***God's Word is the Authority

RV253-02***

In the process of the creation evolution controversy, one of the areas upon which the attack is focused, is the Book of Genesis in the opening chapters, which describes the creative work of God that out of nothing by the spoken Word of God came everything. And ultimately came the creative hand of God producing human life and a creature made in the very image and likeness of God.

Liberal theology says, "That this is a myth. There never was an Adam. There never was an Eve. There never was a Garden of Eden, and there never was a God who was putting all this together. This was a myth to give a background picture of some kind of origin for the process of evolution.

If it's a myth, then it does not bear any authority concerning the nature of man, because something marvelous was done here in the creative work of God. He made a man and he made a woman. God Himself, by His omniscient evaluation, said that what He had done was very good. It was a perfect product. Yet something terrible happens to make that product anything but perfect, make it very ugly, make it very gross and very disgusting. It only took a few generations after Adam for the whole world of humanity to be so bad that God decided to put it all to death except Noah and his family: to start over again and to establish the principle of human government, to control the nature of man by constituted laws and the authorities within society with judges, and man authorized to exercise the ultimate punishment of execution.

None of that makes any sense if this all evolved; it only makes sense if the Word of God is true. And that is the issue that confronts humanity, it confronts you and me, it confronts all of mankind; is the Bible the true Word of God, or are we just kidding ourselves? And if it is, then we must give it considerable care, study, and credence. We can't just blow it off. From the moment of the first consciousness of Adam and Eve, they received information from God about spiritual matters for their guidance.

And that is our beginning point this morning for the closing of the Book of the Revelation. We're down to the very end. The Last Testimony Number 2 is our subject, Revelation 22:18-21.

Where do we come to at the very end? We come right back to the Word of God and the authority of God. The problem all began in the very first book and it took all the Bible, and finally we come to the end of Revelation and the problem is resolved.

But Adam and Eve were not ignorant of principles of doctrine. From the moment of their consciousness, they received information from God for their spiritual guidance. They had direct Word of God oral communication. Their knowledge of doctrine was expanded daily, as in the cool of the day, Christ would meet with them in His pre-incarnate state and would teach them, giving them instruction and meaningful words. They understood what they were told, whatever the language was in which Christ spoke to them. The words had meaning and the Word of God was very clear.

Part of the Word of God that they possessed was not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The penalty for doing this, they were told, would be certain death. Turn to Genesis 2:16-17. "And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, 'From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die.'" In the Hebrew language it is that emphatic. You shall surely die if you eat of this tree, 'You've got this whole garden I want you to take care of it. That's your job. You enjoy it to your heart's content. You do what you wish in this garden. But the one thing you cannot do is to eat of this particular tree called the tree of the Knowledge of good and evil.'

The doctrinal principle here was that obedience to the Word of God in its plain meaning, as had been delivered to them, will result in life and blessing. That's still true today. Anybody who lives by the principles of the Word of God will be a person who enjoys life and blessing. Obedience meant that all earthly goods and pleasures were at man's disposal. He was not denied any pleasure in the garden and he was not denied any material thing in the garden. It was all his to have and to enjoy.

Eating the forbidden fruit, however, would be an act of contempt for the clearly stated Word of God. That was the point. God said 'Now we have set it up and here is the first dispensation. This is the Dispensation of Innocence and it is the Dispensation of the Gentiles. The first phase is the phase of innocence. You will be tested. The only test that you have to meet is to obey me about this tree.' In effect, God was saying 'I'm testing you relative to your attitude toward the Word of God. If you obey it, it's life and prosperity; disobey it and it's death and grief.'

Well, Adam and Eve in arrogant self-confidence, decided to disobey the Word of God about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Satan, disguised as a serpent, came to Eve and cast doubt upon her understanding of what God had meant about the prohibition against eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Genesis 3:1, "Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, 'Indeed, has God said, "You shall not eat from any tree of the garden"?' You shall not eat from every tree of the garden? Here is Satan casting doubt upon a clear statement of the Word of God.

