

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ! In this edition I'll be discussing the Word of God, Diligence, Endurance, Belief, Faith, Temptations, the End Times, and much more!

I would encourage you to go to <https://thechurchofjesuschrist.info> as I continue to update the site. I have links to several specific features below. Let me know what you think, whether you have any suggestions, or any requests.

As always, I'm extending an invitation for submissions to be published in The Gospel Notes Newsletter (TGNN). Additionally, if you have a subject or a question that you would like to have covered in a future edition of TGNN, feel free to send me a note and I'll do my best to address it.

The primary criteria for inclusion of articles are these:

1. It should be oriented towards the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
2. It should use the scriptures as a source of information.
3. It should include references for any quoted 3rd party sources.
4. It should not be political.

If you have a testimony to share, please send that to me and let me know if you would like it to be included in a future edition of the newsletter. Please keep in mind the four criteria listed above where applicable.

You can view previous editions of The Gospel Notes Newsletter (TGNN) in PDF (Portable Document Format) at <https://thechurchofjesuschrist.info/TheGospelNotesNewsletter>

Or you can access other educational/informational/inspirational resources at <https://thechurchofjesuschrist.info/Resources>

You can find the current preaching schedule for the Springfield, Missouri Restoration Branch at https://thechurchofjesuschrist.info/Resources/Service_Schedule.php

If you do not wish to receive the newsletter, please let me know. All responses to me will be treated confidentially unless you tell me otherwise.

Alma 16

52 And now, Korihor said unto Alma, If thou wilt show me a sign, that I may be convinced that there is a God, yea, show unto me that he hath power, and then will I be convinced of the truth of thy words.

53 But Alma said unto him, Thou hast had signs enough. Will ye tempt your God? Will ye say, Show unto me a sign, when ye have the testimony of all these, thy brethren and also all the holy prophets?

54 The scriptures are laid before thee; yea, and all things denote there is a God, yea, even the earth and all things that are upon the face of it, yea, and its motion;

55 Yea, and also all the planets which move in their regular form do witness that there is a Supreme Creator. And yet do ye go about, leading away the hearts of this people, testifying unto them there is no God? And yet will ye deny against all these witnesses?

56 And he said, Yea, I will deny, except ye shall show me a sign.

57 And now, it came to pass that Alma said unto him, Behold, I am grieved because of the hardness of your heart, yea, that ye will still resist the spirit of the truth, that thy soul may be destroyed.

58 But behold, it is better that thy soul should be lost than that thou shouldest be the means of bringing many souls down to destruction by thy lying and by thy flattering words;

59 Therefore, if thou shalt deny again, behold, God shall smite thee, that thou shalt become dumb, that thou shalt never open thy mouth any more, that thou shalt not deceive this people any more.

60 Now Korihor said unto him, I do not deny the existence of a God, but I do not believe that there is a God; and I say also that ye do not know that there is a God; and except ye show me a sign, I will not believe.

"In my most extreme fluctuations I have never been an atheist in the sense of denying the existence of a God.— I think that generally (& more and more so as I grow older) but not always, that an agnostic would be the most correct description of my state of mind."

- Charles Darwin, "Letter 12041 – Darwin, C. R. to Fordyce, John, 7 May 1879". Darwin Correspondence Project. Retrieved 24 January 2011.
(From Wikipedia - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious_views_of_Charles_Darwin, emphasis added – J.E.)

Agnostic

1: a person who holds the view that any ultimate reality (such as God) is unknown and probably unknowable

broadly : one who is not committed to believing in either the existence or the nonexistence of God or a god

2: a person who is unwilling to commit to an opinion about something
political agnostics

(<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/agnostic>)

The philosophy promoted by Korihor is very similar to that held by self-proclaimed Agnostics today. While we often think of Atheists as the principal adversaries of Christianity, ones that both deny the existence of God and who take a purely naturalistic as opposed to a spiritual view of the world around us, the truth is a little more complex than that.

The Atheist mind set is that of a religion itself, placing humanity at the pinnacle of intelligence in the world. The reality is that the Agnostic view may be the more difficult to face. An Atheist firmly believes that there is no God, but an Agnostic can take the view that

because they aren't able to commit to accepting the existence of God, you cannot prove that there is a God either, and therefore your belief is mere delusion.

