

Part 2: Gnostic Christianity

INTRODUCTION – Interim Old Testaments

- C. S. Lewis...
- Justin Martyr...
- Don Richardson...
- King Solomon...
- Apostle Paul...

Ecclesiastes 3:11; Romans 2:14-15; Colossians 2:13-23

Parallelomania – Osiris, Horus, Mithras, & Jesus

1. Mithras was born on December 25th.
2. Mithras was virgin born and attended by shepherds.
3. Mithras had 12 disciples.
4. Horus was born of a virgin.
5. Horus said things like I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but by me. *“Therefore the key verse of conservative orthodoxy today was sourced in pagan roots.”* (Harpur)
6. Horus was crucified between two thieves.
7. Osiris, after his death, went to preach to the souls in prison.
8. Osiris rose from the dead.
9. Orpheus/Bacchas/Dyonisis died by crucifixion.
10. The Christian “Madonna and Child” is borrowed from Isis and Horus.

Something Better Than Gnosticism

ABOUT GNOSTICISM... Gnosticism is a complex web of beliefs revolving around the idea of “Gnosis”, a special, deep *knowledge* that may not be easily apparent to the unenlightened and uninitiated. This gnosis takes study, investigation, and special, gifted insight, in fact, it is often thought to be a secret that should not be made too easy for all to see. In general, Gnosticism teaches that *spirit* is the essential and good reality and *matter* is a negative reality, a prison, an evil to be overcome. (Hence, knowing special inner truth for salvation is often stressed rather than how one actually lives in this world.) Some Gnostics could not believe that a good God would create a physical world and so hypothesized that our physical world was created by a lesser, evil deity (the Demiurge) in order to imprison our true spiritual selves within matter. Regardless, Gnostics agree that our job is to transcend the physical, to return to our pure state, to become one with the Divine Spirit again. On the positive side, Gnostic ideas help remind us that there is more to this world than the physical. On the negative side, Gnosticism can lead to the pitfalls of a) missing the joy of God’s creation, b) disconnecting our physical lives from our spiritual lives, c) debasing our physical lives in an attempt to become more spiritual, d) making salvation a matter of special knowledge available only to a select few rather than child-like faith available to all.

Romans 1:3; 6:4; 8:25; 15:3, 8; 1 Corinthians 1:23; 2:2, 8; 9:1, 14; 10:6-11; 11:23-25; 15:3-8; 2 Corinthians 8:9; 13:4; Galatians 1:18-19; 3:16; 4:4; Philippians 2:5-8; etc. Galatians 4:24 VS. 1 Corinthians 10:6-11 Romans 12:1

CONCLUSION – Thy Kingdom Come

Matthew 6:9-10

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY...

AUDIO... *God’s Library; The Scene of the Crime; The Jesus Scandals; The Way; The Story of Us; When Darkness Falls*
 BOOKS... *Jesus Outside the New Testament* (Robert E. Van Voorst); *The Historical Jesus* (Gary R. Habermas); *What Are the Gospels?: A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography, Second Edition* (Richard A. Burridge); *Is The Bible True?* (Jeffrey L. Sheler); *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (N. T. Wright); *Letters From A Skeptic* (Gregory Boyd)
 WEB... www.tomharpur.com; www.mcmaster.ca/mitm/pdfs/MJTM%206.7%20Heath%20on%20Harpur.pdf

HOME CHURCH QUESTIONS...

WARMING UP...

1. Take time to review this week’s message and discuss your reactions. Talk about what most challenged, puzzled, or encouraged you.

LOOK TO THE BOOK...

2. Read Paul’s comparison between Christ and Old Testament religion in **Colossians 2:13-23**. a) What verse or thought stands out to you the most? Why? b) Do you think the principle here could be applied to a comparison of Jesus and other ancient religions? Do you agree with C. S. Lewis that, in some way, Jesus is the substance of which ancient mythology is the shadow or “echoes”?
3. Let’s return to last week’s *Composer-Conductor Challenge*. Harpur is certain that Paul did not believe in a human, flesh-and-blood Jesus. That Paul was a Gnostic Harpur says, “of this there can be no doubt”. Read through the Scriptures listed above under “SOMETHING BETTER THAN GNOSTICISM”. a) What passage stands out to you the most? Why? b) How might passages like **Galatians 4:24; Mark 4:33-34; Matthew 3:10-17** lead people to think that Paul and Jesus (if he existed) were Gnostics? What do you think was the motivation behind, the point, of Jesus’ approach in these passages (also see **Matthew 7:6**)? c) So, do you think Paul was a Gnostic?

SO WHAT?...

4. In **Colossians 2:13-23**, what do you think is Paul’s main point – the one that he wants his readers to take away with them? Pray about this in your own life and the life of your Home Church. And while you’re at it, why not take time to pray for Tom Harpur?

Bruxy Cavey @ THE MEETING HOUSE – Sunday, April 23 / 30, 2004