Now, if you were Eve, how would you have responded? If you were in her position due to the fact of the instruction that you had received on this matter on a daily basis, how would you have reacted? Shortly after she was created by God from Adam's rib, I have no doubt he took her over to that tree and said, 'You see this tree? God calls it the tree of knowledge and good and evil. We are not to eat of this tree. That's the plain Word of God, it's very clear. We can eat everything else in this garden, but we cannot eat of this particular tree.' He said 'If we do, the consequence will be death. We who have been suddenly brought to consciousness by His breathing into us the breath of life, soul, and spiritual life, will suddenly become unconscious physically in death, and our souls will be held in reserve for eternal punishment and they will be conscious forever.' So, it was very clear Adam explained it to her and they went on. How long? We don't know. But Satan came in on one occasion. Adam was not there. The first thing he does is say, 'Do you really have the Word of God straight?'

Now that's the principle. We're going to close down the Book of the Revelation and the first question is, do you have the Word of God straight? Do you really understand that book? Are you getting something all mixed up? Are you some kind of a stupid nut that doesn't understand that this book was all fulfilled by 70 A.D.? Are you still looking to the future that all these things are going to take place? Don't you understand that this is not literal meaning that we're dealing with?... And you have to decide, is that the Word of God or not? Because whichever way you decide, you've either added and detracted from the Word of God or you've respected it.

So, here comes the serpent. He cast doubt upon Eve's understanding of the Word of God. Either Eve did not know God's word about the tree very well; or she did not want, more likely, to remember and act upon it literally. She knew very well the instruction, but she didn't want to act upon it. I have had enough experience in the ministry to know how this works. People cannot attend this congregation without getting explicit, clear pictures about God and sin and right and wrong and the application of biblical doctrines to all facets of society: to government, to education, to business, to all institutions. It is so clear that if you are out of line with it, you can only sit there and squirm because there's no slack given you when it comes to what the Word of God has said. The Word of God is what is true.

On one occasion performing a marriage ceremony, the groom said, "My future mother in law is a feminist type. And she really gets all up and her hackles rise when she hears the phrase 'weaker vessel.' Could you not include that in your ceremony?" Because I do, because I read Scripture. And I said [to him] "The whole ceremony is a procedure that we make up. Many of the words are just words that we think are fitting and any of those we can change. But when I read Scripture, I can't change that. I can't take away from the Word of God." He caught it immediately. [So he said] "So, you're right, it has to stay."

So, it's an old it's an old trick of Satan to say to you, take out something out of the Word of God one way or another, ignored or twisted out of its meaning or pretend that you never heard it.

It is not uncommon for people to hear the Word of God and understand it quite clear, literally. Then they go to all their friends, to all the things that society does, and they take comfort from the fact society breaks the rules of God and therefore it's OK for them to do. They take assurance from the word of somebody else. In the case of Eve, she took the word of Satan disguised as a snake instead of the Word of God, the pre-incarnate Christ, with whom she had had personal fellowship and whose voice of instruction she had heard.

So, Eve should have responded to Satan by quoting the Word of God with its intended literal meaning. When the Lord Jesus Christ faced a similar situation in the wilderness temptation, He defeated the temptations of Satan on those 3 occasions by simply quoting the Word of God, and He applied it in its literal meaning. We have that recorded for us in Matthew 4:4, Matthew 4:7, Matthew 4:10. On those 3 occasions He just quoted Old Testament Scripture, which rebutted the sin that Satan was inviting Him to commit. Jesus took the Word of God, literally. He said, 'That is the Word of God. This is not the word of man. I cannot re-adapt it. I cannot reinterpret it. The words mean what the words mean.' And the result was, the Bible tells us, that Satan was defeated and took a powder out of that temptation wilderness and just moved on; and Christ was left there alone, victorious.

Wouldn't that have been something if Eve had said, 'I don't want to be a man, I don't want to be my husband, I don't want to be the leader in spiritual things. I don't want to be pushy on the things of God. I don't want to be opinionated. I want to be subject to the mind of God and to the lines of authority in my family. You, you snake, if you want to talk to somebody, talk to my husband. He'll be here shortly. He's out gathering supper.' So, Eve could have done that. Jesus did.

