Course Description

Discipleship – Comparative Religions

Ministry Area - Education

This course was developed using the book, So What’s the Difference?, by Fritz Ridenour. This course will provide all Christians with a biblical, user-friendly material that will help them evangelize, disciple and minister to children, youth and families. The course is centered around a common testimony that binds all authentic believers in Christ together and distinguish them from other worldviews. Since there are so many views and opinions now available, it is more important than ever for biblical Christians to be able to recognize and spell out the basic differences between a Christian worldview and the beliefs held by neighbors, coworkers and schoolmates. This course will spell out the differences between the historic Christian faith and other views represented in major religions, cults and ideologies that are vying for the hearts and minds of people today. This course will also spell out how God’s Word should be the determining factor used to define the differences between the basic truths on which Christianity was founded and what other faiths believe.
Providence Baptist Church
Discipleship Class – Comparative Religions
Syllabus

Textbook: So What’s the Difference? – Fritz Ridenour

Publisher: Regal; 2nd edition (March 2, 2001)

Language: English

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Course Objectives

1. Observe how orthodox biblical Christianity differs from other faiths.
   a. Observe how God’s Word should be the plumb line used to define the differences between the basic truths on which Christianity was founded and what other faiths believe.
   b. Observe that the backbone of Christianity is Jesus Christ: who He is and what He did.
   c. Discuss how a biblical worldview understanding of Christianity should bring new excitement, enthusiasm, and power to your relationship with Jesus Christ.

2. Explore other religions and belief systems of the world.

3. Discover biblical truths and use those truths to evangelize, disciple, and minister to people of all walks of life. (Understanding your own belief system will make it easier for you to explain and share your faith with others.)

4. Discover how other belief systems influence your thoughts, feelings, and actions.

5. Understand that the most important part of a Christian’s belief system is knowing God.
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**Nothing New Under the Sun**

Eleven more viewpoints that undermine, challenge or attack Biblical Christianity

* Baha’i, Christian Science, Evolutionism, Freemasonry, Hare Krishna, The International Churches of Christ, Secular Humanism, Postmodernism, Unification Church (The Moonies), Unitarianism, Wicca (Witchcraft and Neo-Paganism)*

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<td>18</td>
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Homework

Unless otherwise directed, please read assigned text and complete weekly table measuring the difference between biblical Christianity and others faiths. (Plumb line: Christ died for our sins according the Scriptures...He was buried...He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. 1 Cor. 15:3,4). (see example below of weekly homework table to be completed.)

**Biblical Difference between Biblical Christianity and Roman Catholicism**

Christ died for our sins according the Scriptures...He was buried...He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. 1 Cor. 15:3,4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roman Catholicism</th>
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<tr>
<td>Regarding Authority</td>
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**Biblical Difference between Biblical Christianity and Eastern Orthodoxy**

Christ died for our sins according the Scriptures...He was buried...He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. 1 Cor. 15:3,4)

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**Biblical Difference between Biblical Christianity and Judaism**

Christ died for our sins according the Scriptures...He was buried...He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. 1 Cor. 15:3,4)

<table>
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<td>Regarding Salvation</td>
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Lesson I – Introduction

Today the Difference Matters More than Ever

..Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have... 1 Peter 3:15 NIV

I. Introduction

- Relative thinking, the idea that there is no objective absolute truth and “what’s true or right for you isn’t necessarily true or right for me,” has captured the imagination of vast numbers of people and has even infiltrated some Christian churches.

- There is increasing controversy in some denominations because some church leaders have abandoned Christian core teachings, including the incarnation of Christ, His redemptive work on the cross and His resurrection.

- School boards, other elected officials and the Supreme Court have sought to remove God from the classroom, making it difficult for Christian ministries and other Christian interests, by rulings and decisions of various kinds.

- Increasing numbers of people have fled “organized religion” and are seeking “spirituality” in many “nontraditional” forms, particularly the New Age movement. Also, many new cults and ideologies have appeared on the scene, some claiming to be legitimate Christianity with newer and deeper insights. In addition to the “newer” views, the old cults and ideologies have developed more subtle approaches and more convincing arguments.

- With a veritable smorgasbord of views and opinions now available, it is more important than ever for biblical Christians to be able to recognize and spell out the differences between a Christian worldview and the beliefs held by neighbors, coworkers, and schoolmates.
II. What is your Worldview?

Definition – Worldview: A set of assumptions that make up your personal outlook on the nature of the world and how to live in that world day by day. It is your “set of beliefs about the most important issues in life”.

To determine your worldview, answer the following questions.

1) Who or what is God?

2) Who am I and how do I operate in my world?

3) How can I tell right from wrong?

4) When it’s all over, where do I go?

5) How can I know the truth; for that matter how can I be sure that I know anything?

6) What does my life mean, and how do I fit into history, if at all?
III. Nonbiblical Worldviews:

1) Naturalism

2) Pantheism

3) Polytheism

4) Relativism
IV. Can you articulate your biblical worldview? Why is it so important to be able to articulate your biblical worldview?

Review and discuss briefly the following scripture references.

- 1 Peter 3:15
- Genesis 1:27
- 2 Corinthians 11:14
- Ephesians 6:12
- Genesis 3:1-15
V. Review

- There are differences—some significant, some not so significant—among all the branches or blocs of Christians throughout the world. So serious are some of these differences that members of one branch or bloc accuse members of another of not having full salvation (or having no salvation at all).

- The real issue is personal faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord—being justified by faith through the redemption that is through the blood of Christ Jesus (Romans 3:24).

- We will never completely comprehend the infinite God with our limited intellect, but that does not limit God’s ability to communicate what He wants us to know.

- Being a member of any one church or group does not guarantee automatic membership in the Body of Christ.

- Becoming a true Christian is a personal transaction between you and God. *No one else can do it for you.*

- The evidence for the biblical worldview is clearly written on the pages of the Bible. In the next lesson we will review this evidence that forms the foundation of this study.

**Meditation for the Week:**

- **Monday:** Romans 10:11
- **Tuesday:** Romans 10:12-13
- **Wednesday:** Romans 10:14-15
- **Thursday:** Romans 10:16
- **Friday:** Romans 10:17
Lesson 2

The Importance of a Biblical Worldview – Part I

..that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.” 1 Corinthians 15:3,4 NIV

I. Introduction

The evidence for the biblical worldview is clearly written on the pages of the Bible. In this lesson, we will review this evidence that forms the foundation of this course which is summed up in 1 Corinthians 15:3, 4. In this lesson we will answer the following questions.

- Can you be a Christian and not be biblical?
- Are there brands of Christianity that are unbiblical?
- What does it mean to have a plumb line for comparing faiths?

II. What is Biblical Christianity?

- “Biblical” means that the Christian believer searches seriously and carefully for the meaning of the Bible on its own terms, not changing its meaning to fit the times. Biblical Christians approach the Bible with reverence and respect, because they believe it is true and authoritative-that it contains God’s very words (II Timothy 3:16-17).

III. What is a Plumb Line –

A plumb line – a string with a pointed weight on the end–is still used today by masons to make sure they lay a brick wall straight and true. In the Old Testament, God told Amos, “Look, I am setting a plumb line among my people (Amos 7:8)

The Plumb Line we will use in this class for measuring the difference between biblical Christianity and other faiths will be based on the following scripture:

..that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.” 1 Corinthians 15:3,4 NIV
God’s Word will be the plumb line used in this book to define the differences between the basic truths on which Christianity was founded and what other faiths believe. We will explore the teachings of the bible on three key points, all contained in capsule form in the above scripture reference. (1 Corinthians 15:3, 4)

- The person and work of Christ – who He is and what He did us.
- Mankind’s major problem-all of us are sinners in rebellion against God and in need of a Savior.
- The truth and reliability of the Bible-divine inspiration of Scripture.

Based on given scripture references, answer the following key questions that people often raise about Jesus Christ.

1) Based on John 1:14, John 10:30, John 14:19, 5-9, John 8:58 – Was Jesus really God, or was he a great teacher and nothing more than that?

2) Based on Luke 1:35, Did Jesus’s virgin birth actually happen?


4) Review any of the following verses: Matthew 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24: 1-42; John 20 and 21. Did Christ actually rise from the dead?
IV. What is Sin?

1) According to 1 John 3:4, what is sin?


   Many religions and cults admit the problem of sin, but their answer is to seek salvation from sin through good works or by keeping rules and laws.

3) Based on Romans 3:23-24, How could Jesus Christ die for everyone’s sin? Isn’t every person responsible for his own sins?

4) Are we all good, all bad or in between? (Ephesians 2:1)

Review

• If Jesus Christ was not who He claimed to be (God), but only a man, then Christianity is a fraud and Jesus would have to be a liar or a lunatic. As C. S. Lewis said, “He leaves us no other alternative. He did not intend to.”

• People with an atheistic or naturalistic worldview scoff at the virgin birth because they cannot accept miracles or the supernatural. Other people object to the doctrine of the virgin birth on the grounds that it is similar to another legend, like pagan (polytheistic) stories of heroes who were half god, half man.

