; while worshipers have decided that it’s easier to allow “hired hands” to perform their work of learning and sharing the gospel.

*The Devil’s system of merchandising has corrupted Christ’s Church.*

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### Thoughts About Christianity and Money

In a world where money is at the root of almost every enterprise, one does wonder how Christ’s Church might function without it. Sharing God’s message often incurs monetary expense. So how should Christians deal with this fact?

First, we should accept that Jesus and His apostles were quite clear: those who share God’s teachings should never receive monetary compensation for their work. But what about all the other expenses associated with sharing the gospel?

During the 1<sup>st</sup> Century, Christ’s messengers lived in a society where it was customary to provide food and shelter for visitors. So it was easy for them to go house-to-house and share the gospel. However, in these modern times with high crime rates, most people are suspicious of Christians knocking on their door.

So let’s consider a modern-day example. In my case, I could try to preach the contents of my books house-to-house. But if I wanted food and temporary shelter, I doubt that my listeners would offer much assistance. So I’ve concluded that I can expose more people to my

messages by publishing books.

Yet the process of writing and publishing costs money — and this money has to come from somewhere. It's clear (at least to me) that Jesus prohibited financial reimbursement for my time and effort in developing my books. As Jesus said, "Freely you have received, freely give".

But this raises an interesting question: *Would it be wrong for an author to charge what is necessary to recover his or her publishing costs?*

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Now consider a Christian radio station. Just as in the case of publishing a book, it costs money to broadcast program material. And even if the station's Christian messages are provided free-of-charge, there are substantial broadcasting and employee costs.

*So would it be wrong for a Christian radio station to solicit donations to pay for its broadcasting and employee costs?*

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Finally, assume that fifty Christians band together and pool enough money to rent a meeting hall. Within this fellowship, those who preach follow Jesus' instruction and do not accept money for sharing God's truth.

And this raises yet another question:

*Would it be wrong for this group of Christians to solicit monetary donations to pay for their building?*

And given that in many countries, house-to-house ministries are things of the past, these appear to be legitimate questions deserving prayer and thoughtful consideration.

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12 — Disloyal Churches

The Bible tells us there are two diverse groups of people worshiping God: Israelites and Gentiles. The Israelites were those with whom God made the Old Covenant. This group consists of the descendants of the patriarch Jacob, which later became the twelve tribes of Israel.

But the Bible categorizes all whom are not Israelites as Gentiles. And since most of the Israelites (except those of the tribe of Judah, the Jews) have become lost from history, the majority of modern Christians are Gentiles.

And this is important information, because the Book of Revelation contains a warning directed specifically at Gentile Christians.

Christ's Warnings to Christians

In Revelation Chapters 2 & 3, Jesus discussed seven Christian churches located in Asia Minor. Very few Israelites lived in this area, so the population was predominantly Gentile, just as it is with Christianity today. And since Revelation describes itself as a prophecy foretelling the future ([Revelation 1:3](#), [Revelation 22:7](#), [Revelation 22:10](#), and [Revelation 22:18-19](#)), some biblical commentators believe these seven churches describe the spiritual state of modern Christianity.

And the most fascinating feature of this prophecy is that it accurately describes how modern Christians have put aside the teachings of Jesus, so they can build relationships with human shepherds that substitute their own doctrines for our Lord's teachings.

Problem Churches

In the second and third chapters of Revelation, Jesus describes worshipers with numerous spiritual problems. Most had not overcome their human nature. Many needed to repent of sinful behavior. While very few were paying attention to their Savior's voice and following His teachings. These Christians had not developed a personal relationship

with Jesus; neither had they responded to His call with a sincere heart. But then, Revelation 3:20 relates something amazing:

Behold, I stand at the door and knock; ***if anyone hears my voice and opens the door***, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.

These 1st Century Christians were so far away from their Lord and Savior, that they actually refused to invite Him into their fellowships! Jesus was being kept outside of their assemblies, where He was demoted to knocking on their doors, as He attempted to get their attention.