But instead she disparaged the privilege she had of living in the magnificent environment of the Garden of Eden. She disparaged it by adding to the prohibition of God's word, saying something that God never did say to her, and by weakening the death penalty to a possibility. Genesis 3:2-3, "And the woman said to the serpent, 'From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; [Yes, we can eat from all the trees] but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it lest you die.'" God never said that they couldn't touch it. But she added to it in in an attempt to disparage a certain restriction and that things weren't as nice as they could be, that God already was putting a pressure upon them, so that Eve here weakened the death penalty by saying 'lest you die.' God did not say 'lest you die.' He says, 'You shall surely die.' There was no question about it.

This is exactly the way people deal with the judgments of God that are pronounced in Scripture. They soften them to a possibility. They pretend that maybe they didn't quite understand what God was saying. They like to pretend that the Word of God is not clear to them and that they must have a new point of view.

Do you realize that there's something like 900 million Roman Catholics in the world, and that every one of them from the pope on down to the humblest janitor, are walking lockstep into the Lake of Fire? Tell that to your Catholic friends. The truth of the matter is that the Roman Catholic Church has totally distorted the Scriptures. It tells people not to read the Bible because only the Magisterium, the College of Cardinals and the teaching authority of the pope, can tell you what those Scriptures mean. What they tell you is totally what they don't mean. And what they have come up with, and which is still the authority of the church today, is based upon the Council of Trent, which followed the Reformation and went on for 12 years. It says, "That if anybody says that they can be instantly justified before God by an act of faith, let them be anathema." That's what the Council of Trent says, 'Let there be a curse upon you,' and anathema means let him go 'into the Lake of Fire.'

The Roman Catholic church says, 'anybody who believes that you may be saved by believing in Jesus Christ, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved,' the Roman Catholic Church says 'we condemn him to eternal flames?' And that's the only way that you can get there. So, wouldn't you ask them, 'how shall we get there?' They give you a works salvation through the sacraments of the church. And they dispense it piece-by-piece, so that maybe at the end of life, you're pretty near justified and you finish it off in Purgatory. All that is paganism, from Babylonianism.

And yet here is the Word of God. They [the Roman Catholic Church] claim that they produce the Bible, and only they can interpret it. What they do is add to it, remove from it, twist it up: like when they get to the Ten Commandments and the Roman Catholic Church is faced with the Second Commandment about no images that you bow down and pray before or worship. So, the Roman Catholic Church removes that from the Bible, just pulls it right out. And then it divides the Tenth Commandment into two, so they still have Ten Commandments. That is a great deceit. And it is done on the basis of the fact that the pope says, "We wrote the Bible." I wonder where the Catholic Church was when all the Old Testament written if they wrote the Bible.

But this deceit toward the Word of God is the issue. We're closing the Book of the Revelation, a terrible time that's ahead for humanity, all because of what began here at the very first book, because here was Eve and she couldn't accept what the Word of God said. And she proceeded to disparage it, to soften the penalties, and to expand on what God had said. Adding and detracting from the Word of God is always the kiss of death. That's why it is promoted by Satan still today.

Well, when Satan saw Eve's compromise with the literal meaning of God's word. He immediately reinterpreted the command from God for her, denying that she would die. He comes up to her and he says, "Oh my dear, you don't understand. That is not what God meant. Let me explain to you exactly what the Roman Catholic magisterium does to its members. Let me explain to you. You're confused about John 3:16, that's not all there is. You're confused about Ephesians 2:8-9, no works and only grace. You must understand. So let's explain it to you!” The Catholic Church is still doing the devil's work just as the devil did it here in the Garden of Eden.

Genesis 3:4, "And the serpent said to the woman, 'You surely shall not die!'" God had just got through saying 'you will surely die.' Satan comes along and says to her, 'You surely will not die.' Now what would you have done had you been in Eve's place? Now, the lines of authority are very clear. You are either going to listen to God, or you can listen to the snake.

**Satan Is a Liar**

Satan is inherently a liar the Bible tells us. He was a liar from the time that he promised the demon angels that he could defeat God and they joined him in his rebellion against God. John 8:44 tells us that from the very beginning that Satan was a liar.

But twisting the plain meaning of God's word does not negate its truth or change reality. No matter how much you lie about the Word of God, it doesn't change the truth of it and it doesn't change how God operates.