• One of the strongest reasons that many critics reject the doctrine of the Trinity is that it makes Christ co-equal with God the Father. The Trinity is the particular target of critics in religions like Judaism and Islam, and in cults such as Unitarianism, Jehovah’s Witnesses and Mormonism. All of these groups reduce Christ to a created being who is “second in command” at best or just another teacher on the same par with Buddha, Krishna and Moses.
• To claim there are absolute truths about right and wrong is viewed as being intolerant, bigoted or judgmental – the three great “sins” of our postmodern secular culture. According to the Bible, God has clearly shown us how to know what is objectively and absolutely right and wrong. In other words, God has defined sin for us and He has done it in two ways: general revelation (the moral law planted within each one of us) and special revelation (The Scriptures).

• Biblical Christians believe that Christ is God and that He died for our sins.

• Biblical Christians believe that by nature they are sinners, spiritually dead, and that their only hope of salvation from sin is faith in Christ’s death and resurrection.

• Biblical Christians believe they have a Bible that is inspired by the living God, and it is the only infallible rule of faith and practice.

In our next lesson, The Importance of a Biblical Worldview – Part II, we will discuss the authority of scripture and the Bible’s superiority to other books.

Meditation for the Week:

Monday: Romans 5:6
Tuesday: Romans 5:7
Wednesday: Romans 5:8
Thursday: Romans 5:9
Friday: Romans 5:10-11
Lesson 3

The Importance of a Biblical Worldview – Part II

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

I. Introduction

For Christians, the Scriptures are the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. Christians view these writings as the God-given basis for their faith. Inspiration of the bible is a main watershed between Christianity and other faiths. If the Bible cannot be trusted to be the inspired Word of God, then its claims concerning the deity of Christ, our sinful state and our need for salvation through faith in Christ’s death and resurrection have no force. The biblical Christian recognizes the Old and New Testaments as the only words that come from God Himself—the final authority for faith and practice. For biblical Christians, all claims to authority must be judged according to Scripture.

II. Is the Bible actually “inspired by God”. Answer the following two questions based on the following scripture references.

1) 2 Timothy 3:16

2) 2 Peter 1:21

III. Why is the Bible supposed to be superior to other books?

1) Authority

2) Accuracy
IV. What kind of proof can Christians offer for the Bible’s inspiration and accuracy?

1) New Testament Canon

2) Historical and scientific evidence for the Bible’s validity

3) Psalm 119:89

V. Why Christendom is so splintered. Points for discussion:

1) In the First Century, when Christ’s apostles founded the Church, (1) the Jews did not accept Christ as the Messiah, (2) the Roman government, which branded Christians outlaws because they insisted that Jesus, not Caesar, was Lord.

2) As the Church grew, an even greater threat came from within in the form of heresy, particularly Gnosticism which threatened to corrupt and twist the gospel into just another pagan religion or philosophy.

3) A continuing insistence by the Church at Rome on supreme power and authority over all of Christendom.

4) The Roman Church became more and more corrupt, which finally led to the Protestant Reformation, started by a Catholic monk named Martin Luther.

5) From one Christian Church came three major branches or trunks: Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and Protestant, which further divided into many different denominations.
Review

- To claim anything less than God-breathed inspiration for Scripture is to claim that Jesus is mistaken or lying; if He is either, he is something far less than God. And if He is far less than God, His work of atonement on the cross for our sins is insufficient.

- There is plenty of historical and scientific evidence for the Bible’s validity and evidence in the form of fulfilled prophecy. The Old Testament contains over 300 references to the Messiah that were fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

- Another piece of evidence for the Bible’s inspiration is its unity.

- In the Early Church, apostolic authorship (or at least close association with a recognized apostle) was one of the chief criteria for deciding what books should be included in the New Testament canon (group of authoritative books).

How did the simple gospel taught by Paul and other writers of the New Testament develop into scores of viewpoints that all call themselves Christian but who cannot agree often on very crucial issues? Why do these disagreements persist to this day? Can the gaps ever be bridged?

To begin seeking answers to these challenging questions, we will begin to look at the differences between the evangelical Protestant view presented in this chapter and the Roman Catholic view being taught by the Vatican as the second millennium ended and the twenty first century began.

We will begin next week with our first worldview, Roman Catholicism.

Meditation for the Week:

- Monday: Psalm 119:160
- Tuesday: Psalm 119:172
- Wednesday: Psalm 119:165
- Thursday: Psalm 119:129-130
- Friday: Psalm 119:133
Lesson 4

Roman Catholicism
(The One True Church?)

So What’s the Difference

“. . .that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.” 1 Corinthians 15:3,4 NIV

I. Introduction

To compare specific or particular differences between the Catholic Church and the many Protestant churches that came out of the Reformation would be a hopeless task. For our purposes, we will compare the plumb line of biblical Christianity to the Roman Catholic Church regarding authority (Rome’s claim to be the only “true church,” with the exclusive right and ability to interpret the Word of God for believers) and salvation (how a person finds justification from his sins).

II. Sola Scripture or the Bible Plus Tradition?

- Sola Scriptura means the bible alone is all we need for our spiritual authority. All the things we need to know, believe and practice are clearly stated in Scriptures, which are given by inspiration of God.

- The Roman Catholic Church believes that the apostles passed on their authority to succeeding bishops. As the years went by, the Church added certain teachings based on what it calls Sacred Tradition. Because the bishops supposedly possessed the same apostolic insight and wisdom as the apostles, the traditions they began to pass on were given equal weight with Scripture. Instead of sola scriptura (the Bible alone), the Catholic Church assumed and claimed the correct approach to be Scripture plus tradition.

III. As a Christian, why do you believe Sola Scriptura is so important?
IV. Review pages 39-40 and be ready to discuss the Seven Sacraments of Catholicism.

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Biblical Difference between Biblical Christianity and Roman Catholicism

Christ died for our sins according the Scriptures...He was buried...He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. 1 Cor. 15:3,4)

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<th>Roman Catholicism</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scripture</td>
<td>Scripture and “Sacred Tradition” are equal in authority. Rome says the magisterium (teaching authority of the Roman Church) has been entrusted to interpret the Bible for Catholics, who are not to interpret it for themselves.</td>
<td>God justifies the believer by declaring him or her righteous, and that sanctification is a lifelong process of becoming holy as God works within (John 17:15-19; Phil 2:12,13).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sanctification</td>
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<td>Purgatory</td>
<td>Catholics believe they cannot pay for all their sins in this life, and at death they go to purgatory for an undetermined time to be made totally fit for heaven.</td>
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<td>Mary</td>
<td>Considered co-mediator with Christ between God and man –and “Redemptrix”, Christ’s “associate in the redemption.” Most explicit, perhaps, were the words of Pope Leo XIII in 1891: “As no man goeth to the Father but by the Son, so no man goeth to Christ but by His mother.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pope</td>
<td>Peter was the first pope, and that the pope is infallible when he speaks “ex cathedra” (“from the chair” or with authority) on matters of faith and morals.</td>
<td>No human being is infallible, and only Christ is head of the Church (Eph 1:22; Col. 1:18)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Meditation for the Week:

Monday: 2 Timothy 3:13
Tuesday: 2 Timothy 3:14
Wednesday: 2 Timothy 3:15
Thursday: 2 Timothy 3:16
Friday: 2 Timothy 3:17
Lesson 5

Eastern Orthodoxy

(Just like the Catholics except for the Pope?)

– So What’s the Difference

..that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.” 1 Corinthians 15:3,4 NIV

I. Introduction

Despite the substantial number of members of Orthodox churches in the United States—some estimates go as high as 6 million—few evangelicals or other Protestants know much about Orthodox Christianity. They are, indeed, a “best kept secret” as far as other parts of Christendom are concerned.

The first thing to understand is that the Orthodox are not just like the Roman Catholics but without a pope. While there are many similarities between Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism, there are some very key differences.

Nor is Orthodoxy one big church that split away from the church at Rome in 1054 and now has its main headquarters at a certain city. There are at least 13 autocephalous (independent and self-governing) churches, including the four ancient patriarchates that still exist in the Middle East: Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem. The current number of orthodox believers worldwide exceeds 200 million.

Most of those who are heads of Orthodox churches are called patriarchs; some go by the title “archbishop” or “metropolitan.” For historical reasons, the Orthodox Church at Constantinople and its patriarch enjoy a certain “primacy of honor” but have no power to interfere in the internal affairs of the other Orthodox churches.

II. Review pages 59-60 and be prepared to discuss why the Orthodox pray to saints and icons.
III. Protestants believe that only the Scriptures are authoritative, and all believers have the right and responsibility to examine Scripture for themselves. What is the Eastern Orthodoxy’s teaching?

