

False Gospels

Tests to Determine if a Teaching Is False

Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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One of my memories of Herbert W. Armstrong—and probably one of your memories as well—was his thundering out of Mark 1: 14-15.

Mark 1:14-15 After John was put into prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

Mr. Armstrong certainly knew this scripture by heart because it seemed like in every broadcast (or every other one) he was on this subject: What was the gospel that Jesus Christ brought? He emphasized over and over and over again that Jesus Christ came proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom of God. It was not a gospel about the person of Christ. You will never find where it says in the Gospels that Jesus said, "Preach Me,"—although He does say that He is our example, and we are to become like Him. But every time that He told His disciples to preach something, it was the gospel of the Kingdom of God. "Preach the Kingdom. Preach the Word."

When Mr. Armstrong said this, it was often the very beginning of a mild tirade or talk—a discussion about how the gospel had been perverted very early on. By the early 50s A.D., only two short decades after Christ had ascended, someone (or, some group of people) had changed the gospel. They had perverted it. They were no longer preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God, but they were now preaching about the person of Christ. And, of course, we found out (after listening to Mr. Armstrong and really seeing what the preachers in this world's Christianity teach) that perversion of the gospel has come down to today. They still preach *the person of Christ* rather than *what Christ preached*.

As God's apostle, Herbert W. Armstrong restored the true gospel to the church and to the world. How many times did he say that it was dark for 1900 years (in a religious or spiritual sense) before God opened his eyes to what the gospel really should be about? From about the time of the early 50s A.D. to the time when Mr. Armstrong was raised up to preach the gospel, the true gospel had not gone to the world for over 19 centuries. Yes, it had gone to some—to the scattered remnant of the church in the wilderness. Some had known it. But it had not been preached like it should have been for all that time.

Obviously, God had a purpose in that. That is not something that 'got by' God when He was not looking. It was obviously part of His plan that there was going to be a long period of darkness, and that the great works of God would be done right at the beginning (as the church was founded) and right at the end (before His Son's return). The ones that happened in the middle were very small and limited in scope; but they kept the works going. They kept the church going, so that the gates of the grave would not prevail against it.

So Mr. Armstrong restored that to the church. God called us to hold up his arms in doing the

preaching of it into as many nations as we could get to. From it, we learned God's plan for mankind. Everything fit into place, once we got the understanding of the gospel right. We learned what the purpose of mankind was, and the purpose of the church, both now and when Christ returns to set up God's government on the earth. Once you get the gospel right, everything falls into place.

There is only one true gospel, and there are many false gospels. Today, what I want to do is to look at false gospels in a general sense—and not specifically at certain false gospels—to see why they are so damaging. Before we do that though, what we are going to do is to start back with the subject of Antichrists. This just naturally moves into false gospels, because those who are of the nature of antichrist can teach nothing but false gospels. We will get a running start into this topic by reviewing a little of the material that we went over in the last sermon.

I John 2:18 Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour.

I think that it is very evident that it is even more so *the last hour* for us, because of all the false gospels and the false Christs that are out there now. Not only are they religious but they are also technological, and intellectual, and societal, and cultural. There are all kinds of things that are proclaiming to be the "saviors" of mankind. Many people have a blind faith in science and technology as saviors of mankind. Look at the movie *A.I.*, which Steven Spielberg along with the late Stanley Kubrick just put out—where the science and technology of robotics is supposedly going to save mankind. It is stupid, but people believe it! They do not see God. They do not know the true gospel. They do not know the plan that God has. Here John becomes a bit more specific, in the theological sense, as to what antichrist is:

I John 1:22-23 Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.

What we see here is the fundamental problem with antichrist. It denies God—beginning with the Son. If you deny the Son, you deny the Father also. Any type of "spirit of antichrist" is saying that *the* God is not God. They deny the Son. They deny the power of the Son. They deny all that the Son did. We see that all of the time now. Just look at "the Jesus Seminar." All these scholars, who are supposed to have the world's wisdom about Jesus, get together; and they are given a selection of balls, or little marbles of various colors. Then they read a section of one of the Gospels, and they vote on it. I guess they actually have people that stand up and give different sides of the story whether they believe that this particular section of the Gospels is true, or whether this particular section of the Gospels is false.