But even though these people refused to invite Jesus into their assemblies, they continued to practice their church services. Believing church attendance fulfilled all of their spiritual responsibilities, they saw no need to integrate Jesus — and especially His words and commandments — into their worship.

The Lord observed how these Christians lacked spiritual character. Many had fallen from their first love; while others were spiritually asleep. Most had either soiled their spiritual garments, become lukewarm, or refused to overcome their carnality. And Jesus actually labeled some of these people spiritually dead.

Then the Lord went on to describe how many were holding onto false doctrines, with some actually studying “the deep things of Satan.” While Jesus labeled one of these churches “wretched, and miserable, and poor, blind, and naked.”

In John 6:63 Jesus said, “... *the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.*” But even though these Christians were “big” on church attendance, they were “small” on the teachings of their Lord and Savior, which were kept outside of their assemblies.

Surely these people had heard how Jesus asked, “Why do you call me Lord, Lord and do not the things I say?” Nevertheless, they were not interested in opening the door to Christ’s words of life – the spiritual knowledge that would guide them to dramatic changes in their personal character ([John 6:68](#)). Instead, they thought God would just accept them

as sinners, by overlooking their many character flaws.

And they fortified these assumptions by focusing on repetitive church rituals — practices they assumed were bringing them closer to God.

Help from the World

Jesus described how these Christians followed the popular and respected theologians of their day, never realizing their Lord disapproved of what they were hearing. Some were even following doctrines derived from the pagan prophet Balaam and the Baal worshiper Jezebel. And if you read through Chapter 9 of this book, you saw how Balaam was a prophet that desired money for preaching – which suggests these 1st Century worshipers were paying their leaders to preach, just as Christians do today.

Jesus also described how these Christians followed the practices of the “Nicolaitans,” which is translated from a Greek word that means “ruling over the laity.” Several Bible commentators explain how this word refers to establishing human religious authorities over God’s people. While the *Scofield Reference Notes* tell us the Greek word translated “Nicolaitans” is derived from two words that mean *to conquer the people*.

Scofield goes on to describe how this word “refers to the earliest form of the notion of a priestly order, or ‘clergy,’ which later divided an equal brotherhood (Matthew 23:8) into ‘priests’ and ‘laity.’” While theologian John Gill suggests the Nicolaitans were an early version of the church at Rome; that is, those who declared complete authority over God’s people.

And in [Revelation 2:6](#), Jesus said He “hates” this doctrine of the Nicolaitans.

Christians Turn Away from Christ

Similar to what Jesus described of the Jews in [Mark 7:7-9](#), these early Christians had set aside our Lord’s commandments, so they could keep their religious traditions. And Revelation 3:20 records how these Christians literally kept their Savior, His teachings, and His

commandments waiting at the door, so they could partake in their humanly-devised worship services.

And so week after week – believing church attendance the core and essence of their responsibilities toward God – these people assumed their involvement at church, along with their financial offerings, were causing them to build holy and righteous character.

We can speculate on how these Christians reached out to unbelievers by sharing the news of Christ’s sacrifice. And perhaps this was all they knew, for they had no understanding of how the Lord’s followers are called to be shining lights of holiness to the world — people the world can look at and say, “I want that kind of life, how can I have it?” And even though they may have impressed unbelievers with their zeal for praising Christ and His sacrifice, the hypocrisy of their personal lives negated all their evangelical efforts.

Yet their loving Savior continued to wait outside their assemblies, patiently trying to get their attention.

Church Attendance Paramount

During their weekly fellowships, these early Christians lazily listened to whomever had enough personal drive and ego to command their assemblies. The members considered these church messages their “spiritual food,” which was far easier than obeying the apostles’ instruction to learn and study Christ’s words on their own.

And since their leaders focused on subjects that supported pastoral authority and church rituals, they never heard about the intimate one-on-one relationships they could be having with their Savior and God the Father ([John 17:18-23](#)).

