

# The Christian Arsenal

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## Who Is Really A Christian?

We are being inundated with the message of ecumenicalism. ( Ecumenicalism is a movement that desires to see all faith come together as one.) We see celebrities such Oprah leading prayer vigils for anyone of any faith be they Christian, New Age, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist or whatever. We have religious leaders espousing the concept that there is one God but many paths to Him, the Christian path, The Buddhists path, the Jewish path and so on. These are lies from the depths of Hell. It is time for Evangelical Christianity to wake up and stand for the truth as **Jesus Christ** taught it.

The following is the teaching of Dr. John MacArthur. I would encourage you to read it and take inventory of where you stand, where your church stands, and where your denomination stands on this issue. The truth of the Bible is not up for discussion, compromise or a vote. God and His Word are not subject to trends of the times, liberal theologians or the ranting of Ecumaniacs.

## WHO IS REALLY A CHRISTIAN?

Dr. John MacArthur, Jr.

Selected Scriptures

This is a very, very pertinent issue. It would seem that everybody in evangelical Christianity... everybody who is truly a Christian would understand that the gospel is the heart of Christianity... that the gospel is found only in the Scripture. And that the gospel must be preached to the ends of the earth. I grew up understanding that. My theological education affirmed it. My years of studying the Bible have sealed that affirmation. **The heart of the Christian faith is the gospel.**

The gospel is found in the New Testament. The foundations of the gospel are found in the Old Testament and the gospel must be preached to the ends of the earth if people are to be saved. That's essentially the Christian mission. That's what the church has believed. That has compelled its life. That has been its mandate. Jesus said, **"Go into all the world and make disciples, baptizing them in My name and teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."** And He said it another way. He said, **"Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature."** That has been the church's mandate and true Christians have always believed that. The true church has always taught that. We have believed and been compelled by the fact that if people don't hear the gospel they can't be saved. And if they aren't saved, then they'll spend eternity in hell under the judgment of God. So it is absolutely critical that the world hear the gospel of Jesus Christ...that they not only hear it, but that they understand it accurately...that they believe it...that they embrace it for themselves, because it is the only saving truth.

Compelled by this clear Biblical mandate, Christians through the centuries have taken this saving message to the ends of the earth. Generation after generation, they've been engaged in doing this...preaching the gospel to every person on earth has been the goal of the church. I've told you many times, that's the only reason we're still here. We're already saved and sealed for eternity. There's no reason to leave us here except for this responsibility of evangelism.

Now, we believe the Bible is very clear that salvation comes through believing in Christ. Believing in Christ comes from hearing and understanding the gospel. Being able to hear and understand the gospel can only occur if somebody takes the message and somebody can only take the message if they're sent with it. That's what **Romans 10** says. We're saved by believing in Christ, but you can't believe in Christ unless you hear about Christ and you can't hear about Christ unless somebody preaches and somebody's not going to preach unless they're sent...and that is our mandate and that has been the mission of the church since the church was born on Pentecost and Jesus said. **"You'll receive the Holy Spirit and you'll be witnesses unto Me in**

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***Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth.”***

Since the church was launched until today, uncounted millions of dollars in every currency on the map of the world and millions of hours of efforts and work and millions of Christian people through the centuries have been spent and sacrificed to take the only message of salvation to the edges of the earth...translation work...rigorous, difficult, challenging work of taking a language that isn't even written and developing an alphabet and developing a way to write that language and then teaching the people to read their own language when they've never even seen it...then giving them the Scriptures and the gospel and leading them to Christ...rigorous work that takes decades. Then, printing materials in every language...preaching, teaching, evangelizing...that's what the church has been engaged in since its calling...since the arrival of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost...an unrelenting effort to use every means available to reach people with the only message that can save them from eternal judgment and that's the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And here we are now at the start of the new millennium. This is the official start – the year 2001 – and at the start of this new millennium, we have greater means to take the gospel to the ends of the earth than we've ever had! Technology, sophistication in the application of that technology to every imaginable medium of communication has given us greater power now than ever to bring the gospel to the ends of the earth.

And isn't it amazing that at this point in time the enemy of men's souls, the enemy of God, the arch rival of God, Satan himself, has cranked up his efforts to prevent this. He's done it in a couple of interesting ways. One is to make the church confused about what the gospel is. Over the last fifteen years, this has been a battle that I've been engaged in with some others to try to make sure that Christian people understand what the gospel is! It doesn't do any good to have the technology...it doesn't do any good to have opportunity...it doesn't do any good to have the financial means...it doesn't do any good to have the manpower to take the message to the ends of the earth if you don't know what the message is!