**Satan Casts Doubt on God's Character**

Satan also cast doubt to Eve about God's character. That's the next thing. First, you attack the Word of God. You discredit it. You distort it. You twist it in some way, and then you go after the guys, who are communicating the Word of God in its true, clear, literal, easy to understand, totally coordinated from one end of the Bible to the other in a Pre-millennial, Dispensational, Pre-Tribulation Rapture context. You go after those guys to discredit them, so that even if you are sitting under the most magnificent instruction you could ask for, you get carried away by something that catches your fancy on TV, or in a book, or someplace else. But the hard core teaching of the Word of God in explaining it is what Satan does not want you to listen to, and he gives you the idea that there is somebody, who can do it better to meet your needs. Nobody can do anything better to meet your needs than what God had done for Eve in instructing her in doctrine. And nobody could do better for you than that which you receive as the instruction in the Word of God, which means you have to be here to get it.

Satan, in Genesis 3:5, goes after God, the communicator. Genesis 3:5, "For God knows that in day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God." 'You will be a God. You will know good and evil. You will have an understanding about good and about evil, the way God understands good and evil. You will actually have experience personally what is good and evil.' Eve was told that 'God was jealous of the potential godhood of Adam and Eve. God did not want two other gods competing with Him.' So Eve was told that 'You are a potential God. You're a potential goddess, and God does not want you to know that.' Eve was told that 'she would be equal in knowledge to God if she ate the fruit.'

At this point, Eve ignored the clear meaning of God's word which had been delivered to her. She believed in Satan's reinterpretation, which was a lie, and she ate the forbidden fruit. Genesis 3:6, "When the woman saw the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, [and then, the said 3 words,] and he ate."

**Adam's Choice**

What would you have done if you had been Adam there? You could have done 2 things. You [could have] said 'Eve, you've done a terrible thing. I can't eat of this tree. I can't follow your advice. God has condemned that. You cannot be my teacher. Only God can be my teacher on spiritual things. And I can see what's happened to you; you've lost your glory light, you've lost your glory covering. Something has happened to you.'

Instead, the Bible says, "And he ate." He says, 'Eve, maybe you're right. I think a man should listen to his wife.' That's where the phrase was first brought into popularity. He went along with her, even though he knew better. That's why later, in the Book of Romans, Paul says, 'Eve was really tricked. She innocently, foolishly, was tricked. But she didn't hang with doctrine. But he said 'Adam wasn't tricked for one moment. He knew exactly what the devil was doing. He knew exactly what Eve had done, and he chose with his eyes wide open to go along with her in that sin. It's very hard for a man not to descend to the wrong attitudes of his own wife.

So, Eve saw that the tree was good for food, was physically useful. It was delight to the eyes, it was esthetically attractive. It could make one wise, it was able to put one in the know. And she offered it to her husband, and he went along with her for superior spiritual insight and interpretation.

**The Consequences of Disobedience**

The consequences of disobeying God's word was instant spiritual death and ultimate physical death. Genesis 3:7 gives us instant spiritual death: "Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings." The expression "and they knew that they were naked," which was a symbolic reflection of the fact that they were sinful, "they knew that they were naked" implies that they knew they were sinful, their glory light was now gone. And their covering therefore was gone and they were naked completely without the innocence of God's glory upon them. They were sinful. And they both died spiritually at that point.

Genesis 5:5 tells us that 12 years later Adam died physically. "So all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years, and he died." They did not become gods as Satan said they would. They did not possess divine knowledge. And they saw their simple condition in the shame of their nakedness. Both were spoiled from a very good creation God had made of them just because they wouldn't listen to the Word of God. They were so foolish not to pay attention to what they already knew. They tried to cover their sinful conditions. They try to hide from God. They had exchanged life for death. They had exchanged pleasure for suffering. They exchanged abundance for want. They had exchanged fellowship for alienation from their Creator.

They received God's punishment and they were forever expelled from the Garden of Eden. So much for godhood. Man may attempt to be like God, but he will only end up as the dust of the ground from whence he came. And you know, the Bible tells us that dust is the serpent’s food. Dust is snake food. Snakes eat dust.