They get all of their linguists, and etymologists, and whatever else, to come up and tell you whether or not they believe that Mark, or Luke, or Matthew, or Q, or some other author actually wrote this or not—or whether it was put in later. And then they all say, "Okay, time to vote. If you want to vote 'Yes' that this is historically true, put in your white ball. If you think that it is not true, but in the black ball. If you think it is substantially true, put in your yellow ball. And if you think it is substantially false, put in your red ball." (I do not know the colors exactly; but I

am just giving it to you off the top of my head.) Then they tally the balls; and, in most cases, the black balls win.

There are more of these scholars who think that the Gospels are fundamentally false, and that these things that Jesus did (which are recorded in our Bibles) are not true. They were added in later by writers, people in the church, in order to beef up the history of Jesus so that He would be more "godly" (or, what they would expect to be godly), or more like a Savior, or more like this and more like that. So, you get these learned men who basically say "We deny Jesus Christ, the Son of God." You come down to the fact, from their point of view, that only about one quarter of the Gospels can be traced back to the original writings—according to them. That is, based on their own subjective opinions.

There are many ways that this *spirit of antichrist* is brought out. These are the same men who are putting their two cents in these more modern commentaries, more modern works, modern articles and essays, etc. about Christ. It is a bunch of rubbish! They do not have one iota of faith, and yet people the world over trust them and their opinions. And they are basically led down the path to destruction, because these people, whether they understand it or not (and I am sure they do not), are preaching a false gospel. They are changing God into their own image.

So, in denying the Son, they deny the Father; and they are in trouble. I would not want to be in their shoes. But, on the other hand, I know that my own perceptions of the Father and the Son are not perfect either. That is why we are in the church. That is why God has called us out. So that we can learn more about Him, and His Son, and His plan, and His character; and come to have a fuller and more mature understanding of all of it, so that one day in His Kingdom we can be made just like Him.

I John 2:24 Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning.

What was *from the beginning*? What is the beginning? Well, we can seriously take this all the way back to Genesis 1:1. I think John's first idea of what "the beginning" is here is the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ. As a matter of fact, that is exactly how Mark opens up the gospel of Mark. "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ." That is where the New Testament church began—with John the Baptist preparing the way, and Jesus coming into Galilee preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God.

Another beginning could be the beginning of the church. Another beginning could be the beginning of their conversion. That is, when they were taught by the true apostles and the true ministers of God. I do not know which "beginning" exactly we want to pick there. But I think, if nothing else, we ought to think about Jude 3—the faith once delivered to the saints. Maybe that is the best beginning of all—to leave it a little bit more general, like that. It is the true gospel that he is talking about: "Let the true gospel abide in you, which you heard from the beginning."

I John 2:24 If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father.

That is good news! That is a promise, and it is a great promise to hang on to. If we do our best to abide in the truth, abide in the gospel—that means to live in it, to dwell in it—then God and

Christ will abide in us. Is that not comforting? We have to do our part. We have to stick with Him, so that we can be sure that He is sticking with us. But it is a great thing to know, a great thing to believe.

I John 2:25 And this is the promised that He has promised us—eternal life.

Ah, ha. There is a great motivation! Not only is Christ in us, but He has promised us eternal life *if* we see this thing through to the end and endure those things that will be coming upon us.

I John 2:26 These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you.

Now he kind of jolts us back to the idea of antichrists again, because there are people out there that are trying to deceive you. And there is certainly one personality, who is the most "antichrist" of all, who is definitely trying to deceive you all the time. That is Satan the devil—the god of this world, the prince of the power of the air—who is *a/ways* trying to pull us away from Christ. He is the Adversary. He is the accuser of the brethren. He is the great deceiver, the subtle serpent; and he has ministers who appear of angels of light (as it says in II Corinthians); and he is doing his very best to deceive us. So we need to know where we stand. We need to know where the antichrists stand, and where the antichrist teachers stand. We need to be able to spot them. We need to be sure in our own convictions.

I John 2:27 But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you.

What he is saying here is that you have already been taught the truth. So do not let somebody come in and dissuade you from the truth. He is not saying that you do not need anybody to continue to teach you the truth. He is saying that you do not need anybody to teach you otherwise. You have an anointing in you. Most people think that this anointing is the Holy Spirit, which should enable us to be able to tell truth from error.