So, it's certainly a very wise strategy on the part of the enemy of men's souls to confuse the church about the message. So, along with many others, I've been engaged in writing books to try to clarify for "Christians" what the gospel is, because the church has become confused about the gospel. They're not really sure whether Jesus is Lord or not, whether He needs to be Lord or not. It doesn't seem to be important to the church that people understand the true biblical doctrine of justification by faith alone, grace alone and Christ alone. It doesn't seem to be important to some people that there is repentance of sin...that we preach repentance...in fact, some people think that's some kind of an intrusion into grace.

There's a failure to understand the doctrine of substitution and imputation...that is, the true understanding that our sins were imputed fully to a substitute who died in our place and that we contribute nothing to our salvation except faith in that substitute. So, here we are as an evangelical church confused about the message.

I mentioned a few weeks ago, the pastor of a very large evangelical church made the statement that the Reformation was overrated as to its importance. What the Reformation did was define the gospel. Not only do we not know what the gospel is largely, we're not even sure it's important to get it right. That's a tragic thing. Here we are on the brink of really the greatest potential to spread the gospel to the ends of the earth and we're not sure what it is...

The church in the process has gotten shallower and shallower. There are a number of reasons why. One of them is because churches have proliferated everywhere and are being pastored by

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men who are unskilled, untrained and who don't have the theological background to be able to define things biblically and with any depth. Another is that there's this concern not to offend anybody and to make church "fun" and "entertaining" and so we create some kind of synthetic gospel that doesn't have enough truth in it to save anybody!

Now, all that is bad enough, and we've tried to address that, but there's a new wave in the evangelical world that is at least as frightening if not more frightening. The new wave in the evangelical world is this...there are some people who are telling us it's not necessary to even take the gospel to the ends of the earth. It's not necessary! People are being saved without it!

Now, this view has some labels. Let me just give you a little teaching here. This is a theology class for a few minutes. You can handle it, I know. If I can understand it, you can understand it. What is the name for this idea that somebody can get into the kingdom of God...that somebody can go to heaven without the gospel? This is one name: **natural theology**...that is that man naturally can ascend to a knowledge of God...can ascend to a relationship to God...can ascend by his reason and his innate desire to do what's right to comply with God's will. This is natural. That is to say opposite of supernatural. *Supernatural theology says that God has to come down and save man. Natural theology says that man can climb up to God...man can approach God on a natural level.*

This is to say that man has the natural reasoning process and power to come to God and be saved without the Scriptures. Advocates say mankind may discover the existence of God...he may discover the attributes of God...he may discover the nature of God by human reason apart from Scriptural revelation. Man is capable of knowing God...knowing the truth about God and knowing God's will without the Bible! His reason is sufficient.

Now, obviously to believe that you cannot have a "reformed view" of depravity. You would have to believe that man has not only innate reasoning power, but innate goodness to pursue righteousness. So, people who advocate this have a flawed view of man's depravity. But what they advocate is that man can make it to heaven without the Bible. You can make it to heaven without the gospel. So, what's all the missionary fuss about? You don't need repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, as Paul said he had to preach in **Acts 20**. The lost do not need to hear the gospel! They don't need to have a Bible. They don't need all this translation work. They don't need all these people sacrificing their lives in remote areas with small tribes of people to try to get them the Bible and the Word of God and the gospel, because they can be saved without it.

A couple of weeks ago I quoted from the **L. A. Times**, December 9...a quote from the pope...just to show you that the Catholic Church believes this. Pope John Paul II said this week that all who live a just life will be saved even if they do not believe in Jesus Christ and the Roman Catholic Church. The pope went on to say, "The gospel teaches us that those who live in accordance with the Beatitudes... 'the poor in spirit, the pure of heart, those who bear lovingly the sufferings of life' will enter God's kingdom." The pope is taking an inclusive view of salvation. The biblical teaching that salvation only comes in response to faith in Jesus Christ is rejected as unreasonable and cruel by people who believe this. The heathen are saved if they just live good lives...if they're just poor in spirit...if they're pure in heart...and if they pursue what is right...they live good lives and they're sincere...it doesn't really matter what they believe...