Why, such teachings might marginalize the importance of the church — and especially its leadership!

We might speculate on how more solidly-based Christians might visit and attempt to share the teachings of Christ. But the church leaders knew the Lord’s teachings would upset their traditions — and especially their self-appointed authority. So when visitors arrived, they carefully labeled

anything new or different as “false doctrine.”

Setting themselves up as doctrinal gatekeepers, the leaders tagged those with different views as “God’s Enemies” — a practice that led to church splits, and eventually the rise of entire denominations based upon competing and contradictory doctrines and beliefs. And since their primary motive was to protect their positions of authority and monetary income, these self-appointed “shepherds” made certain that most of our Lord’s teachings were kept outside of their assemblies, where Jesus could not influence their sheep.

Nevertheless, these Christians looked and acted much like the genuine article. But since they refused to allow the spiritual power of God to change their lives, they had to cloak themselves in a form of godliness based upon religious traditions and practices ([II Timothy 3:5](#)). These people rejected Old Covenant law and embraced the sacrifice of Christ — but here they remained spiritually motionless, refusing to move forward and claim Christ’s life, His teachings, and the power of God’s Spirit to overcome their sins.

While their loyal Savior continued to knock, in hope.

The Consequences of Rituals

Revelation Chapters 2 and 3 provide a look inside the minds of those who receive the glorious call of God, but decide this calling demands far too much personal change, humility, and sacrifice. So instead of opening the door of their minds and inviting their Savior in for help, they turn away from overcoming and growing in spiritual knowledge and holiness, to embrace repetitive rituals and traditions by which they deceive themselves into thinking their lives are pleasing to God.

Such Christians are grateful for God’s calling and especially Christ’s sacrifice — but they have little desire to give anything back to God. In [Matthew 11:12](#), Jesus explained how energetic Christians forcefully reach out for the Kingdom of God. And those who cherish the gift of God’s calling don’t keep their King waiting at the door. Instead, they rush out to greet Him, welcome Him into their lives, and carefully practice everything He taught.

As our Lord said in Mark 12:30, the greatest of all God's commands is to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength."

The apostle Paul wrote epistle after epistle, trying to motivate early Christians to reject Old Covenant law and rituals, and embrace Christ's New Covenant. And yet week after week, and then year after year, far too many Christians stubbornly reenacted their own hybrid version of the Old Covenant, complete with its ordained priesthood, repetitive rituals, familiar traditions, and humanly-derived doctrines and teachings ([Matthew 15:9](#)).

And since these Christians chose to ignore their Lord and Savior knocking outside the doors of their minds and spirits, the apostle John commented on how they people had turned their church services — and even their entire religion — into a spiritual idol:

We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

Little children, guard yourselves from idols (I John 5:19-21).

The Rituals of Modern Christianity

In today's world, most Christians have chosen to worship God through the idols of repetitive rituals. And they do this because it's far easier than digging into the Bible and following the words of Jesus Christ.

To the rest of the world, these people appear God-fearing and righteous. They go about saying "God bless you," allowing others to pass first through a door, helping people pick up the things they drop, and acting the role of an ambassador for Christ. Such people enjoy the "role" of being a Christian; but they have little desire to "take up their cross" and carry out the personal sacrifices necessary to build the holy and righteous character Christians need to witness for God.

By fulfilling repetitive rituals and giving constant praise to Jesus and His sacrifice, these people have convinced themselves that God will accept them without much in the way of personal change.

Think About This

The apostle John wrote that we can recognize genuine Christians by the fact that they love and sacrifice for their spiritual brothers and sisters ([1 John 3:14](#)). But ritual Christians spurn those who are not part of their particular denominational assembly. Their church services are closed and cult-like, subtly announcing to visitors “We don’t want you here, unless you can submit to our doctrines, rules and rituals.” And in a very real sense, these people have made the “ritual of church” more important than a genuine relationship with God the Father, Jesus Christ and God’s children.