The last time we were at Padre Island, I saw this whole program carried on before my very eyes. On the day that we went swimming in the Gulf, Mr. Short took the kids ahead and I stayed back at our pavilion. And while I was there, I had stepped outside and there was a snake. When I looked closely, he was in the process of eating a lizard. This lizard was sitting there struggling with his feet out. I became fascinated. While this lizard head first was going in, and the snake would gulp, and the lizard would go in. And he gulps again and the lizard would go. And the lizard’s tail was flapping. I think he said 'S.O.S, S.O.S.,' by the way to hit the ground. I believe that's what I saw him say. I thought to myself, boy, I'm not about to help you. I want to see this. Boy, that lizard went all the way into that snake, just like Adam and Eve went all the way into the serpent in the garden.

Since that time, the snake has been the symbol of the religions of Satan around the world. Just visit some of the ruins in Central and South America, of the Indian ruins all over in their pyramids that they have built. In their structures, you will see the symbol of the snake. I saw a picture the other day of a thing that happens only once a year at Chichen Itza, Mexico, one of the Aztecs ruins where they had a stepped-down pyramid. And these people have the image of the snake everywhere because that was the origin of their religion. It's very interesting that they made that connection and that Satan is behind all this. They were clever enough, they were smart enough, that once a year the sun is at a certain point that as it moves, a light suddenly hits the corner on those steps and it slithers down like a snake to the bottom. I was fascinated by looking at that picture. Here is the snake wiggling its way down that incline of that pyramid that they had, the stepped-pyramid they had built.

It all goes back to the devil. He is the god of this world. He is the god of this age. He is the prince of the power of the air. And back in the Garden of Eden, the terrible things of the Revelation which come to climax there, began here. What is finally resolved at the end of the Book of the Revelation began here. Why? Because two people could not believe the Word of God, even when they knew it. It's bad enough for people who don't obey the Word of God because they've never been taught, but to know it and turned against it. So they return to the dust and they become snake food.

Man sinned by eating, now he would suffer with toil in order to eat. Eve, what had manipulated her husband, now she will be told that she would be mastered by her husband. Satan destroyed the human race and he will be dispatched to the Lake of Fire.

**God's Provision**

However, God's grace promised to undo the consequences of twisting the meaning of God's word. And don't forget that's what we're talking about, they had twisted the meaning of God's word. In Genesis 3:15, we have the first promise of a Savior. "And I will put enmity between you [the serpent, the devil] and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head [wounding them spiritually], and you shall bruise him on the heel." a mortal blow to Satan's control.

Genesis 3:21 says "And the LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them." An animal was killed, blood was shed. And here is the first symbolic presentation that they needed a covering that only blood would give, the blood of an innocent victim, ultimately that would be the Savior who would be born through the woman promised in Genesis 3:15.

This was fulfilled, recorded for us in Romans 3:24-26, "being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation [a satisfaction] in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed;" The first thing that was important, the first thing that Christ accomplished with His death on the cross and the shedding of His blood, was to show that God had not violated His own holiness. Because all the while, from Adam on down, He had been forgiving sins, but God did not have the sin covered. But God says, 'I'm going to forgive this to you, you're going to Heaven. You believe, I'm going to send you a savior, you're going to heaven.' But the sin could not be forgiven because it had not been covered by the penalty of death. The first thing was that the death of Christ now covered all those IOUs that God had accumulated and showed that He was not unholy in passing over the death penalty temporarily until Christ paid for those who, like Abraham, believed in God.

[continuing with Romans 3:26] "for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer of Dallas Seminary used to read this verse and say, "in the justifier of one who has nothing but faith in Jesus, nothing more to added to it." So, much for the Roman Catholic works system.

**God's Warning About His word**

At the end of Revelation. We have seen that God warns against a repeat of the sin of Adam and Eve, that is, of adding and diminishing the Word of God and in Revelation particularly, as it applies to that book. A solemn declaration is made by John against anyone adding to the prophecies revealed in Revelation. The words are the words of God, and they're not to be diluted with human viewpoint, wisdom of man's words and the ideas which God's words convey.