I John 2:27 But as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.

This is the process by which we come to understand the truth, through the Holy Spirit. If we continue in that, following the things that the Holy Spirit teaches, then we can be assured that is not a lie—it is the truth; and we will be abiding in God. And because we are abiding in Him, He will be abiding in us.

I John 2:28 And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.

So, he is saying, "Stick it out! Endure to the end. Keep up the good work, because Christ is coming back soon; and we don't want to be ashamed that we dropped the ball. We let the team down. We let ourselves down. We let God down." He is saying, "Let's all abide in the truth. Let's keep on abiding in the truth, so that when He appears we may have confidence, and faith, and really be able to be joyous at His return."

I John 2:29 If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him.

Is that not what we are looking for? Birth into God's very Family! That is what will happen, if we

continue to practice righteousness. Of course, the righteousness that we are commanded to practice is *His righteousness*—the example that He set.

I John 3:1-2 Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; [We already come under that umbrella, but it is only the beginning stages.] and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be...

We really do not know how all of this is going to work out. We have an idea. God has given us clues. We look through a glass darkly. But we really do not know everything—all the details—about how we are going to be when God changes us into spirit beings.

I John 3:2 But we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

Remember that in the last sermon I said that our goal is to get rid of all *antichrist* that is in us. When you get rid of all that is "antichrist," what are you? You are *Christs*—or, you are just like Him. So that is why John can say this so confidently. When all of that happens, when everything is revealed, we will be like Him. We will be able to see Him face to face. And we will be able to see Him in all of His glory and perfection. We will be exactly like Him in character.

I John 3:3 And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

John gives one more instruction in there, before kind of closing out this section. We are not supposed to be just sitting here like blobs, waiting for God's Kingdom to come back to this earth. If we have this hope in us—to be just like Christ, to be changed to be just like Him at His coming—then we have work to do! Is not purifying oneself work? I would like to find the formula, if you know it, where *purification* happens without work.

Do we not all want the magic bullet? Do we not all want instant perfection? But the obvious implication of what John says here is that it takes work. Purification is no easy thing. Does it not say there in Malachi 3 that Christ comes as a refiner? And the refining process is no easy thing. We are talking about metals being refined—or, our going through the trials and the tribulations, in a sense; and we come out the other side *pure*.

So, if you want to put it into a summary, John is saying here that true teaching culminates in eternal life and being like Christ. And then we can apply that same understanding, that same principle, to false teaching. What does false teaching produce? False teaching is going to produce just the opposite. It is going to produce destruction and death. And it will produce us in the image of some other god—usually a god of our own making; but it certainly will not be Christ, or the Father.

This is exactly what John's Master taught in Matthew 7:16 and a few verses after that. He talks about false prophets, and what does He say? "You shall know them by their fruits." You shall know them by what they produce, and what their teachings produce. And the same thing goes for true prophets, and true ministers, and the true gospel. It always produces goodness, character, and eventually eternal life and birth into the Family of God.

Many times we do not have enough foresight to see all that far. But it is something that we have to work at, to come to understand how to evaluate true from false so that we can be wise in these things and catch false things early, before they start really affecting our lives.

In a sense, John never gets off this topic; because he is combating a problem in the late first century church called Docetism. To bring it down to its simplest understanding or ideas, *Docetism was a Gnostic belief that Jesus was a man and Christ was a spirit. When Jesus was baptized, Christ came upon Jesus in the form of a dove and stayed with Him throughout His ministry. Then, before He was crucified, Christ left Jesus and was never tainted by the suffering that was brought on Jesus because of sin.* This is the basic idea of Docetism. There were other things, but this was the major heresy of John's day. And now you understand why he says there in chapter 2, that whoever denies Jesus denies the Father also. What they were doing was saying that Jesus was just an ordinary man, but Christ was the God—thus separating the two beings.

I do not really want to get into all of Gnosticism; but anything that is flesh, and physical, and material is corrupt and anything that is spirit is good and perfect. And so they tried to separate Christ and Jesus so that they could somehow, in their minds, separate the physical part of Jesus from the spiritual part of Jesus. But we know that is not necessary. Jesus is the Christ. They are one being. And He had to go through those things, as a human and God, so that (as it says in Hebrews 2) He can suffer for us and be a faithful High Priest—and be therefore our Sacrifice, our Redeemer, the Creator who was slain for His creation. But they have got all these things mixed up. And with that introduction, I think you can better understand chapter 4.