This has been in the fabric of Roman Catholicism for centuries. That is why Catholic apologist Peter Creeft who wrote the book **Ecumenical Jihad** can say that there are Buddhists and there are Hindus and there are Confucianists and there are Muslims and there are atheists and there are orthodox Jews...all in heaven because Christ is not the issue...the oospel is not the

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issue...the Bible is not the issue...sincerity and goodness is the issue! And this is the natural theology that man by his natural powers, his reasoning powers and some innate goodness can ascend to the knowledge of God and the will of God and please God and earn salvation whether he ever sees a Bible or ever hears about Jesus Christ. The pope was simply affirming what Catholic theology has long believed. This is somehow motivated by some human conception of "fairness". It's not "fair" somehow for somebody somewhere not to be able to be saved when they don't have immediate access to the gospel.

But, it's not just a Catholic view and I'm going to read to something...There was an interview that was held between Robert Schuller and Dr. Billy Graham on **The Hour of Power**. I have the transcript of that conversation. The conversation went like this...

**Dr. Schuller:** "Tell me, what is the future of Christianity?"

**Dr. Graham:** "I think there's the body of Christ, which comes from all the Christian groups around the world or outside the Christian groups. I think that everybody that loves Christ or knows Christ whether they're conscious of it or not...they're members of the body of Christ and I don't think that we're going to see a great, sweeping revival that will turn the whole world to Christ at any time."

In other words, what he's saying is that there are people in the body of Christ who never heard of Christ so we don't need to expect that they're all going to come to Christ...they're going to come another way.

Further he says, "God's purpose for this age is to call out a people for His name and that's what God is doing today. He's calling people out of the world for His name whether they come from the Muslim world or the Buddhist world or the Christian world or the non-believing world...they are members of the body of Christ because they've been called by God. They may not even know the name of Jesus, but they know in their hearts that they need something that they don't have and they turn to the only light they have and I think they're saved and they're going to be with us in heaven."

**Dr. Schuller** responded: "What I hear you saying is that it's possible for Jesus Christ to come into a human heart and soul and life even if they've been born in darkness and have never heard and never had exposure to the Bible. Is that a correct interpretation of what you're saying?"

**Dr. Graham:** "Yes, it is because I believe that. I've met people in various parts of the world in tribal situations who've never seen a Bible or heard about a Bible...have never heard of Jesus but they've believed in their hearts that there is a God and they've tried to live a life that was quite apart from the surrounding community in which they lived."

**Dr. Schuller:** "This is fantastic! I'm so thrilled to hear you say that. There is a wideness in God's mercy!"

**Dr. Graham:** "There is. There certainly is."

This has certainly leaped from Aristotle to the Catholic into evangelical Protestantism. Now, we have a kind of Protestant viewpoint that says that Muslims and Hindus and whoever are going to be in the body of Christ, in the kingdom, in heaven, with salvation whether they ever get a Bible or whether they ever hear the gospel, or whether they ever know about Jesus Christ. The Billy Graham organization affirmed this position is the same as the one articulated in an article in

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**Decision Magazine**, which Billy wrote in 1960, so this is not something new.

Now, this introduces us to the sort of evangelical side of this and there's a term that's being used to describe it...it's called "**wider mercy view**" – which is a little easier to handle than the "**natural theology view**". The idea that man in his depraved condition can find God and God's will, live a righteous life and please God is impossible to prove by Scripture, so rather than posture yourself as a natural theologian, you'd rather be a super-natural theologian, so you come up with another title...the "wider mercy" view...that there is this wider latitude...there is this inclusive view in which the Lord is going to include everybody. What it essentially says is that people can be saved in any religion.

When I was a student at seminary, Clark Pinnock wrote a book called **Set Forth Your Case**, which was a really fine Christian apologetic – a Christian evidentialism book and he was a great champion for the Christian faith. He has since wandered far away and apostatized from that into a point where now he is probably the leading proponent of this wider mercy view. I'll quote, he says this: "When we approach the man of faith other than our own...(somebody in another religion)...it will be in a spirit of expectancy to find out how God has been speaking to him and what new understanding of the grace and love of God we may ourselves discover in this encounter. Our first task in approaching another people, another culture, another religion, is to take off our shoes. The place we are approaching is holy. Or else we find ourselves treading on men's dreams. More, we may forget that God was here before our arrival."