IV. What do evangelical Protestants have in common with Eastern Orthodoxy?
**Biblical Difference between Biblical Christianity and Eastern Orthodoxy**

Christ died for our sins according the Scriptures... He was buried... He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. (1 Cor. 15:3,4)

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Eastern Orthodoxy</strong></th>
<th><strong>Christianity (with scripture references)</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scripture</td>
<td><strong>Scripture</strong> is the supreme authority over the church, the sole guide for faith and practice (2 Tim. 3:16,17; 1 John 5:13)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apostolic Succession</td>
<td>Orthodoxy teaches that apostolic succession occurred through bishops and Church fathers who developed a “corpus of tradition” equal to Scripture.</td>
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<td>Salvation</td>
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<td>Salvation comes through faith in Christ (Romans 3:24; Eph 2:8,9)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Praying to Saints and Icons</td>
<td>Praying specifically to Mary, because Mary and certain saints have achieved deification (become God).</td>
<td>Icons – (paintings of Christ, apostles, Mary and other saints) those who lack learning or the time to study can come in to the church and see on its walls all they need to know to understand their faith.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Meditation for the Week:

Monday: Ephesians 2:6
Tuesday: Ephesians 2:7
Wednesday: Ephesians 2:8
Thursday: Ephesians 2:9
Friday: Ephesians 2:10
Lesson 6

Judaism

(Foundation for the Christian Faith, but still looking for the Messiah)

So What’s the Difference

“.that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.” 1 Corinthians 15:3,4 NIV

I. Introduction

What makes a person Jewish? Is Jewishness a nationality, a religion or both? What can we say to our Jewish friends about Jesus Christ, born Jew but rejected by many of His own people? (See John 1:11.) These are some of the questions often asked about the people who follow one of the world’s oldest living religions.

To begin with, the Jewish people are descended from the ancient Hebrews. This name comes from Eber, their traditional ancestor (mentioned in Gen. 10:21). We can go back even farther to the name Shem, a son of Noah (mentioned in the same verse). From Shem comes the word “semitic,” which refers to a group of peoples that includes both Jews and Arabs.

The history of the Jewish nation is contained in the Old Testament, the only Scriptures recognized by the Jewish people. Of particular importance is the Torah—the Law contained in the first five books of the Old Testament.

For Judaism, another critical part of the Old Testament are the writings of the prophets. These spokesmen for God stressed the importance of justice and love, placing that importance far above the empty ritualism of keeping the external regulations of the Law, while missing its intent (see Mic. 6:8). Striving for decent behavior (exhibiting justice and love) is still basic to Jewish thinking. It is no coincidence that many charitable organizations are led and supported by Jewish people.

Since the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by the Romans in A.D. 70, the Jews have had no place to offer sacrifices for their sins as required by the Law of Moses (see Deut. 12). After this dreadful loss, they scattered to almost every nation in the world where they established communities and build synagogues to keep their faith alive.

The Jewish people have been persecuted many times, worst of all by the Nazis who murdered 6 million Jews in the Holocaust. In 1948, the state of Israel was born and became a homeland to Jewish people immigrating from all over the world. In 1967, the Israelis captured all of Jerusalem, the first time they had held it as a free people since 586 B.C.
II. Teachings/Practices *(Review pages 67-69 and list at least two Jewish customs and laws)*

1. Orthodox Jews will not work, travel, use the phone, write, touch money or pose for pictures on the Sabbath.

2.

3.
# Biblical Difference between Biblical Christianity and Judaism

Christ died for our sins according the Scriptures... He was buried... He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. (1 Cor. 15:3,4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Judaism</th>
<th>Christianity (with scripture references)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scripture</td>
<td>The three books – the Torah, the Mishnah and the Talmud-rule every facet of the Orthodox Jew’s life. They try to follow the letter of the Law written down by Moses in addition to added material like the Mishnah and Talmud.</td>
<td>Jesus Christ is God as well as man, and He died to redeem all men from sin (Mark 10:45; John 1:13, 14; 1 Pet 2:24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus Christ</td>
<td></td>
<td>Jesus Christ is God as well as man, and He died to redeem all men from sin (Mark 10:45; John 1:13, 14; 1 Pet 2:24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God</td>
<td>Jews believe that the Lord God is one (using Deut. 6:4).</td>
<td>Everyone is born in sin and falls short of God’s standards (See Romans 3:10, 23; 5:12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sin</td>
<td></td>
<td>Everyone is born in sin and falls short of God’s standards (See Romans 3:10, 23; 5:12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvation</td>
<td>Jews believe that anyone, Jew or Gentile, may gain salvation through commitment to the one true God and through moral living.</td>
<td>Everyone is born in sin and falls short of God’s standards (See Romans 3:10, 23; 5:12)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Meditation for the Week:

Monday: Isaiah 53:1-2
Tuesday: Isaiah 53:3
Wednesday: Isaiah 53:4
Thursday: Isaiah 53:5
Friday: Isaiah 53:6
Lesson 7

Islam

(Allah is One, and Christ was just a Prophet)

– So What’s the Difference

..that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.” 1 Corinthians 15:3,4 NIV

I. Introduction

Here are some possible questions for Jeopardy or some other TV quiz show. What major religion

• Has gained thousands of converts in North America, including many professional athletes?

• Is the youngest among major world religions but still one of the largest?

• Is so missionary minded that it is seeking to convert Western countries, not just African and Asian countries?

The answer to all of the above is Islam, a religion that claims nearly 1 billion followers in countries throughout the world. Islam originated in what is now Saudi Arabia, and from there is expanded along trade routes to Africa and Asia. The country with the most Muslims is Indonesia, with 120 million. In addition, there are millions more in parts of Eastern and Western Europe and in the Americas. One out of every six human beings on the face of the earth subscribes to the faith of Islam.

Islam is the correct name for the religion often incorrectly called Mohammedanism. The word “Islam” means “submission” (to Allah, the God of Mohammed, the man who founded this religion). A believer in Mohammed’s religion is a Muslim, meaning “one who lives his life according to God’s will”.

II. Five Pillars of the Muslim Faith

1. Statement of belief

2. Prayer

3. Alms

4. Ramadan

5. Pilgrimage to Mecca

III. The Black Muslims are American in Origin

• In 1913, Timothy Drew, who had changed his name to Noble Drew Ali, taught that Blacks were originally from Morocco (not Ethiopia as many scholars say) and that they had been enslaved by the “Caucasian Devil.” Ali called for the overthrow of the tyranny of the White culture. After Ali died in 1919, Wallace Fard Mohammed claimed to be “Ali reincarnated” and formed the Nation of Islam in Detroit in 1930.

• Sometime after 1935, Fard disappeared and Elijah Mohammed assumed leadership of the movement.

• In the 1950s and 1960s, a very successful recruiter for the Nation of Islam, Malcolm X, began moving away from Elijah Mohammed’s positions and teachings. He challenged the leadership of Elijah Mohammed and finally was assassinated by Black Muslims in 1965. Malcolm X’s beliefs, however, did not die with him. By the early 1970s, Black nationalism was disavowed by key Black Muslim leaders, links to orthodox Islam were established and non-Black members were admitted.
### Biblical Difference between Biblical Christianity and Islam

Christ died for our sins according the Scriptures...He was buried...He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. (1 Cor. 15:3,4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scripture</th>
<th>Islam</th>
<th>Christianity (with scripture references)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Muslims believe in four God-inspired books: the Torah of Moses (what Christians call the Pentateuch), the Zabur (Psalms of David), the Injil (Gospel) of Jesus, and the Qur’an. But, because Muslims believe that Jews and Christians corrupted their Scriptures, the Qur’an is Allah’s final word to mankind. It supersedes and overrules all previous writings.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus Christ</td>
<td></td>
<td>Christ is the Son of God, the sinless Redeemer who died and was raised again for sinful man (John 1:13,14; 1 Pet. 3:18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Muslims believe there is no God but Allah.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sin</td>
<td></td>
<td>We are born corrupted by sin, spiritually dead apart from God’s grace, and that no one does good apart from faith in Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:12; Eph. 5:8-10).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvation</td>
<td>Allah does not love those who do wrong, and each person must earn his or her own salvation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Meditations for the Week:

Monday: Matthew 8:29
Tuesday: Matthew 17:5
Wednesday: John 1:1-5
Thursday: John 8:58
Friday: John 10:30
Lesson 8

Hinduism

(We are all Divine)

– So What’s the Difference

..*that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.* 1 Corinthians 15:3,4 NIV

I. Introduction

The word “Hinduism” comes from the Indus river, which flows through what is now Pakistan. In the third millennium B.C., the great civilization of Mohendo-jaro flourished there, populated by the dark skinned Dravidians. For what archeologists have been able to discover, the Dravidians had a polytheistic fertility religion that centered upon worship of the forces of nature and use of rituals, merging human sexuality with the hope for abundant crops.

About 2000 B.C., the light-skinned and warlike Aryans came over the Caucasus mountains and conquered the people of the Indus Valley. The Aryans also had a polytheistic religion, and some of the most popular Dravidian gods received new Aryan names but retained their old functions. The Aryans wrote down their hymns, prayers, mythic stories and chants into the Vedas, Brahamanas, Aranyakas and Upanishads, composed between 2000 and 700 B.C. and known as the Vedic literature. These writings are considered by Hindus to be supernaturally inspired and are as sacred to them as the Bible is to Christians.

