

## Does Doctrine Really Matter? (Part 1)

Inconsistencies of Mainstream Christianity

John W. Ritenbaugh

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This sermon begins what I think will be a two-part series for the purpose of self-evaluation in one narrow area against those calling themselves Christians in this world. It is not being given for the purpose of inflating or self-righteousness, but for honest investigation into where we stand in this one area. I do not know how far I am going to get in this particular sermon, but I plan (later on) to give a great number of statistics from one area of the American religious scene. I want you to be able to compare yourself to them so as to help you see whether some element of this same tragic flaw might be in you.

This is not a happy message. In fact, to me, it is profoundly saddening. It has a simple basic premise. However, the effects of the subject are of weighty importance individually because we can easily fall into the same tragic flaw, thinking that it is okay with Christ that we be this way. It involves the importance of truth in terms of religious doctrine.

Ever since shortly following the Islamic terrorist bombings of New York City and Washington, D.C., the American president has made repeated efforts to smooth over things with that group of Americans affiliated with that religion, and at the same time mollify political friends in Islamic nations. His efforts have been rejected by a fairly large number of Americans affiliated with Evangelical groups because he has repeatedly said that the Christian God and the Islamic god are one and the same. Specifically he says, "We all worship the same God." But this is true in only one major area, and that is that both religions claim that their god is Creator; otherwise, all other major doctrines are different. Now, why is this important?

A Gallup poll, released Friday, December 12, 2003, found that 61% of Americans surveyed said religion is very important to their lives. By way of contrast, Canadians surveyed by the same poll responded by saying that 28% of Canadians said religion was very important to them. In Britain the same poll showed 17% of them said religion was important.

There is no doubt that Americans are deceived and confused regarding much of what Christianity consists, but America is nonetheless the most seriously religious nation of the Western civilization. America has been this way from its very beginning.

Most colonies begin because of business interests, but the first permanent colonists did

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not get to the American shores primarily because of business interests. They did not come here because it was a penal colony as it was in Australia. They came because they were escaping religious persecution. They wanted religious freedom, and they wanted it in a very serious way. They were willing to work hard, and sacrifice to have it. They had a theological vision. According to their own writings, they came to build the New Jerusalem. They were going to build the New Israel—the shining city on a hill.

Those colonists were largely Protestant Calvinists in belief and in practice, and were English by nationality. By the time the Revolutionary War was won, the Federal Constitution frame had its basis in English common law and Protestant Calvinist interpretations of the Bible and biblical law.

These people perceived the Bible's God as sovereign, guiding and overruling the destinies of men and nations. They understood Him as having a definite purpose that He was working out, and that they, by His grace, were a part of that purpose. They saw themselves as being in the world, but essentially separated from it, and that their individual liberties and prosperity were subject to and derived from God, not the nation. Thus their individual choices were filtered through His word much more thoroughly than others nations around them.

Now so far, so good, because that line of thinking forms a legal and moral foundation of America. But that foundation has virtually disappeared from even the mainline Protestant religious denominations like the Methodists, the Presbyterians, the Episcopalians, the Dutch Reformed, and the Lutheran churches. As far as I know, that thinking never really existed in the Roman or Greek Orthodox Catholic churches, nor in Jewish groups.

Today, all of these groups still believe that God is working out His purpose, but to them the individual person has become exceedingly more important to the outworking of that purpose. *Now* they perceive God much more closely to the thinking of a deist; and that is, that God indeed created all things, that He wound it up so that it would run, and then stepped back to watch what happened. In other words, they certainly believe that God exists; however, they do not perceive Him as being involved to any great extent.

Peter prophesied that this would happen at the time of the end.

**II Peter 3:1-9** This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you, in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: That you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour: Knowing this

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first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? [Remember, he is talking about the time of the end here, and they say] for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. [In other words, God is not intervening. It is just running.] For this they **willingly** are ignorant of that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: [In other words, what it says in Genesis about the flood is deliberately rejected.] Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished. But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

The sum of this is that it is clearly stating that people at the time of the end will not perceive God as intervening in the affairs of men. When you think about what is happening here, the word of God is being deliberately rejected to enable one to reach one's own conclusions that will reverberate into the way one acts out one's life. Some members of these churches may feel that God is involved in the movement of great events, but feel surely He could not be involved with "little old me."