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## 13 — Missing the Mark

xxThe apostle James wrote something every Christian should consider:

Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is *sin* (James 4:17).

James pointed out that when we refuse to do what we know we should, it's a form of sin. And here the Greek is pronounced *ham-ar-tee'-ah*, which means "missing the mark." And this is an important concept, because modern Christianity indeed has missed the mark.

In Matthew 16:18 Jesus said, "I will build My Church." But today's institutionalized churches bear almost no resemblance to the Church raised up by Jesus Christ and His apostles. This volume has provided many examples of why this is true, so let's review what we have learned:

Jesus commanded His disciples to never consider another human being their spiritual guide, teacher or leader. Furthermore, the Lord prohibited His followers from exercising spiritual authority over their brethren. Jesus was crystal-clear: *Christians must follow and obey Him*.

But modern churches structure their organizations according to the model of hierarchical authority found in worldly governments (thanks to the emperor Constantine). Thus "the institution" appoints certain educated and approved Christians to authoritative positions such as pastor, evangelist, minister, elder and deacon. Then it establishes all doctrine for the fellowship, leaving individual members with no choice but to sit and listen as church leaders preach the organization's particular theology. So in exactly the same manner as the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Israelite religions Jesus condemned, Christian churches have inserted their human leadership between God and His people.

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Jesus commanded those who share His teachings to never ask for money. Furthermore, the Lord specifically prohibited His followers from operating His religion as a money-funded business.

But modern churches instruct worshipers that God has authorized Christian leaders to accept monetary offerings and tithes on His behalf.

Then in direct contradiction to the commandments of Jesus, these institutions pay “hired hands” to preach their humanly-devised doctrines.

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Jesus commanded His sheep to look to Him for all spiritual knowledge — and to follow only His words. Therefore in the Church of Jesus Christ, doctrine flows directly from our Lord and Savior to individual Christians. Furthermore, Jesus declared that those who follow the doctrines and commandments of human organizations are worshiping God in vain.

But modern churches have chosen to follow the example set by the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Rabbis. Institutionalized Christian churches create their own peculiar doctrines and commandments — dozens of versions of them — all of which were formulated by councils of salaried church leaders and theologians. And all too often, the teachings of Jesus are at best seldom mentioned, while at worst outright contradicted.

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Jesus designed His Church as a heavenly spiritual family — a global fellowship of equal brethren who refer to each other as brothers and sisters. Early Christians shared meals together. They prayed, studied, entertained, and relaxed together. And they cared for each other as family. While fellowship took place “day by day,” not just once a week at church.

But modern churches practice what amounts to “hit-and-run” fellowship at worship services lasting only 1-2 hours per week. And even though a few members may attend weekly Bible studies and similar church activities, most will never see their spiritual family until the next weekly service.

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Perhaps modern Christians need to consider a prophecy written in Jeremiah 5:30-31:

An appalling and horrible thing Has happened in the land: The prophets prophesy falsely, And the priests rule on their own authority;

And My people love it so!

But what will you do at the end of it?

And indeed, what will modern Christians do when the last day of their human life arrives, and just as Jesus promised, “The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48).

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14 — Restoring Christ's Church

Attend almost any Christian congregation and you will soon hear someone explaining the need for offerings and perhaps tithes. With today's Christian religions, church growth is viewed as the product of infusing money into an organization.

But the history of the early Church relates an entirely different story. In the years following Christ's death it was not money that promoted growth, but the witness provided by God's spiritual family:

*And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. *And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved* (Acts 2:44-47).*

The early Church provided a startling example of how the Holy Spirit worked through God's people: behaviors changed, people became givers rather than materialistic takers and there was an obvious, close-knit family atmosphere.

Then as time progressed and Christians left the institutionalized Temple environment, their praise and glory for the God who blessed them was an open witness to their non-Christian neighbors.

