

# Gnosticism

WHAT IS IT AND HOW DID IT AFFECT THE EARLY CHURCH?



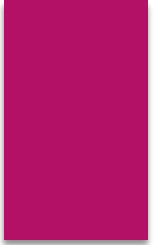
## Question: What is the definition of the term Gnostic?

▶ **Answer:** A very dangerous heresy which came into the church like a flood in the 2nd century. By the beginning of the 3rd century nearly all the more intellectual Christian congregations in the Roman Empire were affected by it. Its errors are clearly referred to in the New Testament.

▶ 1 John 2:22 Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son.


1 John 4:2-3 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; 3) and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.

where reference is made to those who denied that Christ had “come in the flesh.” The system came from many places such as the mythologies of Greece, Egypt, Persia, and India, and from the philosophies and theosophies of these lands. Many of Gnosticism’s leading ideas had existed before the Christian era but its devoted followers felt that in the Christian religion, there were valuable elements which could be worked into their scheme of things. Their aim was to reduce Christianity to a philosophy and relate it to various pagan teachings as well as to the OT which they distorted.



The Gnostic claimed special secret knowledge. It could be possessed only by that section of humanity which was "pneumatic," or spiritual. They alone were inevitably led back to the realm of light of the Supreme God. There was a second class of men, those who were "psychic" and could not get beyond faith alone. A third class represented the overwhelming mass of human kind. They were merely "hylic" (i.e., subject to matter) and their case was utterly hopeless for they were in endless bondage to Satan and their own lusts, and their end was to be completely destroyed. Here was one of the worst features of Gnosticism, the elevating of a limited number into a specially privileged class, and the consigning of the vast majority of mankind to unredeemable destruction. This was totally contrary to the teachings of Christianity.

We recognize a similar mentality of degenerate men today. They are self-enlightened, arrogant people who despise God. They are fully engaged in their sinful lifestyles and reject anyone that doesn't agree with them. They are shoving their sinful lifestyles down our throats and daring anyone to stand against them. You will see them tied to groups such as BLM, LGBT, Liberalism, Satanism, Communism and socialism. They are fully engaged militant protestors of all that is Godly. The Bible has mentioned these even from the beginning. Satan and the demons are working overtime to defy the One true God!



▶ Contrary to a message of salvation through Christ alone (Acts 4:12 “And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.”

the Gnostic Jesus brings a message of self-redemption. Man only needs to examine his inner “spark” to find the knowledge needed to free himself from his material body and reach God.

▶ This alleged purity of heart is the exact opposite of what is stated in Jeremiah 17:9 “The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?”

Today, Gnosticism has evolved and branched out from the exclusively spiritual into the **secular and scientific**. Another form of Gnosticism denies the existence of God altogether, while embracing an eternal—but still flawed—universe. This atheistic form of Gnosticism doesn't see the material world as totally evil, but as flawed and incomplete. Mankind becomes the “deity,” and **it is his right** to improve the human body and the world around him through his own wisdom.



▶ Christianity and Gnosticism are mutually exclusive; however, it is easy for a Gnostic mindset to seep into our own thinking if we're not careful (1 Peter 5:8) **Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.**

The Gnostic is pursuing goodness, but, instead of seeking to be regenerated by Christ, he grabs hold of a man-centered purpose for living. Gnostic thought makes man "wise in [his] own eyes" (Isaiah 5:21) **Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight!**

Proverbs 3:7 pointedly advises against: **"Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil."**

Gnostic thinking claims that deeper truth can be found apart from God.

▶ But Proverbs 1:7 says, **"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction."**

▶ Instead of searching our corrupt, flawed "inner selves" for answers, we should instead test everything against the revealed Word of God (1 Thessalonians 5:21-22) **But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; 22) abstain from every form of evil.**

In the end, it is God's truth alone that can be trusted.

▶ Source: Got Questions? Bible questions answered

## What is Christian Gnosticism?

There is no such thing as Christian Gnosticism, because true Christianity and Gnosticism are mutually exclusive systems of belief. The principles of Gnosticism contradict what it means to be a Christian. Therefore, while some forms of Gnosticism may claim to be Christian, they are in fact decidedly non-Christian.