Now, that redefines missions pretty significantly. Instead of going into a tribe and saying "these people are lost, these people are doomed in darkness"...you walk in there and you say you're standing on holy ground because God has been there in the form of their paganism. "Yet," says Pinnock, "God has more going on by way of redemption than what happened in first century Palestine." I can't imagine a more disastrous belief than that! God has more going on by way of redemption than what happened in first century Palestine? What does that say? That says that the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ was just one thing in the midst of many, rather than the single greatest event in all redemptive history! That depreciates Christ. That depreciates His incarnation, His virgin birth, His sinless life, His substitutionary death, His bodily resurrection, His ascension, His intercession, His second coming...everything...if Christ is just one among many! This is a regurgitation of an old Greek heresy that the apostle John dealt with called "the universal logos"...where Christ's Spirit is floating around injecting Himself into every religion. It also attacks the Trinity because only biblical Christianity affirms that God is a Trinity. Even Mormons deny that.

You say, "this is confusing..." Well, yes. I think I know what you're thinking...not because I'm omniscient but because you probably think like I do. And what you're thinking is "how can people believe this when the Bible says that salvation is in Christ alone." Right?

In **John 14:6**, Jesus said, "***I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No man comes to the Father but by Me.***"

That's pretty clear.

**Acts 4:12... "*Neither is there salvation in any other. There's no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved...*"**

We know that.

Jesus says in **John 7: "*Because you believe not in Me, you'll die in your sins and where I***

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***go you will never come.”***

Believing in Jesus, to anybody who reads the New Testament is the only way to be saved. There's no other Savior. There's only one mediator, Paul said to Timothy, ***“There's only one mediator between God and man, the Man, Christ Jesus...”*** only one mediator! How do they deal with this?

Some of these people talk about Jesus every time they're on the television. Every time they get up and speak...what are they talking about? What are they saying? “Jesus is the only Savior...Jesus is the only Savior”...and then to say that Muslims, and Buddhists and animists and who knows what all over the place are all going to be in the body of Christ and they're all going to be in the kingdom and they're all going to be in heaven...how does that work?

Here is the answer to that. You can find it in the writings of people like Clark Pinnock and Sanders and other who write on this. Here's what they're saying... “The work of Christ is the only basis of salvation, but it's not necessary to know that.”

In other words, whatever religion you're in...if you believe in God...however you imagine God to be...and if you try to do what's right...and try to do what's good and religious...you're going to be saved by Christ even though you didn't know who He was. You didn't know that God was a Trinity. You didn't know God had revealed Himself in Christ. You didn't know Christ lived, died, rose again...you don't know anything about that but Christ is still going to be your Savior...He still will have paid the price for your sins, so that they would say, “He is the only Savior, but He has atoned for and paid the price for the sins for the people who will never know about a Bible and will never know about Jesus Christ.” They will still directly benefit from His work on the cross without ever knowing Him.

Mother Theresa was very true to her Catholic faith. My family and I went to visit her when we were in Calcutta. We gave her a copy of the book, **The Gospel According to Jesus**. It was an interesting occasion. She was a very gracious woman...very strong...very gracious little four foot lady. The kids wanted to give her this book and so they did. She said that she would read it.

Mother Theresa was very, very true to her Catholic faith. She understood Catholicism very well. In the front of a Bible which she autographed, she wrote, “May you enter into the heart of Jesus through the Virgin Mary...” and signed her name. So, she believed that salvation is by virtue of Mary and that's very true of the Catholic faith.

Another thing that is true of the Catholic faith was we went into her home for the sick and dying in Calcutta and on the walls were Hindu gods...pictures of the Hindu gods...you know, those multi-armed, bizarre gods and deities of the Hindus on the walls of this Catholic facility. By the way, it is immediately adjacent to one of the most vile, deviant temple that I'd ever seen in my life anywhere in the world...this temple in Calcutta, this Hindu temple where blood sacrifices are made regularly, even as big as an ox. And there is worship there that I wouldn't even describe in a public setting...so deviant. But, they are there next to each other. And, at the time, (I don't think I really understood then that I now understand) I wondered how she could have pictures of Hindu gods inside her place which was connected to this deviant place next door. I just assumed that this was “political correctness” and that if you're going to survive in the city of Calcutta, you've got to do deference to the people who rule the nation of India and that's what you do. I later came to understand, however, that this was part of their system. And I'll tell you how it works...