I John 4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

This is a general statement, saying, "Look, there are people (beings) out there who are trying to deceive you. Don't just accept everything that is said to you. Apply the test."

I John 4:2 By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ [Notice that. Not Jesus, not the Christ—but "Jesus Christ."] has come in the flesh is of God.

This was, in a sense, a litmus test at the time. If a minister would stand before the congregation and say that Jesus and the Christ were two separate beings, then anybody out there in the audience should have known that this was a false minister. He is denying that Jesus Christ—the *one* individual—came in the flesh. He is saying that just Jesus came in the flesh (not the Christ). And so it was very easy, then, to apply this test.

I John 4:3-4 And every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God [That is just the opposite. It is very simple.]. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world. You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

Now notice what John does. He is saying, "Look, this is a fight between two sides. God is the head of one side. Satan, who's in the world, is the head of the other side. But the godly side is

much stronger than the worldly side." And so we can have confidence (faith) that our side is going to win and that God will give us strength to see the falseness of the other side. And, therefore, hold them at arm's length.

Notice that he juxtaposes this side by calling them "little children." That is how we feel facing the power of this 'being' who is trying to deceive us at every turn. We feel so small and insignificant. But John says, "Look, the test is pretty simple. The test is if this person preaches anything that is not the truth about Jesus Christ, then you can say that he is false and in the spirit of antichrist. And our side—the side of truth—is far stronger than the side of falsehood and lies. So be confident in these things. Be confident that the truth will eventually win out, and endure whatever happens to go on now—even if we shrink to just a few people, our side is so scattered."

That is what was happening at the end of the first century. The church was dwindling—very much like what is happening today. Most of the people were going to the false side—grabbing on to Gnosticism and Docetism, and falling away. I am sure that people in the church, in some cases, felt like God had forsaken them. But John's saying to hold on. "Look, it doesn't matter if we shrink down to a few people. We have all of these promises that the gates of the grave shall not prevail against the church. It's not going to die out. I may be 96 [or, whatever age John was at the time] but He can rise up others. We have the truth; and, most of all, we have God and Jesus Christ. So there's nothing to get 'down' about. We're the strong side; and we'll stay on the strong side--as long as we abide in Him."

I John 4:5 They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them.

Here is another tidbit from John about how we can understand the false. The world is going to like them. They are going to sound like the world. In many cases, they are going to sidle up to the world as closely as they can, in order to make things easy for themselves. So, here is another way that we can check. If something sounds 'worldly,' then it probably is. We need to be aware of that; because he says, in chapter two, that anything that is of the world is not of God. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world" because these things are passing away. We want to stick with those things that are eternal, those things that are of God.

I John 4:6 We are of God.

A very strong, very straightforward little sentence there. *We are of God!* And we can say that with confidence.

I John 4:6 He who knows God hears us.

In this instance, John was saying that specifically of himself and his own ministry, and the true apostles. Remember that he had opened up the book by talking about the fact that he was one of the ones who had touched Christ—who had handled Him, had seen Him with his eyes, had heard Him with his own ears. And so, in some cases throughout this Bible, when he says "we" he is talking about the true apostles of God; and I think this is one of them. "He who knows God hears us," he says. And who is usually speaking? Usually it is the ministry; and so he is saying, "Those of you who hear us and understand us, we are of God."

I John 4:6 He who is not of God does not hear us.

This is another clue. If you reject the messenger, then it is likely that you are of the other spirit. If the messenger is bringing the truth and people reject the truth, then those people, who reject the truth, are not of the truth. Then they are not of God. And so we can make a judgment.

As an example, if we believe that Herbert Armstrong was a true apostle of God and brought the truth of God (the gospel of the Kingdom of God) and people reject him, I think that is a good clue that they are not "of God." It may not be a conclusive proof; but I think that, if you reject the messenger, you have pretty much rejected the message as well. There are several scriptures in the Gospels that talk about that. If you reject those whom Christ sent, you reject Him; and if you reject Him, you reject the Father who sent Him.