What do you think regarding this? What do *you* think about the daily operations of God? It is important because the practical effect, if we consider the evidence from their lives, has been to make them feel insignificant and unimportant to any purpose. They are detached from Him, and loyalty to a spiritual cause has all but disappeared from their lives. They thus feel free to pursue their own course of belief and action because He is no longer looked upon as their guide, source, and provider of all good things. How could He possibly be any of those things if He has stepped back and is just watching?

This has worked to make them far less concerned about their personal relationship with Christ. However, there remains to this day, in what the world terms as "Evangelical" churches, a stronger strain of the former approach that the colonists had to life and religion. Included in this group would be the Baptists (especially the Southern Baptist Convention), the Assembly of God churches, Pentecostal churches, Seventh Day Adventists, Christian Missionary Alliance, and the Church of God (meaning the Church of God-Seventh Day and those churches that have their roots in the Worldwide Church

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of God).

There are other groups of this general nature, but this group also happens to be the most divided group among those that would generally be termed "Protestant" by this world's media and academia. They have many spokesmen, but five of the better-known are Billy Graham, Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, Tim LaHaye, and Hal Lindsey.

The president's declaration regarding Christianity and Islam's God being one and the same has not set well with the membership of these organizations. But at the same time their leadership is pretty much willing to overlook what he has said out of respect for national unity. And so what the Evangelical leaders say **publicly**, in order to continue showing support and apologize for him before their membership, is to state, "We must remember that President Bush is Commander in Chief. He is not **theologian in chief**."

I do not know what the president privately believes regarding this, but there is no way that his statement can be theologically correct. For him to say this is to present a god who is involved in hypocrisy and confusion, and the God of the Bible is neither a liar nor the author of confusion.

I want you to briefly consider three simple thoughts with me that show that the God of the Bible cannot possibly be the god of these two religions *if* the Bible is the source of religious truth. First I want you to turn to Hebrews 6:18. I am not going to do very much in the way of expounding here, but this verse presents one basic general truth, and that is:

**Hebrews 6:18** That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.

The broad general truth here is that it is impossible for God to lie. We are going to add a scripture here that might even be better known, and it is one that we probably know without knowing exactly where it says it.

**Numbers 23:29** God is not a man that he should lie.

God does not lie.

Do Islam and Christianity have the same doctrines? You know very well what the

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answer to that is. Does God give one set of doctrines to one group, and many *many* different doctrines to the other group? For Him to do this would be to speak out of both sides of His mouth, and one set of doctrines is a lie. But suppose He were telling the truth, what would be produced from that kind of a situation? Well, what can be seen very clearly is confusion, and God is not the author of confusion, as it says in I Corinthians 14:33.

**I Corinthians 14:33** For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.

Is there peace between Islam and Christianity? These two groups have been fighting one another for well over a thousand years.

It is impossible for God to lie, and He is not the author of confusion. We are getting some pretty sound evidence here. We will look at one more. As I said—three simple truths.

**Matthew 12:25-26** And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation: and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand. And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?

God does not make war against Himself. God does not lie. God is not the author of confusion. God does not make war against Himself, and Islam and Christianity are warring with one another. That is proof that the God of the Bible is not the author of **both** of these religions.

If they are fighting against one another, and they are the same kingdom, it is not going to stand. But this same Bible, this same book, which is the foundation and anchor and provider of truth says that God's kingdom will stand **forever**. We are showing very clearly that the God of the Bible is not the god of both of those religions.

This principle has very serious spiritual ramifications for the church. I want you to turn just briefly to James 4:1-4, because James addresses something here that has happened on occasions within the Church of God. I should not say it just happened once. It has happened many times.

**James 4:1** From whence come wars and fightings among **you**?

This is addressed to church members: wars and fightings. That sounds pretty serious, especially the word "wars."

**James 4:1-2** From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence even of your lusts that war in your members? You lust, and have not: you kill ...

My Bible says in the margin "**murder**." That is pretty hard to conceive of that happening within the church of God, but it apparently has happened; murder has taken place within the church. As far as I know it has not taken place in this era of the church, but there have been a lot of fights of the spiritual kind. Maybe there were even some fisticuffs between some people.

I do not know of any murder, but God's word says that murder has occurred. That is why I say that this principle of making war and there being a lack of peace within the church has very serious spiritual ramifications, because we have to consider *source* here—**source of spirit**—that brings these things about. This is important at least to this sermon, because these two religions—Islam and Christianity—are certainly making war against each other. They are using a spiritual principle here that shows that if they are receiving the spirit from the same god, then it is not the spirit of the God of the Bible, because God does not make war against Himself.