Think About This

Early Christians practiced a close-knit fellowship that is virtually unknown to modern Christians. The early Church provided real-life examples of how God's people will live in the Kingdom of God — and through this witness, Christ was able to bring many more people into God's family.

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Rebuilding Christ's Church

So how can Christians re-create the family relationships enjoyed by their

1st Century brethren? Jesus tells us in Revelation 3:20:

Behold, I stand at the door and knock; ***if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.***

Jesus is constantly at the door of our minds and spirits, waiting for us to invite His participation into our lives. All we have to do is open a red-letter Bible and prayerfully study the precious “words of life” the Lord has given to us.

Just as physical sheep require grass to stay alive, Christ's sheep must feed on His spiritual teachings.

And if we carefully and diligently study and follow our Lord's words, we will discover a new and different religion — a Christianity where God's “words of life” literally change our spiritual nature and personal character. And when several Christians invite Jesus and His teachings into their lives, their mutual fellowship will begin to display the collective fruit of God's family — and Christ's Church will again begin to grow:

It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail; ***the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life*** (John 6:63 — RSV).

But understand this: these intimate spiritual relationships will never develop, unless Christians accept Jesus as their only spiritual guide and teacher, and then put His teachings to work in their lives.

Every Christian needs to thoughtfully consider these words of our Lord and Savior:

... and ***they will hear My voice***; and [then] ***they will become one flock with one shepherd*** (John 10:16).

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## 15 — Conclusion

Christians often refer to Jesus Christ as their “Lord and Savior.” But these terms have entirely different meanings. With the second term “Savior,” all effort and energy flows from Jesus to the worshiper. And this is why most Christians find it easy to jump on the “Jesus is Savior” bandwagon.

But the “Lord” term is the more difficult part of the equation. For if a Christian actually makes Jesus their Lord, they are taking constructive action that goes far beyond singing praises and praying “Thank you, Jesus.” Accepting Jesus as Lord means He rules over every area of your life. We must unconditionally obey what Jesus commands, which He confirmed when He told His disciples, “Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?”

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### xxx A Message From the Father

Throughout His ministry, Jesus explained how the Father is greater and more powerful than any other spirit being ([John 10:29](#), [John 14:28](#)). But up until the time Jesus appeared on earth as the Messiah, humanity had neither seen nor heard of God the Father ([John 5:37](#), [John 6:46](#)).

But once Jesus started His ministry, the Father began to speak to human beings. The first communication occurred at our Lord’s baptism:

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. Immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him; and a voice came out of the heavens: “You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased” (Mark 1:9-11).

God knew His Son was about to do battle with the religious establishment, so He shared a public message of personal encouragement. And then near the end of His ministry, just before Jesus was crucified, the Father shared another message of encouragement:

Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name. Then a voice came out of heaven: “I have

both glorified it, and will glorify it again” (John 12:27-28).

But there was one more message from God the Father – a very special communication given in a most unusual setting. And in preparation for this message, Jesus asked his most trusted apostles — Peter, James, and John — to follow Him up to a high mountain, where He was miraculously transfigured to appear as He does in Heaven.

Then with the Lord’s face shining as the sun and His clothing as white as bright light, God the Father spoke directly to these three apostles, as He defined the core and essence of their apostolic mission (Matthew 17:5):

A bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; ***listen to Him!***

This communication was not directed at Jesus, but specifically to His apostles. And God’s message was not one of encouragement, but rather a solemn and sober command. For with this message, the Father explained precisely what the apostles were to preach and share with others.