The interchange between Alma and Korihor illustrates the Agnostic point of view very well. Korihor not only states that he does not believe in God, but he further states that Alma also cannot know that there is a God. Korihor was proven wrong in a way that was both instructive and consequential for him. If Korihor were an Atheist, he would have said flatly that he does not believe that there is a God, made an offensive remark, and would have left it there.

The truth became revealed after Korihor was struck dumb – meaning he was unable to speak. Based on the fact that their communication afterward was written, he may also have been made deaf.

Alma 16

61 Now Alma said unto him, This will I give unto thee for a sign--that thou shalt be struck dumb according to my words; and I say that, in the name of God, ye shall be struck dumb, that ye shall no more have utterance.

62 Now when Alma had said these words, Korihor was struck dumb, that he could not have utterance, according to the words of Alma.

63 And now, when the chief judge saw this, he put forth his hand and wrote unto Korihor, saying, Art thou convinced of the power of God?

64 In whom did ye desire that Alma should show forth his sign? Would ye that he should afflict others to show unto thee a sign?

65 Behold, he has showed unto you a sign. And now, will ye dispute more?

66 And Korihor put forth his hand and wrote, saying, I know that I am dumb, for I cannot speak; and I know that nothing, save it were the power of God, could bring this upon me; yea, and I also knew that there was a God.

67 But behold, the devil hath deceived me; for he appeared unto me in the form of an angel and said unto me, Go and reclaim this people, for they have all gone astray after an unknown god.

68 And he said unto me, There is no God; yea, and he taught me that which I should say. And I have taught his words; and I taught them because they were pleasing unto the carnal mind;

69 And I taught them, even until I had much success, insomuch that I verily believed that they were true; and for this cause I withstood the truth, even until I have brought this great curse upon me.

Korihor confessed here by saying that the truth was that he did believe in God, but that Satan deceived him and convinced him to tell others that there was no God. Korihor was given mixed signals by Satan, who on the one hand appeared to him as an angel of light – thus having a supernatural experience, and on the other hand told him to teach people that there was no God and no Christ. This is the very nature of what confusion is. By appearing

to him as an angel of light Satan gave him sufficient evidence to know that there must be a supernatural being called God, while simultaneously telling him there was no such being.

Unfortunately for Korihor, his circumstances only grew worse once his confrontation with Alma was finished. He knowingly rejected the knowledge of the existence of God despite evidences proving it.

If today the leading Agnostics were to be polled, I have to wonder if they could honestly reply that they do not know that God exists. The key thing to remember out of this exchange is not that Korihor had been a bad person before his encounter with Satan (we really know nothing about his life before this), but that Satan managed to convince him to proselytize the world about something he knew to be false.

Jesus prophesied about this very thing happening again in times to come.

Mark 13:25 (verse 22 KJV) For in those days **there shall also arise false christs and false prophets**, and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch that, **if possible, they shall deceive the very elect**, who are the elect according to the covenant.

Matthew 24:23 (verse 24 in KJV) For in those days, there shall also arise false Christs and false prophets and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if possible, they shall deceive the very elect, who are the elect according to the covenant.

Who are the elect according to the covenant? I must suppose that the covenant it speaks of is most specifically referring to those that have a covenant with God through baptism. We may also include those who are the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but in either case, these elect it speaks of are those that should know the truth of the Gospel of Christ and are believers and followers of Christ.

It does not say that the elect **will** be deceived, but that they are the target of the false christs and false prophets. There is no need to deceive someone who doesn't know the truth, because they can be led wherever they can be led, but Satan is not content to just lead unbelievers astray – he takes pride in leading even the most devout believers astray and will work hardest to convince them to turn away from God.

I must assume that some of these most devout believers will be deceived, otherwise Jesus' warning would not have much potency behind it. I believe this to be the case because of the following:

Isaiah 53:10 Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief; when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed; he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.

Mosiah 8

39 Behold, I say unto you that when his soul has been made an offering for sin, he shall see his seed.

40 And now, what say ye? **And who shall be his seed?**

41 Behold, I say unto you that whosoever has heard the words of the prophets, yea, all the holy prophets who have prophesied concerning the coming of the Lord,

42 I say unto you that **all those who have hearkened unto their words, and believed that the Lord would redeem his people, and have looked forward to that day for a remission of their sins,**

43 **I say unto you that these are his seed, or they are heirs of the kingdom of God;**

44 For these are they whose sins he has borne; these are they for whom he has died, to redeem them from their transgressions.