A writer by the name of Raymond Pannekin has written a book called **The Unknown Christ of**

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**Hinduism.** Isn't that an interesting title? This is what he says, "The good and bonafide Hindu is saved by Christ and not by Hinduism, but it is through the sacraments of Hinduism...through the message of morality and the good life, through the mysticism that comes down to him through Hinduism that Christ saves the Hindu." Everybody's in! Good Hindus. Good Buddhists. Good anybodyes! Good...you know, people that you see on the Discovery Channel running around with spears and bones through their lip...everybody is going to be in if they're good.

You can understand what an unbelievable thing this is to have intruded into evangelicalism, right? You might be able to live with this if it were coming out of Union Seminary in New York or if it were coming out of some liberal denomination that had already advocated homosexuality in its clergy or something like that...but, to hear the kinds of people who are saying this and the kinds of people who endorsed Peter Creeft's book...and J. I. Packer who said, "What if he is right?" You ask, "How could this get into evangelicalism? How could we succumb to this? How could we buy into this? How could pastors be saying, 'oh, the Reformation doesn't really matter and now we really need to redefine missions altogether all over the world...'" But, that's exactly what's happening!

Well, all of that to say that we have a major problem! And as you know, I not only speak to you, but the Lord has allowed me to speak to a lot of people beyond you. Since **Grace to You** is on nearly two thousand times a day and is heard by a lot of people in English and I think now five hundred times a day in Spanish, when we have something we want to say to the evangelical world, we usually get a platform to say it. So, I just felt that I needed to address this, and you know the way to address this is to simply go to the Scriptures. Right? I mean, I'm not gonna give you my opinion...my opinion isn't worth anything!

Well, what does the Bible have to say about this? Do we have a biblical case for the exclusivism? Do we have a biblical case for the fact that if you don't know the gospel and you don't believe in Jesus Christ you aren't going to heaven? The answer to that is "YES". And we have a biblical case that natural theology isn't going to get anybody anywhere. And we also have a biblical case that God's mercy is extremely narrow. In fact, if you're looking for the word "narrow", you're going to find it in **Matthew 7**. It is a what kind of gate? A **narrow** gate! So, this is a **narrow** mercy and a supernatural theology! And that's what I want to show you from Scripture.

Now, where are we going to start? Well, we're going to start by a general reference. So, just sit there...don't get into your Bible right now...just listen for a minute... This is a general reference to **Genesis 3**...

You know what happened in **Genesis 3**... **Genesis 1 and 2** is creation. **Genesis 3** is the fall of man. Man is created in the image of God and then, God creates a partner...you have Adam and Eve...and they're in a condition of perfection. They have perfect bodies, perfect minds...therefore, they have perfect reason. They live in a perfect environment that is not at all skewed and they have a perfect relationship with their Creator. So, this is perfection!

We're in the Garden in a perfect environment. They had perfect minds capable of perfect understanding, capable of perfect reason, capable of perfect conclusions...still, Adam and Eve in a state of perfection could not on their own understand why they were created! They could understand that they were created and could understand that something more powerful than they created them and some Being that loved beauty and loved order and loved design and had power and gave life and all of that. But, they couldn't know why they were created. They couldn't know what they were to do and what they were not to do, how they were to do it, unless there was somebody who told them! They wouldn't know how to respond to their environment...how to

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function in the Garden, so God said to them, **“You can eat everything...”** otherwise they wouldn't have known that. And He said, **“Don't eat that, if you do, you'll die.”** And He said, **“This is your wife...have babies.”** And He said, **“Name those animals.”** That's why they were walking and talking with God in the Garden, because God was giving them special revelation about how they were to relate to Him and how they were to relate to their world.

Natural theologians should be shocked to know that Adam couldn't know divine truth by his perfect reason. He couldn't by his own reason, his own perfect intellect, couldn't have come to know that he was not to eat this and to eat that...that he was to name the animals, etcetera...etcetera...that he was to tend the Garden! God had to tell him all that!

Robert Morey said that Adam was not created to be the origin of truth, justice, morals, meaning and beauty. The Creator walked with man in the Garden. These daily sessions were special revelation and God told man why He created him and what he was to do in the Garden. He revealed to man what he could and couldn't eat. In other words...God was the origin of truth, justice, morals, meaning and beauty...and man's responsibility was to receive what God revealed! Man was not the origin, but the receiver of truth!