God the Father’s one and only message to Christ’s apostles was as follows:

*“Listen to the words of Jesus Christ.”*

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*And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him: for they know **His** voice.*

*And a stranger will they **not** follow, but will *flee* from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.*

— Jesus Christ, John 10:4-5 (KJV)

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16 — Interesting Quotations

“But if you reject me, I will tell my Father in heaven that you don’t belong to me.” — Jesus Christ, Matthew 10:33 (CEV)

“The Bible is very easy to understand. But we Christians are a bunch of scheming swindlers. We pretend to be unable to understand it because we know very well that the minute we understand, we are obliged to act accordingly.” — Søren Kierkegaard, Provocations

“Men occasionally stumble over the truth, but most of them pick themselves up and hurry off as if nothing ever happened.” — Sir Winston Churchill.

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## 17 — Footnotes

[100](#) Jamieson, Fausset & Brown Commentary: The oldest manuscripts and versions read, “Every one who takes the lead”; literally, “goes,” or “leads on before”; compare Joh\_10:4, “He goeth before them” (not the same Greek). Compare 3Jo\_1:9, “Loveth to have the pre-eminence.”

[101](#) Fulfilled Prophecies by which the Jews could identify the Messiah:

1. He would be born of a Virgin (Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:18).
2. He would be of the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10 and Luke 3:23, 33).
3. He would be of King David’s seed (Jeremiah 23:5 and Luke 3:23, 31).
4. He would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2 and Matthew 2:1).
5. He would be a prophet (Deuteronomy 18:18-19 and Matthew 21:11).
6. He would teach with parables (Psalms 78:2 and Matthew 13:34).
7. He would be preceded by a messenger (Isaiah 40:3, Malachi 3:1, and Matthew 3:1-2).
8. He would enter Jerusalem on a colt (Zechariah 9:9 and Luke 19:35-37).
9. He would be betrayed by a friend (Psalms 41:9 and Matthew 26:47-50).
10. He would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12 and Matthew 26:15).
11. He would be forsaken by His disciples (Zechariah 13:7 and Mark 14:50).
12. The money would be thrown in the temple and used to buy the potter’s field (Zechariah 11:13 and Matthew 27:5-7).
13. He would be accused by false witnesses (Psalms 35:11 and Matthew 26:59-60).
14. He would be silent before His accusers (Isaiah 53:7 and Matthew 27:12-14).
15. He would be beaten by his enemies (Isaiah 50:6, 53:5, and Matthew

27:26).

16. He would be spit upon and beaten (Isaiah 50:6 and Matthew 27:30).

17. He would be struck in the head with a rod (Micah 5:1 and Matthew 27:30).

18. He would be mocked (Psalms 22:7-8 and Matthew 27:29, 31).

19. His hands and feet would be pierced (Psalms 22:16, Luke 23:33, and John 20:25).

20. Men would gamble for His clothing (Psalms 22:18 and John 19:23-24).

21. He would intercede in prayer for His transgressors (Isaiah 53:12 and Luke 23:34).

22. He would suffer thirst (Psalms 22:15 and John 19:28).

23. He would be offered gall and water (Psalms 69:21 and Matthew 27:34).

24. He would cry, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me!" (Psalms 22:1 and Matthew 27:46).

25. He would be cut down in His prime (Psalms 89:45 and 102:23-24).

26. None of His bones would be broken (Exodus 12:46, Psalms 34:20, and John 19:32-33).

27. They would look upon Him whom they had pierced (Zechariah 12:10 and John 19:34).

28. He would be executed with thieves (Isaiah 53:12 and Matthew 27:38).

29. He would be buried in a rich man's tomb (Isaiah 53:9 and Matthew 27:57-60).

[102](#) World Census of Religious Activities [U.N. Information Center, NY, 1989]). Cited in Frank Schaeffer's book *Dancing Alone* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Press, 1994), page 4.

[111](#) Bible commentator Adam Clarke's comment about this verse is most interesting: "But perhaps the goodness of God is here meant, for I cannot see how they could believe the Gospel in any way who denied the Lord Jesus Christ; unless, which is likely, their denial refers to this, that while

they acknowledged Jesus as the promised Messiah, they denied him to be the only Lord, Sovereign, and Ruler of the Church and of the world. There are many in the present day who hold the same opinion.”