**James 4:2-4** You lust, and have not: you kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: you fight and war, yet you have not because you ask not. You ask, and receive not, because you ask amiss, that you may consume it upon your lusts. You adulterers and adulteresses [another couple of strong words], know you not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

A little summation here is that in the church, division and warfare are evidence that the relationship with God has broken down somewhere along the line. War is evidence that the attitudes and conduct producing it are flowing from the ruler of this world. That is why James said "friendship with the world is enmity against God."

We are going to turn to one more scripture along this subject-line in I John 4:19-21.

**I John 4:19-20** We love him because he first loved us. If a man say, I love

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God, and hates his brother, he is a liar.

There has to be hatred for war to be taking place within a congregation amongst the people of God. And so if a man says, "I love God," but hates his brother, John comes right out and says that man is a liar. That is pretty strong. That person has deceived himself about him loving God, because he does not.

**I John 4:20-21** For he that does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment have we from him, that he who loves God love his brother also.

It is the love of God shed abroad in our hearts that enables us to love fellow man in the right manner. It is therefore the love of God that produces the biblical peace that passes all understanding. This is why John says here that someone in the fellowship is carnal, ignorant about his love for God, or lying. If we cannot love our brother, then the connection to God is not as strong as it needs to be. If Christianity and Islam have the same god, it **cannot** be the God of the Bible, because the God of the Bible does not fight against Himself by making another member of the body the adversary. Think about that one for a while.

The elements that produce the right result, and the process in which they are used, must fall in the right order. The source and the trigger begin with one's relationship with God. If these two that we are dealing with—Islam and Christianity—were both drawing from the Spirit of God—the God of the Bible—we would see different results. Now why? Because they would be of the same mind. The same spirit, the same teaching would be motivating both. Instead, what we see is an antagonism so great that a very unstable and confusing warfare result.

I have gone a long round-about way to make clear a simple, obvious, and yet profound-in-its-ramifications point. And that is that the Christian Western world and the Islamic world are confronting each other from almost entirely different attitudes and conduct toward what is important to them and their life. What was it that led these two antagonists to believe things about life so differently? Was it not what each was taught?

What is obvious to us is that we can see that the God of the Bible, except for the fact that He is sovereign over all and overseeing and directing what is going on according to His purpose, is otherwise not even involved in the thinking, attitudes, and conduct of either side of the people important to this conflict. Do you understand that?

Further evidence that God is not involved is that both groups are badly divided and warring within their own religions, and therefore the evidence shows that President Bush's statement is perversely correct: They **do** both have the same god. It is the god of this world, not the God of the Bible.

Just a minute ago I said that the elements that produce the right result and the process in which they are used must fall in the right order. The source and the trigger begin with one's relationship with God.

What is it that determines what a person thinks and how he acts? It is his worldview—that which he considers to be important to his life. What determines his attitudes and conduct and motivates how he goes about to achieve them? Primarily two things: (1) It is what one has been taught, whether formally as in a school or maybe by church services, or informally through experience—living. (2) It is then what one chooses to believe, and therefore acts upon. Both of these factors accumulate through one's life. Neither of them is there instantaneously.

We are going to go back to Genesis 3, and we will see an encapsulation of this principle, and it will be so clear.

**Genesis 3:1-7** Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LOORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yes, has God said, You shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, you shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it, lest you die. And the serpent said unto the woman, You shall not surely die: For God does know that in the day you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.

**Genesis 3:15** And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed: it shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.



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This simply-told event is critical to understanding how important what we are taught **is**, and choose to believe **is**, to the way that we live, and therefore the outcome of our life. It teaches us that we must be very careful about what we choose to believe and follow.

Look at the first three verses there. They tell you very clearly that God instructed them. **They were taught**. They **knew** what He said, and to that point in time they apparently believed and acted upon what God said. And then in verse 4, **new** teaching enters the scene from a different source, and then in verse 6 it shows that they chose to believe the **new** teaching, and they sinned. That is very clear, is it not?

I read verse 15 to show you that the fruit began to have an effect upon them. I chose that one verse, but it is really just the start of things. Actually I could have just used verse 7 that says their eyes were opened, which simply means that now they were looking at things from a different perspective. Their worldview had changed. It had changed from what God originally instructed them to a mixture between what God instructed them and to what Satan instructed them. So now they were looking at things differently, and felt themselves free to choose from one or the other, depending on what they felt at the time was good for them to put into action.

