

Just Thinking Apologetics

Does Gnosticism represent the true teachings of Jesus? If it does, then many Christians are following a false Jesus. Many today are claiming that the Gnostic teachings should be preferred to the teachings of 27 New Testament books. What exactly are some of the major tenants of Gnosticism?

It should be noted that Gnosticism encompassed a variety of beliefs. By far the most common theme to Gnosticism is that there is a dualism (two part view) between the spiritual world and the material world, where the former is seen as good and the later as evil. In other words, the physical is evil and the spiritual is good. Gnostics believed that heaven would be composed of spirit beings and the goal of the individual is to free the spirit from the body. They tended to see all physical activities as evil and believed that the resurrection of Jesus was purely spiritual. Salvation was based on works, where the individual had to acquire special knowledge.

The New Testament teachings on these subjects are completely opposite. The New Testament teaches bodily resurrection (I Cor. 15:12f, Acts 2:31-32). The Bible teaches that the physical creation is good (Gen. 1:31). Salvation according to the New Testament is based on faith, not works (Rom. 3:28, Luke 7:50, Gal. 2:16). It is clear that Gnosticism and both the Old and New Testaments differ radically, but how can we know which view correctly represents the real Jesus? Deciphering whether the real Jesus fits the Gnostic view or not will be the topic of next week's discussion.