[112](#) The International Standard Version (ISV) is the only major Bible that correctly translates the Greek ἀφόβως, ἑαυτοὺς ποιμαίνοντες into “shepherds who care only for themselves.” While most Bibles attempt to hide this negative reference to paid preachers.

[114](#) Some theologians and Bible commentators promote church authority by sweeping many of Jesus’ statements under the rug and singularly embracing Matthew 23:2-3, where Jesus said: “... The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do” (KJV). The implication is that since God placed Moses in a position of authority, it then follows that God placed others in similar positions within the New Testament Church. But we should understand how the King James incorporates an errant translation. More accurate modern translations render this verse, “The scribes and the Pharisees *have seated themselves* in the chair of Moses.” And there’s yet another issue beyond the translation. The synagogue had a special chair called “Moses’ Seat.” And it was from this chair that the Scriptures were read. Remember that in the 1st Century, worshipers had no Bibles or personal copies of the Scriptures. Thus what people heard read from “Moses’ seat” was their only exposure to God’s word. Therefore, Jesus was telling the people to observe the Scriptures, rather than the personal views of the Rabbis.

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18 — Scripture References

[John 7:16](#) So Jesus answered them and said, "My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me."

[John 8:31-32](#) So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

[III John 1:9-11](#) I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say. For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words; and not satisfied with this, he himself does not receive the brethren, either, and he forbids those who desire to do so and puts them out of the church. Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. The one who does good is of God; the one who does evil has not seen God.

[Jude 11](#) Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.

[I John 2:19-23](#) They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us. But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know. I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie is of the truth. Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies [Greek: *contradict, disavow, reject*] the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also.

[Mark 7:8-13](#) "Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men." He was also saying to them, "You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition. For Moses said, 'HONOR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER'; and, 'HE WHO SPEAKS EVIL OF FATHER OR MOTHER, IS TO BE PUT TO DEATH'; but you say, 'If a man says to his father or his mother, whatever

I have that would help you is Corban (that is to say, given to God),‘ you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or his mother; thus invalidating the word of God by your tradition which you have handed down; and you do many things such as that.”

[John 2:16](#) and to those who were selling the doves He said, “Take these things away; stop making My Father’s house a place of business.”

[Micah 3:5-11](#) Thus says the LORD concerning the prophets who lead my people astray; When they have something to bite with their teeth, They cry, “Peace,” But against him who puts nothing in their mouths They declare holy war. Therefore it will be night for you--without vision, And darkness for you--without divination. The sun will go down on the prophets, And the day will become dark over them. The seers will be ashamed And the diviners will be embarrassed. Indeed, they will all cover their mouths Because there is no answer from God. On the other hand I am filled with power-- With the Spirit of the LORD-- And with justice and courage To make known to Jacob his rebellious act, Even to Israel his sin. Now hear this, heads of the house of Jacob And rulers of the house of Israel, Who abhor justice And twist everything that is straight, Who build Zion with bloodshed And Jerusalem with violent injustice. Her leaders pronounce judgment for a bribe, Her priests instruct for a price And her prophets divine for money. Yet they lean on the LORD saying, “Is not the LORD in our midst? Calamity will not come upon us.”

[Isaiah 55:1](#) “Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; And you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk Without money and without cost.”

[Isaiah 52:3](#) For thus says the LORD, “You were sold for nothing and you will be redeemed without money.”

[Proverbs 23:23](#) Buy [Hebrew: *get, acquire*] truth, and do not sell it, Get wisdom and instruction and understanding.

[John 2:13-15](#) The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. And He made a scourge of cords, and drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables.

[Psalm 23:1](#) A Psalm of David. The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.

[Jeremiah 12:10](#) Many shepherds have ruined My vineyard, They have trampled down My field; They have made My pleasant field A desolate wilderness.

[Jeremiah 23:1](#) "Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of My pasture!" declares the LORD.