In Genesis 6 we find an accumulation of the results.

**Genesis 6:5** And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

**Genesis 6:13** And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them: and behold, I will destroy them with the earth.

We found in Genesis 3 the term "serpent." Serpent is used as a symbol representing Satan. Satan means Adversary, as we heard in Richard's sermon. Satan's entire existence is spent promoting and creating adversarial relationships, and boy! he is good at it. He promoted the division between Adam and Eve and God by teaching something different from God. The division became a reality when they chose to believe and follow it. This is a simple process: *teaching, believing, action, result*.

Brethren, we have power now that God has called us over every one of those steps. God has freed us from being totally subject to ignorance, and now we **know** truth, and are free to believe it, and choose to do it.

The results of what Adam and Eve did are spread out over the entirety of the extremely sorry history of mankind. Adam and Eve themselves lived to see their children accept the same sort of teaching that they opted to believe, to practice it, and thus produce this warring and dividing world—and then just like God said, they died.

The very simple lesson from this is one of "cause and effect." There is a direct relationship between what we are taught, what we choose to believe, and the effect that we experience in our lives and other peoples' lives. Proverbs 26:2 says "the curse causeless shall not come." There is a cause for good or bad. It depends upon what we have been taught, and what we choose to believe.

We are going to add one more step to this with another familiar scripture.

**Revelation 12:9** And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceives the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

I read this verse because I want you to be reminded that all of us have been subjected to the same basic lying teaching as Adam and Eve received, and as their immediate children received. None of us has escaped, even though we may have been brought up in the church. We have not escaped because we live life in cultures absolutely permeated with distortions about God and His purpose.

All one has to do in order to prove the truth of that last statement is to think about the tremendous variety of religions and ways of worshipping available all over the world. It is no wonder that unconverted people, who are intelligent and thinking, are confused by the religious scene, because all of these religious options available to them on the world scene cannot possibly be right. They know that, but where do they turn if they are discriminating? They know (whether they would put it this way or not) that belief, choice, and action produce results, and so they stay away from religion in droves because they are confused by what they see, and are disbelieving. So all of these religions cannot be the product of the brilliant, loving, providential, and orderly mind that brought this creation into existence, and then sustains it by the word of His power. If all of this worldwide confusion and warfare is the product of His mind, then we are all doomed! There is no hope.

Now what is especially dangerous to us—and I mean **dangerous**—is all the division and confusion of belief amongst those in the Western nations calling themselves Christian.

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All of these Western nations have been impacted by the same Satanic deceptions regarding God, and we have grown up in them. I am kind of getting to that verse in Revelation 18 where God says to come out of it.

**Matthew 16:6** Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

**Matthew 16:11-12** How is it that you do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that you should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees? Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the **doctrine** of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

The Sadducees and Pharisees were the dominant groups teaching false doctrines in Jesus' day. Both of them had some truth, but their overall conception, as well as some specific teachings, were destructive to God's purpose for His creation. Nothing regarding the principle reasons for Jesus' warning has **changed** over the centuries. Only the names of the groups involved have changed.

Its danger is so great that when Jesus gave His warnings about the end-times, the warning against false teaching was the first thing that He thought of. It was at the forefront of His mind. In fact, in all three accounts of the Olivet Prophecy, it is listed first.

**Matthew 24:4-5** And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

Do you know what this is teaching me? It is teaching me that far more dangerous than the wars, than the diseases, than the tribulation, than the earthquakes, and everything else that is going to come—all of that terror that is going to come at the time of the end—the worst thing for us to be most concerned about is **false teaching**.

Some things are very obvious to fear, but other things can subtly and gradually erode and wear away a person's belief system. When that begins to change, the choices will change. I kid you not.

Our most dangerous enemy among human beings right now is the false religions. I say that on the basis of what Jesus Christ, our Savior, listed first among those things to be

aware of.

Jesus was not warning against a string of teachers who believe that they themselves are the Christ, but rather a seemingly endless stream of teachers claiming that Jesus of Nazareth *is* the very Christ, and that they are His representatives. They then proceed to lead people astray by teaching false things about the true Christ and His way.

History conclusively shows that the overall thrust of their false teaching is that all God is attempting to do is to get people saved, and that those saved have little or no responsibility to return to Him to do anything. In other words, they believe that there is no purpose beyond merely being saved. They believe that there is no reciprocity required in the New Covenant one makes with God. Virtually the entire burden is put upon God, and all the saved person needs to do is to accept the Christ as his Savior.