That is something that is very important in this day and age, because people disassociate the message from the messenger. Jesus said, and John says it too (to back Him up), "You can't do it." I think we have seen that in sermons that have been given recently about sanctification. Moses and Aaron were inextricably bound with the truth of God. To reject Moses and Aaron was tantamount to rejecting God; and He killed thousands of people because they rejected Moses—whether they believed God would lead them to the Promised Land, or not.

I John 4:6 By this we know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.

He renames "the spirit of antichrist" here as "the spirit of error." You could also say "the spirit of lying," or "the spirit of falsehood." In II Thessalonians 2, Paul talks about the lie. In Romans 1, Paul talks about how they rejected all the proofs of the Creator that are in the creation, and God gave them over to a lie—to a reprobate mind and that is the same thing that John is talking about here. The spirit of antichrist, the spirit of error, the lie, the reprobate mind—they are all the same type of thing. They all refer back to this falsehood, or this set of falsehoods. They are designed to take us away from God and put us into Satan's camp once again—from which we have been called.

So, any teaching that changes the nature of God and Christ is the spirit of antichrist. It is the spirit of error. Anything that is not *of the truth* is false. It is error. It is antichrist. To many that seems awfully black and white; and it is. There is truth, and there is falsehood. That is why I said that there is only *one* true gospel, but there are *many* false gospels.

When I was studying, quite some time ago, into the sermons on Matthew 13, I came upon this next verse. I found that, to my own mind, this is the theme for a section that runs all the way through to the end of Matthew 13. The section really begins about verse 15 of chapter 12, and then it runs all the way through to the end of chapter 13. But right here in verse 30 is where the theme is mentioned. This is after Christ talks about "a house divided against itself cannot stand." And if He tries to cast out demons by Beelzebub and they would say that He is the devil—that does not make any sense. If the devil casts out the devil, that just does not make any sense. So He must be something else, and He ends up this section by saying:

Matthew 12:30 He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.

That is another very black and white statement. He says, "If you are not with Me, you are

against Me. If you are not doing My work (which is 'gathering,' in this context), then you actually doing a work against Me (which is 'scattering abroad')." That is exactly the opposite of gathering. I think Solomon says something like that in Ecclesiastes 3. There is a time for gathering things, and there is a time for scattering things.

Well, in this case, Jesus is gathering. And He says that those who are not with Him are scattering—hindering His work. What He says here is that there are only two sides. I have mentioned this already. There is Christ's side, or God's side; and there is Satan's side. Our calling removes us from Satan's side. God calls us into His camp. But it is a constant struggle, from that point on, to remain in Christ's camp—because there are always forces and beings out there (principalities and powers) that are trying to drag us back to Satan's side, as if by doing that God will be defeated. That will not happen; but Satan can certainly defeat us, if we allow him to do that.

God is going to win. That goes without saying. We saw that God is the stronger of the two. But personally, you want to win (with God) and not lose (with Satan). So there are these two sides—black and white—always fighting against the other. There is no middle ground. There is no fence to sit on. If you are sitting on the fence, you are on Satan's side. You are either all with Christ, or you are not with Him at all. You cannot have one foot in the world and one foot in the church, let us say. You have to *commit wholeheartedly*.

So, we are either doing His will (doing His work) or we are hindering it. And if we are hindering it—whether it is personally in us, or whether it is the major work that His church is doing—then we are antichrist. We are *against Him*. That is all it means, is it not? We are against Christ if we are hindering what He is trying to do—whether in us personally, or whether in the church in general. But how do we avoid being antichrist? It is really very simple. Jesus said it several times. Let us move forward to Matthew 22. This may be the clearest explanation of this. A man, who was a lawyer, came up to Jesus and asked Him a question.

Matthew 22:36 "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the law?"

You might want to say, "What is the first thing we ought to do? What is the most important thing that we ought to do?" Remember that I asked the question, "How do we avoid being antichrist?" Here is the answer:

Matthew 22:37-38 Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment."

That is how you avoid being antichrist. Simple, but effective! You plunge in *wholeheartedly* to God's side. You hold nothing back. You give everything. I could have turned to Romans 12:1, which is just a different way of stating the same thing.

Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice.