[Ezekiel 34:2](#) Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to those shepherds, Thus says the Lord GOD, "Woe, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock?"

[Ezekiel 34:8](#) As I live, declares the Lord GOD, surely because My flock has become a prey, My flock has even become food for all the beasts of the field for lack of a shepherd, and My shepherds did not search for My flock, but rather the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock.

[Matthew 21:12-13](#) And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves. And He said to them, "It is written, 'MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER', but you are making it a ROBBERS' DEN."

[Mark 11:15-17](#) Then they came to Jerusalem. And He entered the temple and began to drive out those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves; and He would not permit anyone to carry merchandise through the temple. And He began to teach and say to them, "Is it not written, 'MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL THE NATIONS,? But you have made it a ROBBERS' DEN."

[Luke 19:45-46](#) Jesus entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling, saying to them, "It is written, 'AND MY HOUSE SHALL BE A HOUSE OF PRAYER,' but you have made it a ROBBERS' DEN."

[Matthew 12:14](#) But the Pharisees went out and conspired against Him, as to how they might destroy Him.

[John 10:16](#) “I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd.”

[Matthew 23:8-10](#) “But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. Do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ.”

[Proverbs 13:22](#) A good man leaves an inheritance to his children’s children, And the wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous.

[John 9:18-22](#) The Jews then did not believe it of him, that he had been blind and had received sight, until they called the parents of the very one who had received his sight, and questioned them, saying, “Is this your son, who you say was born blind? Then how does he now see?” His parents answered them and said, “We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but how he now sees, we do not know; or who opened his eyes, we do not know. Ask him; he is of age, he will speak for himself.” His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone confessed Him to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue.

[Acts 1:15](#) At this time Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren (a gathering of about one hundred and twenty persons was there together), and said

[Acts 2:46](#) Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart,

[Acts 5:42](#) And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

[Acts 20:20](#) how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house

[I Corinthians 16:19](#) The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Prisca greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.

[Philemon 1:2](#) and to Apphia our sister, and to Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house:

[John 1:10](#) If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting;

[Matthew 21:12-13](#) And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves. And He said to them, "It is written, 'MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER'; but you are making it a ROBBERS' DEN."

[Mark 11:15-17](#) Then they came to Jerusalem. And He entered the temple and began to drive out those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves; and He would not permit anyone to carry merchandise through the temple. And He began to teach and say to them, "Is it not written, 'MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL THE NATIONS'? But you have made it a ROBBERS' DEN."

[Luke 19:45-46](#) Jesus entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling, saying to them, "It is written, 'AND MY HOUSE SHALL BE A HOUSE OF PRAYER,' but you have made it a ROBBERS' DEN."

[Mark 3:29](#) "but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin."

[Deuteronomy 25:4](#) You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing.

[Luke 10:7](#) "Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not keep moving from house to house."

[Revelation 1:3](#) The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John, who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.

[Revelation 22:7](#) And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book.

[Revelation 22:10](#) And he said to me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near."

[Revelation 22:18-19](#) I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.

[John 6:68](#) Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life."

[Revelation 2:6](#) Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

[Mark 7:7-9](#) "BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN. Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men." He was also saying to them, "You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition."

[John 17:18-23](#) "As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth. I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me."

[II Timothy 3:5](#) holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these.

[Matthew 11:12](#) From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force.

[Matthew 15:9](#) 15:9 BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.

[I John 3:14](#) We know that we have passed out of death into life, because

we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.

[John 10:29](#) My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

[John 14:28](#) You heard that I said to you, 'I go away, and I will come to you.' If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced because I go to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.

[John 5:37](#) And the Father who sent Me, He has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time nor seen His form.

[John 6:46](#) Not that anyone has seen the Father, except the One who is from God; He has seen the Father.

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## Information About This Book

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PUBLISHED BY

D. A. Taylor

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ISBN 9781311017093

Prepared on 06/17/23 at 08:45:45 AM

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