II. Two Core Beliefs of Hinduism

1. **Reincarnation** – the belief that the *atman*, a person’s uncreated and eternal soul, must repeatedly be recycled into the world in different bodies (animals, plants or even inanimate objects). Reincarnation is the process that takes the Hindu through the great wheel of *samsara*, the thousands or millions of lives (all full of suffering) that each atman must endure before reaching *moksha*-liberation from suffering and union with the infinite.

2. **Karma** (”action”) – the law of cause and effect. For the Hindu, karma means merit or demerit, which attaches to one’s atman (soul) according to how one lives one’s life. Karma from past lives affects a person’s present life, and karma from this life will determine a person’s station in the next life.
III. Review page 96 and express in your own words why the Hindu’s god is too small?
Biblical Difference between Biblical Christianity and **Hinduism**

Christ died for our sins according the Scriptures... He was buried... He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. 1 Cor. 15:3,4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hinduism</th>
<th>Christianity (with scripture references)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scripture</td>
<td>Scripture is the supreme authority over the church, the sole guide for faith and practice (2 Tim. 3:16,17; 1 John 5:13).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus Christ</td>
<td>Hindus believe that Jesus is not God but just one of many incarnations, or avatars, of Vishnu.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God</td>
<td>God is an eternal, personal, spiritual Being in three persons-Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Matt 3:13-17; 28:19; 2 Cor 13:14).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sin</td>
<td>Hindus call sin “utter illusion” because they believe all material reality is illusory.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvation</td>
<td>Salvation is gained only through believing in the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:24; 1 Cor. 15:3).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Meditation for the Week:

Monday: Titus 2:11
Tuesday: Titus 2:12
Wednesday: Titus 2:13
Thursday: Titus 2:14
Friday: Titus 2:15
Lesson 9

Buddhism

(You Yourself Must Make the Effort)

– So What’s the Difference

..

..that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.” 1 Corinthians 15:3,4 NIV

I. Introduction

Unlike the Hindu religion, Buddhism can point to an individual founder and can look back to a date for its beginnings. The man who formulated Buddhism was Siddhartha Gautama, who was born a Hindu about 560 B.C., at Lumbini near the border of India in what is now Nepal.

Tradition says that when Guatama was born, a seer prophesied that he would become the greatest ruler in human history. The seer added that if Guatama ever saw four things—sickness, old age, death and a monk who had renounced the world—the boy would give up his earthly rule and discover a way of salvation for all mankind.

To refute the prophecy, Guatama’s father built a palace for his son, giving orders that neither the sick, the old, a dead body or a monk be allowed near the palace. Guatama grew up in this way, protected from the world. He later married a beautiful girl named Yasodhara, who bore him a son.

But the “gods” had other plans for Guatama. One day, as he rode through the park that surrounded his palace, he saw a man who was covered with terrible sores, a man who tottered with age, a corpse being carried to its grave and a begging monk who appeared to be peaceful and happy.

That night, as Gautama reported later, he began to think about the look of peace on the face of the monk. He began to wonder if there was more to that than the luxuries of his palace. Late that night he took a last look at his sleeping wife and child, then left the palace forever.

Guatama, 29 years old, was determined to solve the riddle of life. He shaved his head, put on a yellow robe and wandered the countryside as a beggar monk. First he studied the Upanishads with the finest teachers, but he could find no satisfaction in these writings. Then he tried to find salvation through self-denial. He starved himself until he was a walking skeleton, but this brought him no happiness either.
Finally, he sat under a tree for 40 days and nights. He swore that he would not move until he found what he was searching for. During this time, Mara, the evil one, tried to make him give up his quest. At the end of the 40 days, he experienced the highest degree of God-consciousness-nirvana-literally, the “blowing out” of the flame of desire and the negation of suffering. Through this experience, Guatama felt he had found salvation.” From then on, he was known as Buddha or the “enlightened one.”

II. One of Buddha’s most important teachings was his theory of the Middle Way. For Buddha, the Middle Way was a spiritual path of salvation, winding between the extreme asceticism and the unrestrained sensuality he had known while a Hindu. List at least three teachings on the Middle Way.

1. 

2. The cause of suffering is craving (selfish desire).

3. 

4.
### Biblical Difference between Biblical Christianity and Buddhism

Christ died for our sins according the Scriptures... He was buried... He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. 1 Cor. 15:3,4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Buddhism</strong></th>
<th><strong>Christianity</strong> (with scripture references)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scripture</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Scripture is the supreme authority over the church, the sole guide for faith and practice (2 Tim. 3:16,17; 1 John 5:13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jesus Christ</strong></td>
<td>Buddhists identify Christ as a good teacher but less important than Buddha.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>God</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>God is personal, omniscient and omnipotent (see Job 42:1-6; Ps. 115:3; Matt. 19:26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sin</strong></td>
<td>Buddhists believe that sin is the lust that arises in one’s life, and they seek to rid themselves of lustful desires by self-effort or by calling on Bodhisattvas for help.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Salvation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Suffering</strong></td>
<td>Buddhists believe that upon achieving nirvana, he would escape the suffering of life.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Effort</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Without the help of God, the only way to end desire is to die. But with God, we can become “new creatures” who die (figuratively) to selfish desires (John 3:5; 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 2:20)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Meditation for the Week:

Monday: Job 42:1-6
Tuesday: Ps 115:3
Wednesday: Matt 19:26
Thursday: Matt 14:33
Friday: John 1:34
Lesson 10

Where Did the Cults Come From?

..that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.” 1 Corinthians 15:3,4 NIV

I. Introduction

Before discussing some of the cultic movements that are directly at odds with Biblical Christianity, we need to define what we mean by the word “cult.” In this postmodern age that puts such a high value on tolerance, use of such a label is often seen as insensitivity at best and arrogant name-calling at worst. To mention a cult evokes images of brainwashed weirdos conducting strange rituals that sometimes end in death.

But what is a cult? What do its members believe? The word “cult” (from the Latin for “worship”) is defined by Webster as “a religion regarded as unorthodox or spurious.” In Webster’s eyes, a cult is an organization opposing orthodoxy. When Christians speak of cults, they mean groups which they believe do not hold “orthodox (biblical) Christian views.” Therefore the label “cult” as used here is not intended to be derogatory but only a semantic way of recognizing the difference between Biblical Christianity and the beliefs that certain groups might hold.

In fact, some cults (the Mormons, for example) might call Biblical Christians “cultists” because of their belief in creeds that are, in the opinion of the Mormons, based more on Greek philosophy than on the teachings of the New Testament. Early Christianity was seen as a cult by much of the Jewish establishment from which it sprang, as well as by the Roman government, which found Christians to be a pesky bunch that wouldn’t conform to the first-century religious norm and posed a serious threat to peace and tranquility.

The late Walter Martin who spent over 30 years researching cults and working with cultists, defines cults as groups which hold doctrines “contradictory to orthodox Christianity,” yet claim to trace their origin to orthodox sources and may even be in harmony with some of those sources. Another typical characteristic of a cult, says Martin, is that it is “a group of people gathered around a specific person or person’s misinterpretation of the Bible.” Obvious examples are Jehovah’s Witnesses, who began with Charles Taze Russell; the Mormons, who look back to Joseph Smith as their founder and first prophet; and Christian Scientists, who follow the teachings of Mary Baker Eddy.
II. Five Major Characteristics of Cultists

1. They reject the Trinity; that is, they disbelieve in Jesus Christ as God.

2. Cultists usually believe that all Christian churches are wrong and that their group has the only real truth about God.

3. They claim to believe the Bible but they distort its teachings to suit their own peculiar view of mankind, God, The Holy Spirit, heaven and hell, salvation and many other doctrines.

4. Cults deny that people can be saved by faith in Christ alone.

5. Cults are skilled at using Christian terminology, but they are not talking the same language as Biblical Christians.
   - Commonly understood words like “god,” “Christ,” “faith,” “sin,” “salvation,” etc, mean entirely different things to a cultist and a Christian.

III. Why Cults Grow So Fast

1. Cults offer answers to human needs that aren’t being met by Christian churches.

2. Cults seem to offer practical solutions to issues like loneliness, spiritual emptiness and the desire to find a way to please God by serving Him faithfully.
IV. Other Characteristics of Cults

1. Cults offer counterfeit salvation, no matter how real it may seem for a while.

2. The fellowship in many cults is conditional, that is, you must stay in line.

3. Express the smallest deviation in doctrine and you usually will be rejected, shunned or expelled.

4. Being in a cult is hard work. Keeping with all the effort you are expected to expend can easily wear you out, if not physically, then mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

IV. As you learn about these various groups, be aware that our first line of defense against their lure and attractiveness is to know God’s Word and be able to “test all things” with biblical truth.

Review the following scripture references for discussion.

- 1 Thess. 5:21, 11
- 2 Timothy 2:4-16
- Eccles 1:9
VI. How, in a few brief sentences, (based on what you now know about cults), would you answer the question, “How now shall we live?”