Religions of Satan always add their own scriptures to God's inspired book. Mormons, Jews, Muslims, and the Buddhists all do it. They add their scriptures to cover their points of view. And all who add to the completed Bible by that act show that they hold Revelation and the Bible as a whole in contempt as merely man's work to which they can feel free to add their wisdom.

But the Bible is complete and only an unsaved person would dare add to it. This closing condemnation at the end of Revelation 22 assumes what is true that only an unsaved person would dare add to the Bible. Those are the false prophets.

One Roman Catholic Church in the Middle Ages, (Please remember that the popes of the Roman Catholic Church on occasion were some of the vilest, inhuman creatures that ever draw human breath. Many of them were extremely immoral, vile, and had no hesitancy in putting to death people who believe the Word of God and people who believe in justification by faith, as they did to John Huss of Bohemia.) one pope, was so outrageous that he simply rewrote the whole Bible to his liking. In that, he completely established within the Scripture all that the Catholic Church taught, all the Babylonian Nimrods religion. He just rewrote the whole Bible. It was such an outrageous thing that the Roman Catholic hierarchy itself was embarrassed by it. Therefore, they condemned the thing, they destroyed the book, and search everywhere they could for any copies that had been made. They destroyed the whole thing. Even they, who are tolerant of all kinds of twisting of the Word of God, could not go so far as to have a completely rewritten Scripture.

So, this is not something that you might say, 'well, nobody would do this.' Any unbeliever who has the ability and the power to do it would do it. Because that's the only way you get the monkey of moral guilt off your back, which i to remove the authority force, which is the Bible.

If you interpret the Bible non-literally please remember, that is an addition to the Word of God because you make false messages out of what you consider symbols.

Revelation 22:18, the crime and the punishment of addition, "I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book."

**The New Age Movement Lie**

A classic twisting of the Word of God is exemplified by the New Age Movement. The New Age Movement is a Westernized version of Hinduism based on the premise that man is an evolving God. It's the very thing that Satan told Eve that she was. The New Age Movement cult must in a Christian nation, however, cope with the authority of the Bible and its doctrines, which people still respect. The Bible as literal statement condemns the self-deity doctrine as heresy. The Bible leaves no room for any god but the real true God. Therefore, the validity of the Bible is attacked, or the statements of Scripture are twisted from their true meaning in order to support the heresy.

You've all heard of Shirley MacLaine, the actress. She is a New Age Movement devotee. She is a woman who is taught by a spirit, a demon spirit. And she has been taught by him to discredit the Bible in order to defend the doctrine of reincarnation. Let me quote to you from The Watchmen Examiner Vol. 12. No. One about The New Age. The title of the article is "The New Age, A New Twist." It says, "In Shirley MacLaine's book OUT ON A LIMB, her medium teacher, Kevin Ryerson supposedly channels an entity named John. [Isn't that interesting? The demon is named John. And the Book of the Revelation that condemns the twisting of Scriptures is by the apostle John. Satan's always the counterfeiter. John says don't add, don't take away from the Word of God. Don't twist its meaning. And along comes a demon named John that says "So let me interpret the Bible for you, because you don't understand what it's really saying."] Shirley asks John 'isn't the Bible supposed to be the Word of God?' [Now, understand that Shirley MacLaine has these conversations with her spirit guide, the demon named John and she hears him speaking.] He answers, 'Yes, in the main it is, although much of what exists in your Bible today has been reinterpreted [Reinterpreted by whom?] by various persons through time and through various languages, ultimately by the church. It was to the advantage of the church to protect the people from the real truth. The real truth, John explains, is reincarnation. When MacLaine asks 'why aren't these teachings recorded in the Bible?' The answer is 'the theory of reincarnation is recorded in the Bible, but the proper interpretations were struck from it during the Ecumenical Council in Constantinople, sometime around 553 A.D. called the Council of Nicea.'"