45 And now, are they not his seed?

46 Yea, and are not the prophets, every one that has opened his mouth to prophesy, that has not fallen into transgression--I mean all the holy prophets ever since the world began?

47 I say unto you that they are his seed; and these are they who have published peace, who have brought good tidings of good, who have published salvation and said unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!

Knowing the dangers that will be faced by his people long beforehand, Jesus further admonishes us with this wisdom:

Mark 13:43 (Inspired Version only) And whoso treasureth up my word shall not be deceived.

The word we have received in the scriptures is the standard of measure we must use to compare against the world's doctrines and philosophies. We know this must be the case because Jesus himself used the scriptures in this exact manner:

Luke 4 (3-12 KJV)

3 And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.

4 And Jesus answered him, saying, **It is written** that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.

5 And the Spirit taketh him up into a high mountain, and he beheld all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

6 And the devil came unto him and said unto him, All this power will I give unto thee, and the glory of them; for they are delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will, I give them.

7 If thou, therefore, wilt worship me, all shall be thine.

8 Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan; for **it is written**, Thou shalt worship the Lord, thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

9 And the Spirit brought him to Jerusalem and set him on a pinnacle of the temple. And the devil came unto him and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence;

10 For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee; and in his hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

11 And Jesus, answering, said unto him, **It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord, thy God.**

We notice a difference in the third temptation listed here. Previously Satan gave him temptations about what Jesus needed to do for him, and what he could do for Jesus, but in the third temptation Satan tempts him with something that he knows Jesus could do for himself, using the scriptures incorrectly to induce the temptation. This leads to some interesting thoughts.

First, Satan tempted Jesus with the same tactic applied by Korihor – “show me a sign” that you are the Son of God. Jesus does not have to prove this to anyone.

Mark 16 (verses 16, 17 KJV)

15 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

16 And these signs shall follow them that believe:

Faith in God is not predicated on signs, and we know that we must each face a trial of faith:

Ether 5:7 Wherefore, dispute not because ye see not, for ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith; for it was by faith that Christ showed himself unto our fathers after he had risen from the dead;

There are many non-Christians (and sadly, some who claim to be Christians) who believe that it is perfectly reasonable to demand signs that prove the existence of God. Satan would agree with them on this point.

Second, Satan tempted Jesus with something he could do for Jesus, in an attempt to claim superiority to him. Korihor stated that Satan appeared as an angel of light – “enlightening” him with things that others did not understand. To Korihor this was “pleasing to the carnal mind,” meaning his own. It brought pleasure to Korihor to convince others that they were all wrong and should abandon their faith. There are many popular preachers today that dilute the Gospel with promises of success in business, while they themselves receive the benefits of that success, thereby using their own financial success to further propagate their own corrupt doctrines.

Third, Satan used the scriptures out of context to try to convince Jesus to take an action which, if he had done so, would have undermined his mission. Jesus did not have to get proof of who he was, and he was under no compulsion to provide any to Satan, (who also knew perfectly who Jesus was,) to use his authority for something trivial.

There are certain churches claiming to be Christian that will handle poisonous snakes in the expectation that it will “prove” that their faith is true because ***it is written*** that,

Mark 16:18 They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them;

While we have an example of this exact thing happening in the life of Paul, he did not purposely go out of his way to use this to prove his faith to be true.

Acts 28

2 And the barbarous people showed us no little kindness; for they kindled a fire and received us everyone because of the present rain and because of the cold.

3 And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, **there came a viper out of the heat and fastened on his hand.**

4 And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live.

5 And he shook off the beast into the fire and felt no harm.

6 Howbeit, they looked when he should have swollen or fallen down dead suddenly; but after they had looked a great while and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god.

One would be hard pressed to demonstrate that Paul was conducting a church service or that he had gone in search of a deadly and venomous snake to prove to them that he was a man of faith. Rather, it was simply a fulfillment of a promise, but it was not license to act carelessly or to take risks that were not necessary.