Meditation for the Week:

Monday: 1 Thess 5:21-22
Tuesday: 1 Thess 5:23
Wednesday: 1 Thess 5:24
Thursday: 2 Timothy 2:15
Friday: 2 Timothy 2:16
Lesson 11

Jehovah Witnesses (JWs)

There is No Hell...Hard Work Earns “Paradise”

..that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.” 1 Corinthians 15:3,4 NIV

I. Introduction

The roots of the JWs go back to Charles Taze Russell (1852-1916) who, as a teenager, rejected many of the views taught in his Congregational church, particularly the doctrines of hell and the Trinity, which struck him as unreasonable. For a while, the teenage Russell was a skeptic, but soon he was influenced by Adventist teaching that assured him there was no eternal punishment, because the wicked were annihilated. His faith in Scripture was restored, but he remained totally distrustful of all church and denominations.

By the time he was 18, Russell formed his own Bible study and began developing his own system of theology, emphasizing the second coming of Christ, which many Adventists had predicted would happen in 1874. When it didn’t happen, Russell was further influenced by some Adventists who decided that Christ’s coming had happened in a “spiritual and invisible way” in 1874.

In 1879, Russell parted company with the Adventists and launched his own magazine, eventually known as the Watchtower.

Russell never had any formal theological training, and his tempestuous career included his exposure in court in 1912 as a perjurer. He claimed to know the Greek alphabet, but under examination he could not read Greek letters. Nonetheless, he wrote a six-book series called Studies in the Scriptures, which he described as “practically the Bible itself.”

When World War I started in 1914, Russell claimed that it was the “beginning of Armageddon.” But Armageddon never happened that year, or even the next. Russell died in 1916, a failed Watchtower prophet, but he would not be the last.

In 1917, Joseph F. Rutherford, a lawyer who had served as legal advisor to the WTBTS, because its new president. He set 1925 as the new date for Armageddon. When 1925 came and went without Armageddon, the WTBTS and Rutherford backed away from its prediction, claiming that he had been “misunderstood” by JW faithful who had “erroneously” anticipated the end, which wasn’t what the Lord had stated at all.
Another Rutherford innovation was the door-to-door visitation program for which JWS are famous. As president of WTBTS, one of Rutherford’s main goals was to increase membership, which he attempted to do by spreading the word that only 144,000 people were going to make it to heaven. When that met with opposition, Rutherford later announced that everyone who had become a JW before 1935 would go to heaven (the “little flock”) while everyone who became a JW after 1935 would be among the “great crowd” who would not go to heaven but could look forward to living on Earth in a new paradise after Armageddon and the Millennium.

When Rutherford died in 1942, there still had been no Armageddon. The next Watchtower president, Nathan Knorr (1905-1977), was cut from a different cloth than Rutherford or Russell. An almost reticent man who stayed in the background, Knorr changed Watchtower policy and made all its books and other publications from that point on anonymous. Although he joined Rutherford and Russell as a failed prophet, Knorr’s presidency was, nonetheless, marked by a strong emphasis on training and education, as well as increases in world mission work and individual evangelism. Many new JW textbooks and doctrinal teachings were written and published during this span, as well as the JW translation of the Bible, The New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures.

Despite the reversals of 1975 and huge defections from the ranks, when Knorr died in 1977 there were still over 2 million active JWs around the world.

II. Discuss in your own words Jehovah Witnesses view of Armageddon.

III. Explain JW weekly schedule and why you think they are so effective in sharing and defending their faith, if indeed they are effective.
Biblical Difference between Biblical Christianity and Jehovah’s Witnesses

Christ died for our sins according the Scriptures...He was buried...He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.  1 Cor. 15:3,4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Jehovah’s Witnesses</th>
<th>Christianity (with scripture references)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>Christians depend on the guidance of the Holy Spirit as they read the Scriptures and learn to obey God not man (Acts 5:29; 17:11; 1 John 2:26,27)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trinity</td>
<td>Deny the doctrine of the Trinity, calling it an insult to God-given intelligence and reason. And, because God is not a God of confusion (1 Cor 14:33) they reason that he would never author such a confusing doctrine, Satan is the author instead.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christ’s Deity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resurrection</td>
<td>Following His resurrection, Jesus appeared to His disciples, and they were frightened, thinking they were seeing a ghost. Jesus asked them to touch Him and see that he had flesh and bones. Then, for good measure, He ate a piece of broiled fish. Luke 24:36-43.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christ’s Return</td>
<td>They believe that Christ returned to Earth invisibly in 1914 and now rules from heaven, “no longer visible to human sight.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man’s Immortality</td>
<td>They claim that man does not have an immortal soul; and when man dies, man’s spirit (life force) goes out and “no longer exists.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Meditation for the Week:

Monday: Acts 13:2
Tuesday: Romans 8:14, 26,27
Wednesday: 1 Cor 12:11
Thursday: Hebrews 3:7
Friday: Rev 2:7
Lesson 12
Mormonism
As God Is, Man Can Become

..that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.” 1 Corinthians 15:3,4 NIV

I. Introduction – How It All Began

The fastest growing and most successful cult in the history of the United States, and perhaps the world, is the Mormons, officially known as The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS). Increasing at an average rate of 300,000 converts a year (as many as 75 percent of whom may be former Protestants), membership in the Mormon Church reached 10.6 million worldwide in 1999.

The story of Mormonism started when a 14 year old boy named Joseph Smith, Jr., had a vision in which two personages—whom he believed to be the Father and the Son—appeared to him. He asked them which Christian denomination he should join and they told him to join none of them because they were all “wrong and corrupt.”

In 1823, Smith, then 17, saw the angel Moroni appear at this bedside and told him of a book written on golden plates by former inhabitants of the continent that would contain “the fullness of the everlasting gospel.” Four years later, Smith dug up the plates and began translating their “Reformed Egyptian” writing with the help of two special stones called “Urim” and Thummin.”

As Smith translated the plates, he sat behind a curtain, gazing into a hat, supposedly reading lines of the Book of Mormon (BOM) as they appeared on “seer stones” and dictating each line to a scribe outside the curtain. It should be noted that as a youth and young man, Joseph was a well-known hunter for buried treasure with the aid of a seer (or peep) stone. Using a seer stone to get information otherwise unavailable is called scrying” (from descry, “to read”), an occult practice still popular in contemporary witchcraft.

Despite Mormon denials of Smith’s occult practices, incontrovertible evidence shows that in 1826 he was convicted of “glass looking” (using a seer stone), a misdemeanor, because those who did scrying were often con men.

From the early 1830s to the early 1940s, Smith continued to receive revelations that guided him in where to go and what to do next, as well as how to establish new and different doctrines.
By 1838, the Mormons had been driven completely from Missouri into Illinois, where Smith led the development of the thriving city of Nauvoo. Tension between Mormons and non-Mormons increased when the *Nauvoo Expositor* published stories exposing the Mormon practice of polygamy. Smith ordered the destruction of the newspaper and wound up in jail in nearby Carthage, Illinois. A crowd of about 200 attacked the building, and a gunfight ensued. Mormons claim their founder died as a “Christian martyr,” but the truth is he died fighting, using a six-shooter that had been smuggled to him, and he succeeded in killing at least two of his assailants.

Following Joseph Smith’s death, Brigham Young won a power struggle for leadership and led a large number of LDS west, where they settled in the Valley of the Great Salt Lake in 1847. Under Young, polygamy became formal practice of the church, and he himself had 20 wives and fathered 57 children.

As the Mormon Church headed into the twentieth century, with polygamy rescinded and statehood gained, a more positive public image was sought in order to gain more converts. A new strategy, designed to blend the Mormon Church with mainstream Christianity, claimed, “Mormonism is Christianity; Christianity is Mormonism; they are one and the same.”
Biblical Difference between Biblical Christianity and Mormonism

Christ died for our sins according the Scriptures... He was buried... He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. (1 Cor. 15:3,4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scripture</th>
<th>Mormonism</th>
<th>Christianity (with scripture references)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trinity</td>
<td>Mormons believe that the doctrine of the Trinity was a jumble of “inconsistencies and contradictions.” Joseph Smith taught that Jesus Christ, God the Father, and the Holy Ghost were “three distinct personages and three Gods.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God</td>
<td>Mormon list 8 requirements that must be met if a person is to merit forgiveness from personal sins and thereby attain godhood. ..faith in Christ, being baptized, becoming a member of the LDS church, keeping the commandments, doing temple work and accepting Joseph Smith and his successor’s as “God’s mouthpiece.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heaven</td>
<td>Joseph Smith taught that most of mankind will enter one of three levels of heaven: telestial, terrestrial or celestial. Apostle Bruce McConkie taught that eternal life in celestial heaven is for Mormons only.</td>
<td>Heaven is the dwelling place of God (See Ps 73:25) which will become home for all believers in Christ’s full atonement for personal sins (1 John 4:10). To be in heaven is to be in Christ’s presence (Luke 23:43; John 14:3; 2 Cor 5:8; 1 John 3:2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Meditation for the Week:

Monday: Ps 73:25
Tuesday: Luke 23:43
Wednesday: John 14:3
Thursday: 2 Cor 5:8
Friday: 1 John 3:2
Lesson 13

New Age

(The Serpent’s Old Lie In an Updated Package)

– So What’s the Difference

*.that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.” 1 Corinthians 15:3,4 NIV

I. Introduction – How It All Began

New Age ideas go all the way back to the garden, where the serpent asked Eve if God really said she couldn’t eat from that tree (See Gen. 3:1-5).