Gnosticism was perhaps the most dangerous heresy that threatened the early church during the first three centuries. Gnosticism is based on two false premises.

**First, it espouses a dualism regarding spirit and matter.** Gnostics assert that matter is inherently evil, and spirit is good. As a result of this presupposition, Gnostics believe anything done in the body, even the grossest sin, has no meaning because real life exists in the spirit realm only.

**Second, Gnostics claim to possess an elevated knowledge, a “higher truth” known only to a certain few.** Gnosticism comes from the Greek word gnosis which means “to know.” Gnostics claim to possess a higher knowledge, not from the Bible, but acquired on some mystical higher plain of existence. Gnostics see themselves as a privileged class elevated above everybody else by their higher, deeper knowledge of God.



► To discredit the idea of any compatibility between Christianity and Gnosticism, one has only to compare their teachings on the main doctrines of the faith. On the matter of salvation, Gnosticism teaches that salvation is gained through the acquisition of divine knowledge which frees one from the illusions of darkness. Although they claim to follow Jesus Christ and His original teachings, Gnostics contradict Him at every turn.

Jesus said nothing about salvation through knowledge, but by faith in Him as Savior from sin.

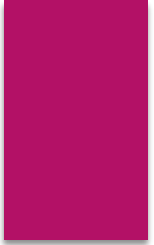
*"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast"* (Ephesians 2:8–9).

Furthermore, **the salvation Christ offers is free and available to everyone** not just for a select few who have acquired a special revelation. There is one source of Truth and that is the Bible; the inspired, inerrant Word of the living God. It is God's written revelation to mankind and is never superseded by man's thoughts, ideas, writings, or visions.

(John 17:17) *"Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth."*

(2 Tim. 3:15-17) *and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 16) All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, 17) so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.*

(Heb. 4:12) *For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*



The Gnostics, on the other hand, use a variety of early heretical writings known as the Gnostic gospels, a collection of forgeries claiming to be "lost books of the Bible."

Thankfully, the early church fathers were nearly unanimous in recognizing these Gnostic scrolls as **fraudulent forgeries** that espouse **false doctrines** about Jesus Christ, salvation, God, and every other crucial Christian truth. There are countless contradictions between the Gnostic "gospels" and the Bible. Even when the so-called Christian Gnostics quote from the Bible, they rewrite verses and parts of verses to harmonize with their own philosophy, a practice that is strictly forbidden and warned against by Scripture

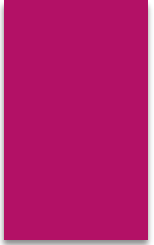
(Deut. 4:2) "You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.

(Deut. 12:32) Whatever I command you, you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to nor take away from it.

(Prov. 30:6) Do not add to His words or He will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar.

Revelation 22:18–19) I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; 19) and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.



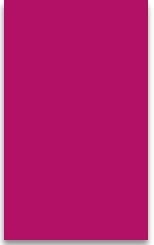


The Person of Jesus Christ is another area where Christianity and Gnosticism drastically differ. The Gnostics believe that Jesus' physical body was not real, but only "seemed" to be physical, and that His spirit descended upon Him at His baptism, but left Him just before His crucifixion.

Such views destroy not only the true humanity of Jesus, but also the atonement, for Jesus must not only have been truly God, but also the truly human (and physically real) man who actually suffered and died upon the cross in order to be the acceptable substitutionary sacrifice for sin.

(Hebrews 2:14-17) Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, 15) and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. 16) For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham. 17) Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

The biblical view of Jesus affirms His complete humanity as well as His full deity.



Gnosticism is based on a mystical, intuitive, subjective, inward, emotional approach to truth which is not new at all. It is very old, going back in some form to the Garden of Eden, where Satan questioned God and the words He spoke and convinced Adam and Eve to reject them and accept a lie.

He does the same thing today as he “prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8). He still calls God and the Bible into question and catches in his web those who are either **naïve and scripturally uninformed** or **who are seeking some personal revelation to make them feel special, unique, and superior to others.**

Pay attention to the Apostle Paul who said to “**test everything. Hold on to the good**” (1 Thessalonians 5:21), and this we do by comparing everything to the Word of God, the only Truth.