That is how you avoid antichrist. What he is talking about here is not just to say, "Okay, I'll do it." This is, "Go ahead, God. Burn me up as a living sacrifice. I'm giving You everything I have, everything I am—whatever it takes, whatever You need me to do." This is a reference back to the sacrifices that were given on the altar in the Temple, where the body of the animal

(the sacrifice) was consumed wholly. That is how you avoid being antichrist. You give your all! Body, heart, mind, spirit—everything. "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might"—for God. Be a living sacrifice. "Worship the LORD your God and Him only shall you serve." (Matthew 4:10 and Luke 4:8—when Christ was tempted by Satan.)

It is really a very simple formula, but it is so hard to do. But that is how you do it. If you do that, then falsehoods will not affect you at all. Acts 10:38 gives the principle of why Jesus was able to be so "good" all the time—*because He went about doing "good."* I have gone to that before, in recent sermons. He did not have time to do evil, because He was totally consumed in His ministry. He went about doing "good." He healed. He cast out demons. I am sure He counseled with people. He helped them to see what was happening. He preached the gospel of the Kingdom of God. He taught in their synagogues. He went to people's homes and He fellowshiped with them. He gave people hope. He told people to follow Him.

On and on, you can go through the Gospels and see a pattern of being kept busy (not busy for busyness' sake, but busy for the works' sake—for God's sake) to do what God had given Him. So, Jesus did not sin—not only because He had perfect righteous character, but also because He was always doing "good." It is like you have a totally dark cave and you bring a candle into it. Where does the darkness go? It must flee before the light of the candle. And that is the same way as righteousness and error, or sin. If you bring righteousness into your life, the evil must fly away.

As a matter of fact, John uses this imagery in the first chapter of his Gospel. He was the Light that came into the world, and the world could not stand it. Could not "comprehend" I think the word is. They could not understand it, could not hold on to it, because they were of the world. But we are of that Light, and we have to continue to do that Light. And that is how we banish the evil, and that is how we keep from sliding into antichrist attitudes and behaviors.

Probably all of you have thought that I would get to Galatians 1, and finally I am going to. This is probably the most well known section on what false gospels are. Paul makes some pretty astounding statements here.

Galatians 1:6 I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel.

Remember that I mentioned that this happened only twenty years after Jesus Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension and the founding of the New Testament church. But it is even more astounding to know that the Galatian church was not founded in 31 A.D. It was founded even later than that. I am not exactly sure when Paul went through Galatia. (I should have looked this up.) But they had even less time to turn away from the true gospel. That is, it had been less than twenty years. I think it was 35-38 A.D. when Paul was converted. So it had probably been less than a dozen years since the Galatians first heard the true gospel, and already they were turning away to a different gospel. And they were turning away from the grace of Christ.

This has to do with what the actual false or different gospel (that they had turned to) was. That was, they were becoming very legalistic and trying to be saved through works of the law. You find that in chapter 5. The first few verses say that very plainly. They were not trying to be saved by grace—by the grace of God through Christ. But they were trying to be justified by works.

In a way it has a lot to do with Gnosticism later on, because some have even thought that the Jews came up with Gnosticism. It was kind of a combination of wacky Jewish thought with wacky Greek thought; and it was not a nice combination when they smacked together. For this sermon, we do not necessarily need to know what this false gospel is, because we are taking it on more general terms.

Galatians 1:7 [This different gospel] which is not another. . . .

What he means by that is, "It's not even a gospel!" You have to understand that the word he used was *euangelion*, which means "good tidings" or "good news." And he is saying here, "Look, you've turned to a different good news that is not even good news." The reason why it is not good news is because *it ends in death!* It does not end in eternal life in God's Kingdom. That is GOOD NEWS! But this false gospel ends in nothingness—eternal death.

Galatians 1:7but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.

This is frequently the way it happens. They take bits of the truth, and they combine it with error. And so it is a perversion of the gospel of Christ. That is how Satan works—a little truth, a little error (the tree of the knowledge of good and evil type of thing). If you remember what Mr. Armstrong said about poison? Do you remember him talking about that? If you take water or some other innocuous liquid (liquor, juice, or whatever somebody might drink) and you put poison in it, which wins? Does the innocuous liquid cancel out the poison? No, the poison remains. It may get diluted somewhat, but the poison is still there.