Now think about this, because modern man is still following the pattern that was established by Adam and Eve. They still believe that God exists, even as Adam and Eve did. Maybe Adam and Eve had more reason to believe God exists, but all of these religions believe that God exists, but are their doctrines the same? Do they believe the same way? You know that they do not. Somebody has gotten in there and disturbed what they teach. And so like Adam and Eve, there is a certain basis of teaching, but somebody comes along and teaches them something that is not quite right.

This being like Adam and Eve is taken one step further, because even as Adam and Eve very clearly felt free to change what God had taught them, so do people today. Did not Adam and Eve do that? Did not they reject what God taught them? Did not they feel they had the freedom to do that? Did they feel in their relationship with God that they were so close that the loyalty and love for Him was so great that they were constrained to do what He said, regardless of what He said? The record shows that they did what they did with a certain amount of deliberateness. "Yeah, God said that, but..."

Now what did we see right near the beginning of this sermon? Peter said people are **willingly** ignorant of. There is a rejection of the principle being established by Peter there, that in the end-time people will be familiar to some degree with the Bible, but they will reject it.

Not everybody is going to reject the same things. Not everybody is going to accept the same thing. This is why there are so many religions, but each, like Adam and Eve, feels to accept or reject what **they** feel that **they** should believe at this particular time because they do not feel a responsibility to God. Though they believe He is there, He has faded into the background in terms of importance.

Oh, how we have fallen from what our ancestors originally brought to this country when they believed that the God of the Bible was with them and giving them their liberties.

We are going to take a brief look (and I should say, a simple overview with very little expounding) at a contrast between what the Bible says in a number of areas, and what present-day Christianity believes. They have things that they feel they are at liberty to change from what God, or our Savior, very clearly said. You are going to know, I am sure, every one of these scriptures. Let us begin in Matthew 5, and verses 17 through 19. Jesus said:

**Matthew 5:17-19** Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach them so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

They feel free to say that the law is done away. Jesus says, "*No, it is not.*" Furthermore, He goes on to show that we have the responsibility to obey it. It is not just that it is not done away, we have to obey it.

**Matthew 6:24** No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

Do you know what Christian people say? They say that their religion is a private matter and that they are free to believe whatever they want. Jesus says, "*Oh, no! God's way involves loyalty and trust. You cannot serve two masters. That is, you cannot serve yourself, having made your own religious doctrine, and serve My doctrine, or the doctrine of My Father. It has got to be one or the other.*" That is pretty clear.

**Matthew 7:13-14** Enter you in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leads unto life, and few there be that find it.

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The world's so-called Christians demonstrate by their lives that they feel pretty much free to live as they please. But now on the other hand Jesus warns right here that His way is narrow and difficult, that it is quite restrictive in belief and conduct by comparison to what human nature desires to do. We cannot have it both ways.

**Luke 14:25-27** And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever does not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.

These are strict terms of making the covenant with Jesus Christ, sometimes requiring the sacrifice of ties involving those one normally has the strongest feelings for, the most contact with, and the closest relationship with. They may have to be departed from. How many people are willing to do that, because it might really be a life-upsetting event?

**Acts 4:11-12** This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.

How can Jesus be the Savior of Muslims if they do not look to Him in faith to be their Savior? I will not do it right here, but we will get to Christians on this particular point a little bit later.

**Acts 9:2** And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of **this way**, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

**Acts 16:17** The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us **the way** of salvation.

**Acts 19:9** But when divers [or different] were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of **that way** before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus.

**Acts 19:23** And the same time there arose no small stir about **that way**.

Nine different times in the book of Acts Luke, using **the**, **this**, or **that**, shows Christianity to be a distinct way of life set apart by beliefs, doctrines, and practices **different from** other religions, including Judaism.

Our president does not seem to understand that he, by making the statement that Christianity and Islam have the same God, is denying the One he calls his Savior by his claim. He does not seem to understand that. Brethren, we are most assuredly not free to believe any old thing and remain Christian, because it will take that person out of **the way**—away from the Savior's path.

The fruit of that thinking is well demonstrated in the Bible, and it will be the same as what Adam and Eve and their children produced. For one to say that Christianity's and Islam's God is the same is either total ignorance or sheer hypocritical political pandering. Even if it is ignorance, one has to wonder about the "born again" conversion President Bush experienced a decade or so ago, because his understanding is abysmal.

