

JESUS CHRIST —Deny the deity of Christ. Separates the human Jesus from the divine Christ. Jesus was simply an unusual man who evolved into a godlike being through metaphysical disciplines.

GOD — A cosmic force — part of which is in each one; therefore allowing every individual to become a god.

BIBLE — Two possible meanings. Either a work of mystical secrets that can *only* be understood by “masters” — or — a useless book of Jewish legends.

SALVATION — By works of discipline. The law of “karma” is what judges us. Since there is not sin in the Biblical sense, there is no need for salvation — only more complete unification with “god” through repeated lives on earth — each one determining the fate in the next (a painful or a good *new* life) until perfection allows one to eventually reach “heaven.”

The concept of the New Age movement is not at all new. Much of its teaching is rooted in ancient practices. It includes an assortment of beliefs collected from such things as witchcraft, astrology, Hinduism and other Eastern religions. The movement focuses a great deal on the spiritual. As Christians we certainly *should* focus on things that are spiritual. Unfortunately, New Age has over emphasized that aspect to the point of turning away from the one true God to gods of the spirit world. As Christians, our spiritual experiences must be in line with truth. I John 4:1 states:

“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” (KJV)

Experience does not prove what truth is but rather truth proves what experiences are of God. Everything that is supernatural is not necessarily of God. God warned the Israelites to not fall victim to this same error in Deuteronomy 13:1-3.

“If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes true, concerning which he spoke to you, saying, ‘Let us go after other gods (whom you have not known) and let us serve them.’ you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the Lord your God is testing you to find out if you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.” (NKJV)

This passage tells us that if the message does not agree with the Scriptures, we should avoid the messenger. There are many teachings attempting to surface in the New Testament Church today that are *clearly* in disagreement with the Scriptures. God has given us His *completed* revelation. Let us not search other “spirits.” Our need *this* day is to *know* the teachings of the Bible well enough to be certain we are abiding by them. Let us pray for more study of His Word.

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DILIGENCE

“We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure.” — Hebrews 6:11

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The Scriptures warn that as time passes great numbers of false teachers will lead believers astray and into error. There are numerous references to this apostasy (or falling away) throughout the Word. Let's look at just a few of those Scriptures. Matthew 7:15 states:

“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.” (NASV)

Another warning is found in Matthew 24, verses 3 through 24. Please take a moment and read *all* of these verses. However for sake of space, we will only include verses 4, 11 and 24 here.

“⁴And Jesus answered and said to them, ‘See to it that no one misleads you. ¹¹Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. ²⁴For false Christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect.’ (NASV)

One more warning of this nature appears in II Timothy 4:3 and 4.

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears. And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.” (KJV)

Still another warning is found in II Peter 2:1-3.

“But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who taught them — bringing swift destruction to themselves. Many will follow their sinful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed, these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up.” (NIV)

False teaching and false teachers are nothing new to the Lord's church. Even the early Christians were plagued by such problems. In the last issue of *Diligence* we discussed the heresy of Gnosticism and its effect on the early church as well as its possible effect on today's church. Unfortunately, Gnosticism is not the *only* false teaching that is taking a toll on society as well as the Lord's church in our current day. The New Age Movement has also become quite prevalent.

It has been said that the New Age Movement is the most dangerous enemy of Christianity in the world today. It is estimated that *at least* one fourth of the population of the United States practices New Age philosophies and teachings. With this great of an influence in society it is important that Christians understand enough about such a popular movement to be able to recognize its false teachings so that we are not misled.

While it is difficult to “nail down” a specific definition of New Age, some of its teachings *can* be easily recognized since they are as old as sin itself. Let’s read Genesis 3:1-6

“¹*Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, ‘Did God really say you must not eat from any tree of the garden?’*²*The woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say; You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it or you will die.’*⁴*‘You will not surely die,’ the serpent said to the woman, ‘For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’*⁶*When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food, and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.” (NIV)*

New Age employs the *very same* methods that the serpent used to tempt Eve. Let’s look closely and compare the two. New Age teaches that:

- 1) God doesn’t mean *exactly* what He says — see verses 1, 4 & 5 above.
- 2) Man doesn’t have to die — see verse 4 above.
- 3) Man can become a god — see verse 5 above.
- 4) Man can evolve through hidden knowledge — see verse 6 above.

It is absolutely *impossible* in this one article, to even scratch the surface of the magnitude of the New Age beliefs. Its teachings however, might be somewhat summed up with six distinctive points of New Age thinking. Those six are:

- 1) All is One — a single source of divine energy
- 2) All is God — God is *all* that exists — *all* that exists is God
- 3) Humanity is God — seek God within self and throughout the universe
- 4) A change in consciousness — imagery; meditation; mystical experiences
- 5) All religions are one — there are simply different spiritual paths
- 6) Cosmic evolutionary optimism — there will eventually be a utopia

In addition to these distinctive thoughts, New Age centers its focus on several typical doctrines. A few of those doctrines are:

- 1) an impersonal god (or force)
- 2) the evolution of man into Godhood
- 3) continuing revelations from beings beyond the world

- 4) the need for meditation (or other consciousness-changing techniques)
- 5) occult practices such as astrology, crystals, Tarot cards, etc.
- 6) vegetarianism and holistic health
- 7) syncretism (or unity of all religions)
- 8) an illusory nature of matter (or — we create our *own* reality)
- 9) pacifism (or anti-war activities)

We must note here again that these are “*typical doctrines*” of New Age. There may be those who practice one or more of these but are *not* yet drawn completely into New Age Religion. It might however be time for a personal inventory of beliefs with a firm check against the Scriptures if one finds him/her self involved with several of these practices on a regular basis.

In the New Age movement the *individual* is considered to be the standard of truth rather than accepting the *Bible* as the standard. This concept is obviously in error according to II Timothy 3:16 and II Peter 1:21. There is absolutely *no* Bible basis for believing that an individual’s *own* inner feelings are the final authority. However since New Agers believe that all is one and that all is God and believe in an evolution of man into Godhood, they are led into thinking that they are part of divine essence. They believe each individual is “intertwined” with God — not in the Biblical sense that a Christian would believe — but as an individual who has or can achieve godhood. A New Ager may frequently quote Luke 17:21 — “*...the kingdom of God is within you*” as a basis for such a belief. (We obviously do not have the space here to discuss *why* using this Scripture for this purpose is inaccurate but would be glad to discuss it with anyone who might wish to do so).

Another area in which New Age is in great opposition with Christianity is that of sin. In all of the hundreds of New Age books that now line the shelves of most every bookstore, one would probably search in vain to find any reference to sin. After all, if the individual has attained “Godhood,” there is no such thing as sin as the Bible defines it. Any lack that an individual might have is described as a lack of enlightenment and the solution is to alter the consciousness of such an individual so s/he will think *properly* of his/her oneness with the divine essence within him/her — or simply altar their reality.

Perhaps one of the most dangerous aspects of New Age Religion to which Christians must be alert, is that of the terms used by the New Agers. While *we* take for granted the definition of certain words, New Agers have entirely different definitions for those *same* terms. If a Christian is not aware of these differences, it might be easy to assume that New Age doctrine may not be as dangerous as this article would lead one to believe. Let’s look at only a few (out of many) of those terms and see how the New Age definition of each word differs from what the typical Christian would assume it meant.