And it's true, Adam and Eve would have know something about God, but they wouldn't have known what God wanted from them, if He hadn't told them! We wouldn't even understand man's pre-fall condition...we wouldn't understand his fallen condition if it wasn't for **Genesis 1, 2 and 3**. You know, you can study the religions of the world...the philosophers...the theologians of the world...none of them ever comes up with the right understanding of man's creation and man's depravity! None of them! They don't ever! Because you can't get there from here! You can't get there from depraved reasoning!

You remember this...when Satan got in the Garden...a perfect man with a perfect mind and perfect understanding, perfect reasoning...in that condition...Satan comes and what does he want Adam and Eve to distrust? Their reason! He says to them, “Has God said? You can't trust God's word.” What Satan always wants us to do is to distrust special revelation and trust our reason. And Satan's leading Eve through this little scenario...finally he says, “Ah, you're not going to die. You can't believe God. God lies. God said that? You're going to die? No, you're going to be like God...He doesn't like that...competition...”

Satan tempted man to trust his reason and reject revelation from the mouth of God. God gave them special revelation. “Don't eat.” Satan said, “Don't believe what God says...trust your reason.” That's essentially what natural theology says. It's just the lie of Satan in the Garden over and over and over and over again. “You can get there through your reason...don't worry about the Bible...don't worry about the gospel...you don't need that...you can get there by your own reason.” But look, how could fallen man in a cursed world find God's truth by his perverted reason and perfect man in perfect world couldn't find God with perfect reason. Adam couldn't know what God wanted if God didn't tell him and nobody else can know what God wants if God doesn't tell him and we're in worse shape than Adam and Eve.

Satan always does the same thing. He always wants to depreciate the special revelation! What a great strategy! “Let's convince the church they don't even need to preach the gospel!” Tell me where **that** came from! Heaven? Tell me where that heresy came from! Who has the most at stake to get us to stop preaching the gospel? Well, let's look at **Romans 1:18-23**. This is one of those monumental passages in the Bible that is extremely definitive and has far reaching implications. I want you to see man...this is a view of man...this is a biblical anthropology.

***“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and***

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***unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, for that which is known about God is evident within them for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and of four-footed animals and crawling creatures...***

We'll stop there. That's familiar to many of us. Now, let me kind of lay this out. The Bible here is saying that there is evidence about God...**verse 19**. What is known about God is evident within them...and that's through reason. Reason looks, **verse 20**, at the creation and says, "There must be a Creator." Reason looks at the diversity and says, "He must have an immense mind." Reason looks at the design and says, "He's a God of order." Reason looks at the beauty and says, "He's a God of beauty and harmony" and all of that. It looks at the vast variety and says, "He's a God of immense power and complexity." Yes, that's true. In fact, it's so true, it's so clear, that eternal power and divine nature are visible through reason looking at creation that it's "clearly seen"...**verse 20**. You'd really have to commit intellectual suicide to deny that there is a cause for the effect of the universe...that there is a Creator.

So, it's just clearly seen...and so clearly seen, end of **verse 20**...that people have no excuse...you have absolutely no excuse for being an evolutionist...NONE! It's absolute idiocy! It's moronic. It uses the term here for moron, translated fool or foolish. Anybody who sees anything that exists assumes somebody made it and the universe certainly demands a Creator...so he says, "God has given man reason and reason looks at creation and concludes certain things about the power and nature of the Creator"...and he's without excuse. The problem is this: It doesn't lead him to God! Amazing! It doesn't lead him to God! It does not lead to the true God! WHY? Back to **verse 18**...**"He suppresses the truth in unrighteousness..."**

Man is so wicked...he is so depraved...he is so vile in his nature...he is so ungodly that his depravity negates the possibility of him coming all the way to God on his own natural powers...rather, he suppresses the truth! He dishonors the Creator...**verse 21**...even though the knowledge of God is obvious around him as Creator...he doesn't know the specifics about God's will or salvation...but at least he can see there's a Creator, but he will not honor Him as the Creator...he will not be thankful to Him. This is what depraved man does! I mean, you have even Adam doing this...dishonoring God by disobeying God, turning from special revelation to follow his own human reason in an act of pride...but here he says, **"They do not honor God, they do not give thanks to God, they turn away from God, they suppress the truth"** and so what they come up with is **"they become futile (that's empty) in their speculations..."** They come up with stupid ideas that aren't true! Like evolution, which is a big lie! It's not true! Or any human philosophy or any false religion! They invent empty human ideas that are not reality! And their foolish heart goes dark. There's no light! They end up with nothing but garbled understanding...**verse 22**... In their egotism, **"they profess to be wise"** (they give themselves PHD's and put on royal and religious robes and cone hats and march around as if they're some great religious wise men)... **"they're fools..."** They're *morons* in the Greek. They are ridiculous.

