

The Dangers of Gnosticism

Is Knowledge Superior to Faith?

“Guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly and empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is falsely called *knowledge* — which some have professed and gone astray from the faith.” *1 Timothy 6:20*

False teaching is a consistent theme in the letters of the New Testament. For example, Paul battled the Judaizers, Jews who demanded the adherence to Mosaic rituals and regulations for salvation. Paul, Peter, John, and Jude also dealt with another heresy known as Gnosticism. Knowing more about their doctrine helps us better understand New Testament arguments. Let’s briefly identify Gnostic origin and beliefs.

Gnostic Origin

The Greek word *gnosis* (no-sis) means “knowledge or to know.” Gnostics (noss-ticks) pretended to have special revelation or knowledge of the Christian religion. Therefore, Gnostics believed that their knowledge was superior to the teaching of the Apostles. Without this knowledge, one could not be saved. Thus, it is easy to understand why Gnostic teaching confused Christians in the early church.

Gnosticism is a mixture of various first and second-century philosophies and religions, including Christianity. It is not a movement of apostate Christians but rather an invader looking to infiltrate and corrupt Christianity.

Gnostic Beliefs

Here are a few of their heretical doctrines.

1. Knowledge is superior to faith.
2. Though God is the Creator, He failed to create a perfect world. It is flawed.
3. God is impersonable. He is not intimately involved in people’s lives.
4. God is mysterious and unknowable.

5. We are basically good, but we’re trapped in sinful bodies and an imperfect world.
6. We can save ourselves from the world through strict self-discipline. We do not need God’s help.
7. Since the world and body are imperfect, Christ was not completely human.
8. Jesus was fully spirit but only partially human. The spirit came upon Him at His baptism and left before His crucifixion.
9. Since Jesus was human (at times), He was also flawed. Because He was flawed, He could not save us from our sins.
10. Because God is impersonable, He is indifferent or apathetic to human action, which leads to license or immorality.

Gnostic Heresy

If you know any Christian doctrine, you can immediately see the heresy in Gnostic beliefs. “By grace have you been saved, through faith,” Paul wrote, not through knowledge (*Eph. 2:8*). God is the perfect Creator who made everything (except sin) perfectly. Sin was hatched by the first human beings, when they rebelled against their Creator. The God of the Bible is personable and knowable, though not completely. He is limitless, and our minds are limited.

People are not good; rather we are rotten to the core. Because we are rotten, we cannot save ourselves from God’s judgment. He must do it for us through His Son. Jesus was conceived by the Spirit (God) but born through a woman (man). He was both in one person, a sinless mediator between the two. Finally, God is not indifferent or apathetic to sin. He has saved us from its power and penalty. Sin no longer has a hold on us. Those who practice sin give evidence that they are not one of His children.

Gnosticism is clearly unbiblical and, thus, a lie.