The demon John is confusing interpretation of a Bible text with translation. He's arguing about different translations, not about reinterpretation. It's ironic that this demon, when John the apostle says, "Don't trust Scripture," is about to do that very thing. Many early manuscripts about Scripture by early church leaders were around by 553 A.D. Those manuscripts were interpretations, and some of those early church fathers had different viewpoints, but they were not translations of Scripture. So, the demon, first of all, is saying the translation has been changed, but it hasn't been changed. The Greek and Hebrew has not been changed. But there have been many changes of some interpretations from these who wrote early on. The Canon of the Old and New Testament were settled well before 553 A.D. All the books of the Old and New Testament were settled by then. So, it's not any ongoing changes in the original text of the Scripture, just changes in interpretation. So, the demon is confusing interpretation with the text of the Scriptures themselves.

Furthermore, this demon John, I suppose, is not very well informed, because the Church Council in Constantinople, he says, "was called the Council of Nicea." No, the church council which did meet in Constantinople, was called the Council of Constantinople. That's kind of hard to remember, isn't it? If it was held in Constantinople, it was the Council of Constantinople; it's not called the Council of Nicea. The Council of Nicea was not held in 553 A.D., it was held in 325 A.D. under the Emperor Constantine. There was a second council Nicea in 787 A.D.

So here, demons, like Satan, are liars, like some people are. Somebody goes out the door and you say 'Where are you going.' They're going to Kroger, the grocery store. But they said, 'I'm going to go to Minyard's.' They can't even tell you the truth of where they're going. They're just inherently liars.

Sometimes you have political leaders that are inherently liars and everything they say and they have an ability to say it. Hitler found, and he taught his followers, that if you say a big lie, you keep saying it, and you keep drumming it in the public press and the public news media, pretty soon people will say this is the truth. 'Never hesitate,' Hitler said, 'to tell a lie to establish your power position because if you can get it on the press and in the news, and people hear it often enough, people will believe the lies.'

So, here's this liar who can't even get or is dumb enough that he can't get the council straight. But the debate at the Council of Constantinople was about Christology, the natures of Christ. Was He just human? Was He divine? Was He both? How do they relate? That's what they were talking about. They were not talking about reincarnation. There's all kinds of records. They never dealt with that at all. So, the demon is lying to Shirley MacLaine. The doctrine of the resurrection in the same body of the same person left no reason for the council to debate the doctrine of reincarnation though the idea did exist. But the Bible says, 'you're going to be resurrected after you die once.' So, they didn't have any reason to discuss that. The Council of Constantinople in 553 did condemn the teacher, one of the leaders, named Origin as a heretic because he taught the doctrine of the preexistence of the soul, as Mormonism does, and they did condemn that. But that is different from reincarnation.

A recent Oprah Winfrey Show also demonstrates this new age twisting of Scripture. She had a panel of New Age leaders, all of them prominent. Quoting again from the New Age examiner, quote, "An example of the confusion of the New Age leaders on this topic can be seen from an appearance of New Age experts on The Oprah Winfrey Show, the topic of reincarnation."

And you understand that reincarnation says, "I am going to godhood. I must prove my worthiness. I come into life. If I live a good life, I come back again as a better person. If I live a good life again, I come back even as a better person, and finally I become a God. If I live a bad life, I come back as a cockroach, or Bob Short or something, something terrible that you come back that next time, say to bring you down. And very intelligent people can do [think] this.

One of the all-time great generals of our era, I'll never forget his name, Patton, George Patton. George Patton believes in reincarnation and he took one of the other generals on the field in Europe one time. He says, "Can't you feel the battle here?" He said, "I was here and I died here. I was killed in this battle in one of my former lives." I hope he got over that. I hope he got that straight. At West Point, his statue stands on the campus of the military academy and they have it facing the library because he never could remember where it was when he was a student there. So, they put his statue up facing the library, so you know where it was now. I hope he got his spiritual life oriented better before he died. He was a great man.

So on The Oprah Winfrey Show, she had this panel, Dr. Donald Curtis, a Unity minister, and a trance channeler, a guy who gives you information from the spirit world. Right up here in North Dallas, elitist high class territory, they used to have a program called FIVE MINUTES ON THE RADIO, FIVE MINUTES THAT WILL CHANGE YOUR LIFE. My son, Stephen, who listened to him a few times, said 'You should call that program FIVE MINUTES THAT WILL RUIN YOUR LIFE because it is all psycho-babble, baloney, and reinterpreting Scripture. I was fascinated to listen to him because the way he would take a Scripture and would give it an interpretation, a twist, that had nothing whatever to do with what the Scripture was saying. Also, Marilyn Ferguson, Marilyn Ferguson wrote THE AQUARIUS CONSPIRACY, the ultimate expression of the New Age movement, intention and destiny and the purpose of it. She's very big in the movement. And then Kevin Ryerson, who is Shirley MacLaine's instructor, they were the guests.