In fact, it doesn't stop there...**verse 23**... **"they exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible men, birds, four-footed animals, and crawling creatures..."**

That's where they end up...worshiping a buas. worshiping men. worshiping whatever... That's

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where they go. Natural man...that's how he goes...always his reason says, "There must be a God...there must be a Creator...He must be powerful, must be complex..." But because they're so wicked, because they're so depraved, they suppress that truth, because of the love of sin they suppress that truth. They can't help but suppress it. They don't have any path to God. They can't get out of their deadness. They're dead in trespasses and sins. They're not alive to God. They're not alive to reality. In that deadness, the truth is suppressed. Righteousness is suppressed. And in its place comes the fabrication of false religious systems and empty stupid philosophies.

What's the end of all that? What's the end of human philosophy and human religion? The grace of God? NO!

**Verse 18: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness."**

**"The wrath of God..."** That's the whole point here. What these verses are telling us is that natural man with his natural theology, unaided by special revelation winds up inexcusably under divine judgment. It's the **wrath** of God! It's not the **grace** of God! You can't go over to some tribe that's worshiping an alligator or something and say, "Oh, I'm on holy ground. God was here before I arrived!" God was not there! God is not there! That is not truth. That is not reality. That is a refusal to honor the true and living God, the incorruptible God, and in His place to stick something else...to fabricate something else...some empty philosophy, some foolish religion or some idol.

So, that's where natural man goes. **Romans 1** is the diagnosis of natural man. He becomes religious. But, his religion is a descent, not an ascent. It is not an ascent to God, it is a descent from the first recognition of God as Creator of the universe down to a false god being created by their own imagination in the suppression of the truth and a love of their own wickedness. And what happens is they don't wind up with the grace of God. They don't end up "in the body of Christ" by any stretch of the imagination. They end up under the wrath of God...the wrath of Almighty God is judgment!

One other passage I want to show you...**1 Corinthians 1**...because it partners with this one...just a brief look at this one. What we saw in **Romans 1** is that when man attains to his highest level of religious pride, he is a moron...he is a fool under wrath. It doesn't matter whether his religion is unsophisticated animism or very sophisticated Western kind of religion or Eastern kind of religion...he ends up in the same place...he's a fool who thinks he's wise.

But let's go beyond that...**1 Corinthians 1:18 "For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness,"**

See, these fools think that what **we** preach is foolish. They think that the cross is foolish, but **"to us who are being saved it is the power of God."**

And here is another judgment. This is a verse taken from **Isaiah 29:14 "For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the cleverness of the clever I will set aside."**

Both of those "destroy" and "set aside" speak of sort of a final judgment, execution. God says, "Go ahead, line up the wisest of the wise. Line up the cleverest of the clever, and I'll cut them down." Again, what happens to people who achieve "religious wisdom"...who achieve a high level of rational understanding of "God and things spiritual"? What happens is God is going to cut them down! It is the same thing as the wrath of **Romans 1:18**. Here it's destruction and setting

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aside...making into nothing!

And then **verse 20**: ***“Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made the foolish the wisdom of the world?”***

This is almost sarcasm. ***“Then where is the wise man going to be? Then where is the scribe going to be?”*** The man who’s spent his whole life fastidiously writing out religious things... ***“Where is the debater of this age?”***...The person who could stand up and debate his philosophy and his theology... ***“Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?”***

Take the wisest of the wise...take the wisdom of the world...take the elite religious leaders...take the people of the top echelons of their religion...whether you’re talking about the pope or whether you’re talking about the leader of Hinduism or the Muslim world, or whether you’re talking about the apostles of the Mormon church or whatever you’re talking about...take them all...all of those who have reached the epitome of man’s devised schemes of religion, the wise, the scribes, the great writers and theologians...the debaters, the people who can argue their point and win the day...all those people...all of them...God is going to make fools!

They’re not going to get grace! Do you get the point? They’re going to get cut down! And the reason is in **verse 21**...this is the key: ***“For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.”***

You can’t get there from here! The world at its highest point of religious achievement, of intellectual achievement...the world at its wisest level cannot come to know God! That’s what it says!