New Age concepts find their roots in many ancient sources, including the Babylonian mystery rituals, which are supposed to elevate humans to godlike status, nature worship; occult practices and reincarnation.

The New Age draws heavily from Hinduism, which, besides reincarnation, teaches concepts like monism (all in one) and pantheism (all is god). Another contributing stream of the New Age movement is Buddhism, which teaches mind control, meditation and spiritual enlightenment, as well as reincarnation.

New Age thought also borrows from Taoism (produced “dowism”), a Chinese philosophy that teaches that all things are constantly changing (the process called Yin and Yang); and, therefore, nothing is absolute; all is relative, including morals and ethics.

From Gnosticism, the New Age adapts the concept of esoteric knowledge, which is supposed to ignite a divine spark and power within and, therefore, negates the need for Christ’s atoning death.

New Age thinking is a hybrid or blend of all of the above, plus several other ideas and phenomena of modern origin, such as unidentified flying objects (UFOs), extraterrestrial intelligence and psychokinesis (bending objects like silverware into pretzel shapes by applying the mind).

So eclectic is the NAM that it is difficult to describe a “complete” New Ager; some buy into one portion of New Age thinking, while others accept and practice other pieces and parts. In addition to those who consider themselves New Agers, there are millions more who have adopted New Age understandings of reality and are using these ideas to develop what they
consider a practical and useful philosophy of life. The NAM has even caught many Christians (and pseudo-Christians) in its web.

Because the NAM is so diverse, it is difficult to estimate the number of people who are New Agers. Various polls taken in recent years provide considerable evidence that a large number of people are interested in New Age activities. For example, 66 percent of American adults claim to have had a psychic experience. Thirty million Americans (one in four) say they believe in reincarnation. Ten million Americans say they are involved in some sort of Eastern mysticism. Forty-four percent of American adults believe they have been in contact with someone who has died (spiritism). Fourteen percent of Americans endorse the work of spirit mediums or channelers. Another survey found that 67 percent of American adults read astrology columns.

For some New Agers, there is no supreme being to whom worship is due because all of us are supreme.

II. New Age Concepts or Practices Condemned or Countered in the Scriptures:

- Many gods, goddesses, spirits and demons: See Gen. 1:1; Exod 15:11; 20:2-6; Deut. 6:4; Isa. 45:5, 6, 21, 22.
- Manipulating or bartering with the spirit world: see Deut. 13:1-5; 18:9-14; 1 Kings 11:33.’
- Mythological, unhistorical legends: see 1 Cor 15:1-8, 12-19; 1 Tim. 1:4; 2 Peter 1:16.
- Secret knowledge only for elite “knowers”: see John 1:12; 3:16; Col. 2:8-10; 1 Tim. 2:4.
- Confusion of identity between the creator and the created: see 1 Kings 8:27; Ps. 8:1-9; 24:1-10; 89:5-14; Isa. 40:12-17; 1 Pet. 1:24,25.
- Ethics and morals derived from humans or the self; no absolutes, everything is relative: See 1 Kings 8:46; Ps. 51:1-4; 143:2; Eccles. 7:20; rom 2:14-16 1 John 1:5-10.
- Reincarnation: see Rom. 6:23; Heb. 9:27.
- Salvation by human effort: see Rom. 4:3; Gal. 2:15, 16.
- Picking and choosing among religions: see Exod. 20:2-5; 23:13; John 1:7-9.
- Worshipping other gods, especially fertility religions: see 2 Kings 17:9-12; Jer. 2:20; Ezek. 6:13.
- The idea that Christ is optional, only one of many spiritual masters: see John 14:6-8; Acts 4:12; 1 Tim. 2:5,6.
### Biblical Difference between Biblical Christianity and New Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scripture</th>
<th>New Age</th>
<th>Christianity (with scripture references)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jesus Christ</td>
<td>One of a “line of spiritual teachers” that continues today.</td>
<td>Jesus Christ is God, the only mediator between God and man (John 14:6; 1 Tim. 2:5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God</td>
<td>God is us and we are God.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sin</td>
<td>Human nature is neither good nor bad but open to continuous transformation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Meditation for the Week:

Monday: Ps 49:15
Tuesday: John 5:25
Wednesday: John 6:40
Thursday: John 11:25
Friday: 1 Thess 4:16
Lesson 14

Nothing New Under the Sun – Part I

– So What’s the Difference

..that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.” 1 Corinthians 15:3,4 NIV

Baha’i

I. Introduction

Baha’i is a movement started by an Iranian wool merchant and Shi’ite Muslim to reform Islam. Many Muslims had been waiting for another prophet to succeed Mohammed; and in 1844 Mirza Ali Mohammed (1819-1850) claimed to be the one who would herald the coming of that prophet. Mohammed became known as “The Bab” (pronounced “bob,” meaning a gate leading to a new era for man), and his followers were called Babists (or Bobis). He was executed in 1850 by Muslim zealots who wanted no part of reform.

Thirteen years later, one of the Bab’s followers, Mirza Husayn Ali (1817-1892), took the name Baha’u’llah and announced that he was the long-awaited prophet.

After Baha’u’llah died in 1892, his son Abdu’l Baha’ (1841-1921) assumed leadership and was instrumental in bringing Baha’i to the United States in 1893. An outstanding teacher and interpreter of his father’s work, Abdul’l Baha’ led in the building of a $2.5 million Baha’i temple in Wilmette, Illinois, just north of Chicago. Abdu’l Baha’ died in 1921 and his Oxford-educated grandson, Shoghi Effendi, was appointed to lead Baha’i as Guardian of the Faith. Effendi died in 1957 with no appointed successor.

II. Teachings/Practices (list at least two additional practices of Baha’i)

1. Baha’i teaches that Adam, Abraham, Moses, Krishna, Buddha, Jesus and Mohammed were all equal manifestations of God, each a genuine prophet and each divine, sinless and infallible.

2. 

3.
Biblical Difference between Biblical Christianity and Baha’i

Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures... He was buried... He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. (1 Cor. 15:3,4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Baha’i</th>
<th>Christianity (with scripture references)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>God</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus Christ</td>
<td>Just another man whose career as Lord ended when Mohammed founded Islam in the seventh century.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holy Spirit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvation</td>
<td>Baha’i theologians deny that Christ is the only way to God. They believe absolute dependence on works to avoid judgment which leaves them relying on obeying the law (Baha’u’llah’s) to achieve what they call salvation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Christian Science

I. Introduction

Christian Science is the mother of the mind sciences family of religions (Religious Science, the Unity School of Christianity and many New Age groups). Christian Science arose out of the religious and intellectual ferment of the nineteenth century, which included everything from adaptation of Hindu pantheistic beliefs into New England Transcendentalism by Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau to experimentation with mesmerism (hypnotism), occult metaphysics, mental healing and attempts to contact the dead and other spirits through séances.

Mary Eddy is heralded as the discoverer and founder of Christian Science but her teachings are dependent upon her association with Phineas Parkhurst Quimby, a metaphysical healer from Maine. It is known that Mary Eddy stole passages almost verbatim from Quimby's own books as well as other author's works. She founded her Church of Christ, Scientist, in Boston in 1879.

Today Christian Science has an estimated 200,000 members in 66 countries. In the ‘90s, several child-neglect court cases involved Christian Science parents; the children died after the parents decided to rely on Christian Science prayer alone, even though their children’s deaths had been easily preventable.

II. Teachings/Practices (List at least two additional practices of Christian Science)

1. CS Interprets the Bible from the perspective of a belief system that rejects the idea of a Creator God who is infinite, personal, good and qualitatively distinct from His creation. Christian Science teaches that God “is not a person. God is a principle,” the principle of Impersonal Mind.
2. CS believes that there is no life, truth, intelligence, or substance in matter. All is Infinite Mind and its infinite manifestation, for God is all in all.
3. Christian Science believes that sin, sickness, suffering and evil have no objective existence (“it’s all in our mind”); therefore, medicine is unnecessary.
4. 
5. 
**Biblical Difference between Biblical Christianity and Christian Science**

Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures... He was buried... He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. 1 Cor. 15:3,4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scripture</th>
<th>Christian Science</th>
<th>Christianity (with scripture references)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Compare Deuteronomy 4:2; 2 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 1:1,2; Jude 3, which teach the divine inspiration of Scripture.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jesus Christ</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>God</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Salvation/Sin</th>
<th>Christian Science</th>
<th>Christianity (with scripture references)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The sinner makes his own hell by doing evil, and the saint his own heaven by doing right...” Man as god’s idea is already saved with an everlasting salvation.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Holy Spirit</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prayer</th>
<th>Christian Science</th>
<th>Christianity (with scripture references)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Denies prayer. “The mere habit of pleading with the divine Mind, as one pleads with a human being, perpetuates the belief in God as humanly circumscribed-an error which impedes spiritual growth.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evolutionism

I. Introduction

Evolutionism, which also falls under the labels of Darwinism and Scientism, is a “religion” based on Charles Darwin’s theory that all life forms have evolved from a common ancestor. The idea of evolution has been around since the ancient Greek philosophers. Darwin (1809-1882) was the first to popularize the concept in his book, The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection published in 1895.