Oprah begins "As I study the New Age movement, it all seems to say exactly what the Bible has said for years. But many of us were brought up with a restricted, limited understanding of what the Bible says."

You know what she means by that. We were like one young man who grew up in our midst said to me at one time, 'Berean ruined my life.' And I knew exactly what he meant because it took him a while to shake off the moral restraints. Finally, he was able to be deep into sin of all kinds right there with the rest of the world. He could feel at ease. But for a long time, his life was ruined by what he had been taught here by the Word of God until he could twist his way out of it. So, Oprah is saying, 'I grew up in this fundamentalist background,' which she did, 'and we got this restricted view in what the Bible is saying.'

Curtis responds, "because of the literal interpretation, for within the framework of sectarianism, no one really knows what the filter of translation down through the ages and what the Bible really said." Again, he's mixing interpretation of writers with translations. The Bible text has not changed. Ferguson adds "When you start taking a scholarly look at when the translations occurred, you realize that many important ideas got lost along the way. Curtis concludes. Then they threw out most of it in 325 A.D. anyway at the Council of Nicea. We don't really know what was there. The Emperor, whatever his name was, sat down in council and said, this is in and this is out. They threw out reincarnation at this time." Several observations and responses can be made to this as well. You will notice how Oprah blurs the distinction between what the Bible teaches and New Age. Her explanation of the perceived differences are attributed to the limited, restricted understanding, literal interpretation. Curtis reinforces this concept of faulty filters of translation through time as a reason for distortion.

Donald Curtis used to be an actor in Hollywood and has this Unity church in North Dallas and he is their leader. But he doesn't know who the emperor was at the Council of Nicea in 325, and I bet most of you know that it was Constantine, the one who introduced Babylonianism into Christianity and ruined the early New Testament church. He can't even remember who the Emperor was, but he's quite confident that he knew that the emperor threw out reincarnation at that time.

This is very sad. This council did not deal with reincarnation. The Council of Nicea dealt with the Arian heresy. And the Arian heresy was that Christ was not God, but that he was a special creation of God. This is one of the Christological controversies in the early church they settled. And finally Athanasius stood up and he said, 'You're wrong, He is God. He is man.' Arias said, 'No, He is only a man. He was created by God.' And they went to the Scriptures. Arias was twisting the Word of God. Athanasius stood up, an 85 year old man at the time I think, and made a very moving statement to the whole council, then took off his robe and showed his back. There were all the scars and the marks of the whippings and the beatings he had taken in persecutions because he had stood firm for Christ and the truth of the Word of God. He said, 'I bear these marks on my body and I cannot turn against Him now. He is God. He is the God-man.' So, they settled that, it had nothing to do with reincarnation.

These are sophisticated but ignorant people; and by whose authority can the clear meaning of the Bible be replaced by some mystical, esoteric, subjective interpretation. However, this is common everywhere you go. The New Age movement is where it's at now. At the heart of that movement, like with Shirley MacLaine and Oprah Winfrey here, is the fact that it doesn't matter how you live because you're going to get another chance to come back in another life to make it right. And they say that the Bible teaches this now. There are verses in the Bible that they are quoted and they say, you see, if you understood what these verses mean, you would see plainly that reincarnation is the truth.

If you have any question about that, we're going to clarify that for you next time.

**Benediction**

Father, we want to thank Thee for the fact that we have learned from Adam and Eve's mistake not to twist Scripture, not to distort what Thou has said, and we pray that Thy blessing might be upon our meditation this morning. Give us a new resolve for an appreciation for the Bible as the source of our life. May we not be ignorant dolts who do not know what God has said, and may we act upon the opinions of God and not the opinions of men. We pray for Thy blessing, upon Thy care upon us as the result of our fellowship with Thee this morning. In Christ's name.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1984

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