To me, we are getting to the interesting part of this sermon, and I am just about out of time. The president has a great deal of company among those claiming to be "born again" in terms of the multitude of falsehoods they claim to believe regarding what Christ will permit of His followers, and still allow them to remain as a Christian.

Now what I am going to say is pretty shocking. I think it is one you are going to have to think about. Think about whom we are dealing with here—the so-called "born again" Christians. These are supposedly the "cream of the crop" of those converted to Christianity. A recent poll published by Christian researcher George Barna reveals that "born agains" have largely embraced the teachings of tolerance and inclusion of the liberal left, academia, the media, the Democratic Party, the Libertarian Party, the Environmentalists, the homosexual, feminist, lesbian, cross-dressing, and polygamist groups.

Barna's poll is taken from two articles that I have here, which I am showing to the group here in Charlotte. One is taken from WorldNetDaily, and the other from a website called Worldontheweb. They both appeared on December 6, 2003. Most of the things that I am going to give you at the beginning were from an article by Gene Edward Veith, titled "Unbelieving Born Agains." That is incredible!

Did you get that title? They are "born again," but they do not believe the doctrines of the church! They are "born again," but they do not believe the doctrines of their Savior! This

Does Doctrine Really Matter? (Part 1) by John W. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

is incredible what I am going to tell you. That title alone ought to tell us that modern Christians—the "born agains"—are either ignorant of, or dropping their belief in traditional biblical teaching.

What we need to do is to measure ourselves against the beliefs of these "born again" people. This is a pit that you **do not** want to slide into. The results of this poll are staggering in their implications for true Christians who **might** possess some of the same liberality of belief and practice that these people—these "born agains"—do.

Twenty-six percent of "born agains" believe that all religions are essentially the same, notwithstanding what it says in Acts: **the way, this way, that way**. There is only one way! But all religions—Hinduism, Taoism, Buddhism—you name it, are all essentially the same.

What I am going to tell you just comes out of Veith's article. It shows that this 26% believes that they can get to heaven **regardless** of what they believe, that the doctrines of religion do not matter. If that is true, then who needs a Savior?

This statistic is beginning to show that these "born agains" are creating **their own religion**. There is the pit. God says, "You shall have no other gods before Me," and these people are creating their own god, and their god is themselves. But they are too ignorant to even understand that. The same thing can happen to us, that we can feel free like Adam and Eve to create our own table of beliefs.

Remember what I showed you earlier. Those beliefs will then become the choice for our action, and once we start taking those steps, those steps will take us off the path that Jesus trod, and we will not end up the same place as He is. We will not end up with the faith of Jesus Christ. You are going to see, as we go through this, how this is compounded, step by step by step.

The next statistic greatly magnifies the evidence that the "born agains" do not believe that doctrine matters, because the Barna poll revealed that 50% of "born agains" believe that a life of good works will enable a person to go to heaven. The practical theological ramification of that is to take the Savior right out of the salvation equation. We are saved by grace, through faith. That is trust, and not of works. Trust and works is what we are expected to reciprocate back, but they do not save us. This concept fits hand-in-glove with the previous belief that all religions are equally good, which is essentially what President Bush is saying.

This next one is staggering! Thirty-five per cent of "born again" Christians do not believe



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that Jesus rose from the dead.

**I Corinthians 15:6** After that [after Jesus Christ's resurrection] he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

Do you see how they are picking and choosing what they believe? They just throw that scripture out, just like they throw the Flood out, and just like they throw other things out, like "salvation is of grace and not of works." These people are creating their own religions. How can a person be a Christian when he throws the word of God piecemeal away from his life?

I want you to turn to Romans 10, and we will finish here.

**Romans 10:6-9** But the righteousness which is of faith speaks on this wise: Say not in your heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what says it? The word is near you, even in your mouth, and in your heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach: That if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, ***you shall be saved.***

Do you see what that is saying there? God is essentially saying that ***if we do not believe that Jesus was raised from the dead, WE ARE NOT SAVED!*** Our faith rests on that hope, and without it there is no hope, and the person without that hope is not going to make it, because there is nothing of any positive worth to drive him on. It is the ramifications of what we choose to believe that are so important, because we will act on what we believe. If we do not believe what God teaches us, we will not act like a son of God. The equation is that simple. Anybody can understand that, but people pride themselves in lifting themselves to the same level as God. And as we heard last week that is exactly what Satan did, and so revealed to us is the ***motivator*** of those who create their own religions.