II. Teachings/Practices (List at least three additional practices of Evolutionism)

1. Evolution is taught as a fact, when it is actually a theory that supports the philosophy of naturalism, a worldview that says nature is all there is, God is not in the picture.

2. 

3. 

4.
## Biblical Difference between Biblical Christianity and Evolutionism

### Evolutionism

**Evolution**
- The process of evolution is unsupervised by any deity and is, therefore, caused purely by chance.

**Meaning of Life**
- No purpose or meaning to life, which arose spontaneously out of a blind combination of time, chance and matter.

**Humanity**
- No purpose or meaning to life, which arose spontaneously out of a blind combination of time, chance and matter.

**Morality**
- Survival of the fittest does away with universal moral values based on divine law.

**Salvation**

---

### Christianity (with scripture references)

- **Evolution**
  - Gen 1:26,27; 51; James 3:9, all of which teach that man is created in God’s image and likeness. Gen 1:28; Psalm 8:4-8; Matthew 6:26; 12:11,12, which teach man’s value in God’s sight and his preeminence over animals and the rest of creation.

- **Meaning of Life**
  - No purpose or meaning to life, which arose spontaneously out of a blind combination of time, chance and matter.

- **Humanity**
  - Gen 1:26,27; 51; James 3:9, all of which teach that man is created in God’s image and likeness. Gen 1:28; Psalm 8:4-8; Matthew 6:26; 12:11,12, which teach man’s value in God’s sight and his preeminence over animals and the rest of creation.

- **Morality**
  - Survival of the fittest does away with universal moral values based on divine law.

---

Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures... He was buried... He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. 1 Cor. 15:3,4)
Freemasonry

I. Introduction

Freemasonry is the largest international fraternal order in the world. It is a secret society that seeks to perpetuate its traditions through symbolism, rituals and oaths taken on pain of death if broken. There is no single central authority, book or even definition of Freemasonry that all Masons accept.

To gain credibility and stature, Masons claim to have ties to ancient biblical accounts. Masonic legends include unproven assertions that the first Masonic aprons (used in initiation rites) were Adam and Eve’s fig leaves; that Freemasonry dates back to the time of Solomon, who employed stonemasons to construct the temple; that Freemasonry is connected to biblical accounts of the Tower of Babel, of Noah and Seth.


Many famous Americans have been Freemasons, including George Washington, John Wayne, Henry Ford and Gen. Douglas MacArthur. In 1991, there were nearly 2.5 million Masons in the United States, down from a high of 4 million in 1959.

II. Teachings/Practices (List at least two additional practices of Freemasonry)

1. Freemasonry teaches the civic values of brotherliness, charity and mutual aid and that all religions acknowledge the same God. The Lodge blends its own myths and rituals with elements from other religions, including Christian, Islamic, Jewish and Egyptian. Joseph Smith, founder of the Mormon Church, was a Mason, and Mormon and Masonic rituals are similar if not identical.

2.

3.
**Biblical Difference between Biblical Christianity and Freemasonry**

Christ died for our sins according the Scriptures...He was buried...He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. (1 Cor. 15:3,4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scripture</th>
<th>Freemasonry</th>
<th>Christianity (with scripture references)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Bible is not the unique Word of God. “The Bible is used among Freemasons as a symbol of the will of God, however it may be expressed. Therefore, whatever expresses that will may be used as a substitute for the bible in a Masonic Lodge” (i.e., the Qur’an or the Vedas).</td>
<td>Christianity (with scripture references)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanity</td>
<td>Humans are basically good, even divine, and human nature is perfectible. “the perfection is already within. All that is required is to remove the roughness...divesting our hearts and consciences of all vices...to show forth the perfect man and Mason within.”</td>
<td>See John 1:14; 14:6; 18:37; Galatians 1:6-9; 1 John 2:22, for the source of real truth and Scripture’s condemnation of those who claim otherwise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Meditations for the Week:

Monday: 1 Chronicles 16:11
Tuesday: Matthew 7:7
Wednesday: Matt 26:41
Thursday: Luke 18:1
Friday: John 16:24
Lesson 15
Nothing New Under the Sun – Part II
– So What’s the Difference

..that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.” 1 Corinthians 15:3,4 NIV

Hare Krishna

I. Introduction

Known officially as the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), Hare Krishna was started in the United States by Abhay Charan (1896-1977), a Hindu from Calcutta. Charan arrived in New York City in 1965 and immediately gained a following among young members of the counterculture who gave him the title of Swami Prabhupada (meaning “at whose feet masters sit”). Swami Prabhupada was the latest and greatest in a long line of Krishna gurus. In the sixteenth century, Caitanya Mahaprabhu, founded the Krishna sect. When Caitanya founded Krishnaism in the early 1500s, he had already become a sannyasi (one who has renounced the world)

II. Teachings/Practices (Review pages 181-182 and list at least three practices of Hare Krishna)

1. In ISKCON, chanting the name of Krishna (sankirtana) is the best way to attain freedom from samsara (endless reincarnation).

2.

3.

4.
### Biblical Difference between Biblical Christianity and Hare Krishna

Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures... He was buried... He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. 1 Cor. 15:3,4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hare Krishna</th>
<th>Christianity (with scripture references)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Truth</strong></td>
<td>No person or religion can claim absolute truth, since absolute is beyond man’s reasoning powers (Swami Prabhupada).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Salvation</strong></td>
<td>Salvation comes through a personal relationship with the god Krishna, and complete surrender in devotion to him.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jesus Christ</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mediator</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and man. 1 Timothy 2:5.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The International Churches of Christ  
(Formerly, the Boston Church of Christ)

I. Introduction

The International Churches of Christ (ICC) is a relatively new, fast-growing and controversial church movement that has been accused by its numerous critics (many of them ex-members) of cultic practices, mind control and mental/emotional abuse.

The ICC has roots in the mainline Churches of Christ, one of several nineteenth-century “restoration” movements that sought to return to the original Christianity of the New Testament. The unquestioned leader of ICC is Kip McKean who, as a student at the University of Florida, was converted under the ministry of Chuck Lucas at Crossroads Church of Christ in Gainesville, Florida. Lucas got his ideas from several sources, the foremost of which was Robert Coleman’s, The Master Plan of Evangelism. Out of Lucas’ work came the highly intensive evangelistic Multiplying Ministries program, which called for each convert to be put under heavy supervision by an older “discipling partner.” Lucas’s program was so successful in began to spread across the country, and its popularity actually caused divisions in churches because congregations wanted to be rebuilt along the lines of the Crossroads Church.

As the Boston church spread and continued to have phenomenal success in acquiring members with its discipleship program, McKean’s new doctrines and attitudes became apparent, including the idea that the BCC was the church of God. McKean believed that all other churches were poisoned by traditions, compromised or apostate.

A church growth research firm found revealed the church was “producing in its members the very same pattern of unhealthy personality change” that had been observed in studies of other well-known manipulative cults, such as Hare Krishna and the Unification Church (the Moonies).

II. Teachings/Practices

(Review pages 186-188 and list at least two practices of The International Churches of Christ (ICC))

1. ICC members seek the “remnant” within other churches and try to recruit them to the ICC, even if they are fully committed within their own fellowship.

2.

3.
### Biblical Difference between Biblical Christianity and the International Churches of Christ

(Formerly, the Boston Church of Christ)

Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures...He was buried...He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.  
1 Cor. 15:3,4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>International Churches of Christ</th>
<th>Christianity (with scripture references)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scripture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingdom of God</td>
<td>God's kingdom only continues in &quot;true Christian churches&quot;, ICC churches.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvation</td>
<td>Water baptism actually saves at the time one is baptized. It is baptism that supposedly brings out of darkness into light and frees us from sins to be totally committed to Christ.</td>
<td>The scripture clearly teach that faith, not baptism, saves (see John 1:12; 3:16; Eph 2:8,9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church Attendance</td>
<td>An ICC lesson on the Church interprets Hebrews 10:23-25 to mean that all members must attend all the meetings of the church, whenever and wherever they are held. If an ICC member wants to miss a meeting for any reason, he or she is made to feel guilty and selfish.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Secular Humanism

I. Introduction

Secular humanism was formally organized as a movement in the first half of the twentieth century, but its roots go back to the explosion of classical learning that occurred during the Renaissance (fourteenth to sixteenth centuries) and even more directly to the Great Enlightenment (seventeenth and eighteenth centuries). Modern science developed through the findings of men like Galileo and Newton. The medieval view of the world and nature was abandoned as people became “enlightened” - in other words, they became “modern” and the age of modernism was born.

II. Teachings/Practices (Review pages 193-194 and list at least two practices of Secular Humanism)

1. Evil doesn’t come from within men and women, it comes from without; and if society can be cleaned up and fixed, then evil will disappear.

2. 