So you have a false gospel here—where some elements of the truth are still remaining, but it has been diluted. "Watered down"—have you ever heard that? It is been watered down with falsehoods. And, even though it has bits of truth in it, its general character is false. It is perversion. It is wrong. It is bad. It is going to lead to death and destruction. So listen to the warnings here. This is how important this is!

Galatians 1:8-9 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.

Mr. Armstrong often said "a double curse" on those who preach another gospel. It is like God is saying, "Woe unto you." You do not want God to say "woe" unto you, (unless you are a horse). Another time, Paul said, "Woe unto me if I preach not the gospel." That is a little bit different understanding of this. Here in Galatians he is talking about preaching a different gospel, and in the other place he is talking about stopping the preaching of the gospel. But either way, a servant of God is condemned. If he preaches a false gospel or if he stops preaching the true gospel—watch out! That is his mission, his commission, his purpose in life—the reason why he became a living sacrifice. And God does not take it very well when His servants let this side down, and go over to the other side. That is treachery, faithlessness.

Galatians 1:10 For do I now persuade men, or God?

Now, this is interesting. It is a way, it is an approach, of how the gospel works and the motivation of the person who is preaching it. What he is saying here is "What am I in it for? What am I trying to have accomplished here? In the end, who am I trying to please?" He goes right on to say that:

Galatians 1:10 Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.

So we come to understand a little bit better about false gospels here. The motivation for preaching a false gospel is to please others. It is not to please God. And so we have here an insight into the mind of a false preacher, a false teacher. If we can find out what his motivation is—who he is trying to persuade and who he is trying to please; then we may have a better understanding of how we are to place him—as a false minister, or as a true one. Who is he trying to get on his side? Is he trying to keep God on his side? Or is he trying to get as many men [as possible] on his side? Is he trying to make men happy with him? Or is he trying to make God happy with him?

You almost have to be a psychologist at certain times, to be able to discern these things. But you do not need a degree in psychology to be able to read motives and general ways of looking at things. A little bit of experience should be able to give us a good view of these things. It will not be perfect, but we have lots of tests here. We are just gathering tests of ways to check out whether somebody is teaching the truth or teaching falsehood.

Galatians 1:11 But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man.

Here is another one. These apostles were good at flooding us with ways to know whether certain things were true or false, and this is another one. What is the origin of this person's teaching? Where does it come from? Did it originate in his mind?

Galatians 1:12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.

How many times did we hear Mr. Armstrong talk about that? That the gospel that he preached did not come by studying in a seminary. It did not come from the ideas of man, but it was revealed by Jesus Christ. And for Mr. Armstrong it was through a very diligent study of the Bible; unlike Paul, whose study was probably with Christ Himself. And the apostles, of course, had Christ to teach them during the 3½ years of His ministry. So *Herevealed it supernaturally* to them, one way or the other. And that is the way it is with all apostles. In a sense, you could broaden that out. I Corinthians 2:10 says that the things of God are revealed to us—by His Spirit.

These things are not physically discerned. It is not because we have some 'turn of mind' that allows us to understand this naturally. The natural mind of man does not comprehend the gospel. As a matter of fact, Jesus Christ said that His parables were designed so that people would not understand; and that it would take the unlocking of the mind, by the Spirit of God, to help us to comprehend what it is that they are really trying to tell us.

So here we have another thing to look for. Is this gospel that we are hearing something that

comes from the mind of God, or does it come from the fertile imagination of some man's mind? We can always check it, because we have here (in this Book that is before us) "the mind of God." As much as we can know about it, and as could be written down, is right here. If we will take the time to check it, then we will know where the teachings originate. Does it originate in God's Word? Does it originate from someone's very active mind?

Let us close in Psalm 145. I want to show you one thing here. Even though David lived a thousand years before Jesus Christ, he came bringing the gospel of the Kingdom of God. He knew what God's message was! The essence of God's message is found here. Notice this:

Psalm 145:10-13 All Your works shall praise You, O LORD, and Your saints shall bless You. They shall speak of the glory of Your kingdom, and talk of Your power, to make known to the sons of men His mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of His kingdom. Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and Your dominion endures throughout all generations.

Is that not the essence of the gospel that Jesus Christ brought? Preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God.