***“God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message”***.. what message?...the message goes back to the message of the cross in **verse 18**... The only way you’re going to get saved is by believing the message of the cross! That’s the only way! It was God’s plan that the world through its wisdom couldn’t come to know Him! I’ll say it again...you can’t get to God from here...by your own rationality, religiosity, philosophy...but God was pleased through the foolishness of the message of the cross...Christ, His death, His resurrection...to save those who believe. This is not to just “believe in anything”, but believe in that!

And the gospel of the cross is not a product of human reason...it’s a revelation! Where do you go for the revelation of the cross? Right here in God’s Word. Oh, Satan loves to come into the Garden today and pull people over and say, “You don’t really think you should believe what special revelation from God says...trust your own reasoning.” That’s what these theologians are doing! They’re just following Satan...

Only the message of the cross can save...anything else is more...moronic. **Jeremiah 8:9** says, ***“The wise men are put to shame, they are dismayed and caught; behold, they have rejected the word of the Lord, and what kind of wisdom do they have?”***

If you reject the revealed word of God, if you reject special revelation, if you reject the word of the Lord, what kind of wisdom have you got? Well, James answers the question...**James 3:15**: ***“The wisdom that doesn’t come down from above is demonic.”*** That’s pretty straight, isn’t it? It’s not just wrong, it’s not just foolish, it’s demonic. Listen, if it doesn’t come down from above, it comes up from below. And that’s why Paul down in **1 Corinthians 2:1** ***“And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God...I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus***

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## ***Christ, and Him crucified."***

Paul is saying, "That's all I wanted to say." Why? Because that's the only message that saves! That's the only message to preach, because that's the only message of salvation! Paul is saying, "When I brought to you the testimony of God...when I unfolded for you the mystery of God, what had been hidden and is now revealed...when I brought to you the word of God, it was all about Jesus and Him crucified, because it's only by believing that that God is well-pleased to save!" So, now where are the wise men? NOWHERE! Where are the scribes? Absolutely nowhere!

I'm reading a book called **Mormon America**...I'm probably half-way through a four or five hundred page book... My! That's a complex operation! Billions of dollars! People coming and going in this complexity of things! FOOLS! From top to bottom! Oh, they've reached all kinds of heights, you know, Ezra Taft Benson, people like that...other senators that we're familiar with today...people in power positions...people who have been in presidential cabinets...and they have complex systems of organization in their religion as well as corporately and it's a huge, big house of cards that God one day is going to blow down! It doesn't mean anything! They've achieved great levels, all the way up to being the president, which means that you're the oldest apostle...doesn't mean anything! Absolutely nothing! It's going to be destroyed! They're going to feel nothing but the wrath!

You can't get to God through your own system! If you reject Jesus Christ, you can't get there! And you're never going to get there until you hear the message. That's why we've been doing this for all these years! That's why for two thousand years people have been going to the ends of the earth with the message of Christ because this is what we know the Bible teaches. Natural man left to himself ends up under the wrath of God...ends up as **1 Corinthians** says, under destruction and they're nothing but a fool... "and take the wisest of the wise and take the cleverest of the clever and I'll wipe them all out," God says! It doesn't get you there!

So no person by natural reason, no person by religious intuition can come to know the truth of God. The only way you'll ever know the saving truth of God is by special revelation! And that's the Bible and the gospel of Jesus Christ! Anybody who says that people are saved by Hinduism or by any other religion, anybody who says that people are in the body of Christ and are Christians and are in the kingdom and are going to heaven but do not believe in Jesus Christ is not telling the truth! That's not what the Bible says!

Lord, we are again made aware, sadly, of what must break Your heart, because it breaks ours...how much more profoundly do You feel the pain of dishonor. Lord, we just want to get the record straight and make sure that we have been faithful to discharge our responsibility...and You told us to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, so we want to make sure that we understand the gospel and that we keep going, and we don't let these lies and these deceptions and these heresies attack Your glorious work. Protect Your church. Protect Your people. And keep faithful men who preach the truth in places of influence. And may Your people hear and understand the truth. Give them discernment so they can sort it out. Give them a love for Your word, so that they have the criteria by which to be discerning. And help us Lord, to be faithful to share the gospel with everybody who comes across our path, knowing there is no other way to heaven except through faith in the message of Jesus Christ and His cross. And may we preach the cross like Paul...determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

We ask these things in His name...Amen