3.
**Biblical Difference between Biblical Christianity and Secular Humanism**

Christ died for our sins according the Scriptures...He was buried...He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. (1 Cor. 15:3,4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Secular Humanism</strong></th>
<th><strong>Christianity (with scripture references)</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>God</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Christians believe in God, the loving supreme creator to whom all mankind is responsible (Gen 1:1; Isa 40:28; Heb 11:3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Truth</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sin</strong></td>
<td>Secular humanists believe that while humans make mistakes, they are not fallen sinners.</td>
<td>Christianity contends that humans have fallen because of sin (Gen. 3, Rom. 3:23) and their only hope for salvation is in Christ (Rom 8:22-27; 1 Pet 1:3-7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Salvation</strong></td>
<td>They must “save themselves” by taking responsibility for their own errors.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Meditations for the Week:

Monday: Ps 19:1
Tuesday: Acts 17:24-28
Wednesday: Rom 1:20
Thursday: Exod 21:17
Friday: John 1:1-14
Lesson 16
Nothing New Under the Sun – Part III
– So What’s the Difference

..that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.” 1 Corinthians 15:3,4 NIV

PostModernism

I. Introduction

The postmodern worldview did not originate with the thinking of any one person or group. Rather, the term emerged during the twentieth century as it began to be used by philosophers, theologians, literary critics, historians and even architects to refer in general to a backlash against the failures of modernism (i.e., secular humanism). Rather than ushering in a predicted Utopia, modernism’s scientific wonders and advancements had created institutions and social conditions that were oppressive, burdensome and, at times, tyrannical. Eventually, postmodernism came to the attention of the public through journalists, who used the term to refer to anything from rock videos to the problems of sprawling metropolises plagued with too much crime, decay and overcrowding.

II. Teachings/Practices *(Review pages 196-198 and list at least two practices of Postmodernism)*

1. Each person’s reality is in his or her own mind. You construct your own reality. Whatever is real to us is your reality.

2.

3.
### Biblical Difference between Biblical Christianity and **Postmodernism**

Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures...He was buried...He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. (1 Cor. 15:3-4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Postmodernism</strong></th>
<th><strong>Christianity</strong> (with scripture references)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>God</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Truth</strong></td>
<td>Society decides what truth is; there is no absolute truth of any kind; not even scientific truth is absolute or trustworthy.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sin</strong></td>
<td>Love the sinner and his sins; or you will be proclaimed a bigot, a racists or a hatemonger.</td>
<td>Christians understand sin, which originates in the heart of man, to be mankind's core problem (James 4:1, Matt 15:16-20, Ps 51:5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Unification Church (the Moonies)

I. Introduction

The Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity (Ton-il-kyo in Korean, “the Moonies” in popular American usage) is a “new” religion that covers Taoism, Confucianism, occult practices and a messianic figure with a thin veneer of Christianity.

Sun Myung Moon founded the Unification Church in 1954 in Seoul, South Korea. Born in 1920 in what is now North Korea, Moon is the son of Confucian parent who converted to Presbyterianism. However, Moon never fully accepted the Christian faith. From an early age and throughout his life, he was heavily involved in spiritism and the occult.

Moon claims that at age 16 he had a vivid vision of Jesus in which he was told to “complete Jesus’ failed mission.” Moon says he then spent nine years in the world of the occult, contacting the spirits of Jesus, Confucius, Mohammed and Buddha, all of whom confirmed his evolving knowledge of the truth. During this time, Moon claims to have confronted Satan and forced Satan to reveal the great secret and real cause of the fall of Adam and Eve, namely that Eve had sexual intercourse with Satan and then passed sin on to the human race through sexual relations with Adam.

Moon does not consider himself just any spiritual leader; he truly believes he is the Second Coming of the Messiah.

II. Teachings/Practices (Review pages 202-203 and list at least two practices of the Unification Church – Moonies)

1. The Unification Church justifies using deception in fund-raising (called “heavenly deception”), such as having healthy people solicit funds while using wheelchairs.

2. 

3.
### Biblical Difference between Biblical Christianity and Unification Church (the Moonies)

Christ died for our sins according the Scriptures...He was buried...He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. 1 Cor. 15:3,4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Unification Church</th>
<th>Christianity (with scripture references)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jesus Christ</strong></td>
<td>Moonies believe that Jesus’ real purpose was to save humanity by getting married and having sinless children; that the crucifixion was an unplanned mistake.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Trinity</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Prayer</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Salvation</strong></td>
<td>Salvation through the blood of Christ is ridiculous.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>God</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sin</strong></td>
<td>The sin in the Garden of Eden was sex. “Eve’s eating of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil denotes that she had consummated a satanic love relationship with the angel (Satan/serpent).” Satan seduced Eve, and then Eve had sex with Adam.</td>
<td>The Bible sees sex within marriage as a gift from God, not as a sin; the sin in the garden was disobeying God’s clear instructions (Gen 3:6, 12, 13; 1 Cor. 7:5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Unitarianism

I. Introduction

The first Unitarians were the Monarchians, a prominent group in the early Church from the middle of the second century to the end of the third, who believed there is no such thing as the Trinity. The Monarchians were soundly refuted, but their Unitarian thinking popped up again in the fourth century in the teachings of the heretic Arius, who claimed Christ was a created being and there was no Trinity. Arius’s teachings were condemned at the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325, but Unitarian heresy continued to infect the bloodstream of the Church.

By the eighteen century, Unitarianism had spread to America through the work of men like Jonathan Mayhew and Charles Chauncey, who helped change Harvard University from its original Christian position to Unitarianism.

II. Teachings/Practices (Review pages 206-207 and list at least two practices of Unitarianism)

1. They do not think of God as a person. They think of Him as a Force, an Oversoul, a Prime Mover or even as being dead.

2.

3.
### Biblical Difference between Biblical Christianity and **Unitarianism**

Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures... He was buried... He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. (1 Cor. 15:3,4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Unitarianism</strong></th>
<th><strong>Christianity (with scripture references)</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bible</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>The Bible is the divinely inspired record, not a myth (Matt 22:29; 2 Pet 1:16-21).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>God</strong></td>
<td>Unitarians believe God is one, but by God they mean the living processes of nature and conscience at work in mankind.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Jesus</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sin/Salvation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Only Christ's shed blood can atone for sins (Rom 3:24,25; Heb 9:22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Heaven/Hell</strong></td>
<td>Unitarians do not concern themselves with heaven or hell, but concentrate instead on this life only.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Meditations for the Week:

Monday: Heb 11:3
Tuesday: Isa 64:8
Wednesday: John 10:30
Thursday: John 14:9
Friday: Heb 9:22
Lesson 17

Nothing New Under the Sun – Part IV

– So What’s the Difference

“.that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.” 1 Corinthians 15:3,4 NIV

Wicca (Witchcraft and Neo-Paganism)

I. Introduction

The modern religion of Wicca, otherwise known as Old Religion, Magick, Witchcraft, the Craft and the Mysteries, is part of the neopagan movement. All branches of the movement attempt to revive the ancient gods and goddesses, mystery cults and nature religions of the Celts, Druids, Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Sumerians and other peoples. Wiccan and neo-pagan groups draw from many sources, including Gnosticism, occult writings, Freemasonry, Native American religions, shamanism, spiritism and even science fiction.

Wicca is practiced in some branches of the military and has also become popular among teenagers in recent years due to increased media and entertainment attention. Wicca is now recognized in the United States as a legitimate religion, protected by law and given tax-exempt status.

II. Teachings/Practices (Review pages 210-213 and list at least two practices of Wicca)

1. Wicca and neo-paganism are similar in many ways to the nature religions mentioned in the Bible, where many gods were worshiped and religions mixed. For example, the fertility religions of Canaan led many Israelites and brought God’s wrath upon them (see 1 Kings 14:22-24).

2.

3.
## Biblical Difference between Biblical Christianity and Wicca (Witchcraft and Neo-Paganism)

Christ died for our sins according the Scriptures...He was buried...He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.  1 Cor. 15:3,4

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Wicca</th>
<th>Christianity (with scripture references)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Revelation</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worship</td>
<td>Deity for most neo-pagans is found by recognizing “the divinity of nature and of all living things”.</td>
<td>Christians worship the creator, not His creation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus Christ</td>
<td></td>
<td>Matt. 1:18-22; John 1:1, 14,18; 8:24; 14:6; Phil. 2:5,6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mankind</td>
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<tr>
<td>Magic</td>
<td>Practitioners attempt to influence reality through invoking invisible spirits or powers. Magic is the craft of witchcraft.</td>
<td>For what God thinks of magic, see Deuteronomy 18:9-13; Isaiah 8:19.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Reincarnation</td>
<td>Most witches do believe in some form of reincarnation (Starhawk); however, reincarnation for witches is not the Eastern view but, instead, is seen as something positive that takes the soul upward in its advancement toward godhood.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Meditations for the Week:

Monday: 1 Cor 6:18-20
Tuesday: 1 Thess 4:3-8
Wednesday: Deut 18:9-13
Thursday: Isa 8:19
Friday: John 3:16
Lesson 18

Recap – Summing Up Major Differences