The example of snakes is just one. There are many others that believe you must speak in tongues to prove that your conversion is true.

Korihor insisted on a sign, and he received one, but it was not to his favor. We see how Jesus rejected such temptation, and we see how Korihor succumbed to it.

Treasuring up the words of Christ will provide an antidote against these false doctrines. It is this kind of perspective that will be the key ingredient for the ***elect according to the covenant*** today and in times to come. In fact, Jesus expressed how we must be diligent about this on more than one occasion.

Matthew 10:19 (verse 22 in KJV) And ye shall be hated of all the world for my name's sake; but **he that endureth to the end shall be saved.**

3 Nephi 12

29 And it shall come to pass that whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name shall be filled; and **if he endureth to the end, behold, him will I hold guiltless before my Father at that day when I shall stand to judge the world.**

30 **And he that endureth not unto the end, the same is he that is also hewn down** and cast into the fire, from whence he can no more return because of the justice of the Father; and this is the word which he hath given unto the children of men.

Alma spoke rather eloquently about what evidences there are all around us, even those that we may not consider.

Alma 16

48 And now, what evidence have ye that there is no God, or that Christ cometh not? I say unto you that ye have none, save it be your word only.

49 But behold, I have all things as a testimony that these things are true; and ye also have all things as a testimony unto you that they are true. And will ye deny them?

In fairness, Alma is asking the impossible, but that is also the point. How can I prove something will not happen? You can't – it is a logical dead end. The only pure evidence to support it would be to wait until the end of the universe, and by its non-happening you can say that it would not happen. By that time the proof is completely unusable, and you are left without a way to answer the question logically except to say that it could happen. But you can also add to that "could happen" the evidence that the one who said it "would" happen has had a pretty good track record of making things happen that he said he would.

Korihor cannot defend his position.

Thus, with just a little mental effort we can realize that proving that Christ will not come is completely impossible, while suggesting he might, that he could, or that he will come is infinitely more possible.

But we can be assured that he will come again because he has proved he could do everything up to this time that he said he would. But let's not be hasty, there are temptations even in this –

Luke 12 (verses 45, 46 in KJV)

54 But the evil servant is he who is not found watching. And if that servant is not found watching, he will say in his heart, My Lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and the maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken.

55 The Lord of that servant will come in a day he looketh not for, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him down, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.

56 And that servant who knew his Lord's will and prepared not for his Lord's coming, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.

There are some who believe that Christ will come, but that this will only happen at the very end of time, almost as an afterthought. These are the post-millennialists or, as the case may be, amillennialists. They do not accept the prophecies which foretold about his reign on earth for a thousand years before the end comes.

Genesis 7 (Inspired Version only)

72 And there shall be mine abode, and it shall be Zion, which shall come forth out of all the creations which I have made; and **for the space of a thousand years shall the earth rest.**

73 And it came to pass that Enoch saw **the day of the coming of the Son of Man in the last days, to dwell on the earth in righteousness for the space of a thousand years.**

Revelation 20

2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil and Satan, and bound him **a thousand years,**

3 And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more till **the thousand years should be fulfilled;** and after that he must be loosed a little season.

4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them; and judgment was given unto them; and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God, and which had not worshiped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads or in their hands; and **they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.**

5 But **the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.** This is the first resurrection.

Contrast this with the Catholic view as presented by Pope Francis on November 24, 2014 at St. Peters Square, the Vatican:

“At the same time, Sacred Scripture teaches us that the fulfillment of this marvellous plan cannot but involve everything that surrounds us and came from the heart and mind of God. The Apostle Paul says it explicitly, when he says that “Creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God” (Rom 8:21). Other texts utilize the image of a “new heaven” and a “new earth” (cf. 2 Pet 3:13; Rev 21:1), in the sense that the whole universe will be renewed and will be freed once and for all from every trace of evil and from death itself. What lies ahead is the fulfillment of a transformation that in reality is already happening, beginning with the death and resurrection of Christ. Hence, it is the new creation; it is not, therefore, the annihilation of the cosmos and of everything around us, but the bringing of all things into the fullness of being, of truth and of beauty. This is the design that God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, willed from eternity to realize and is realizing.”

- https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2014/documents/papa-francesco_20141126_udienza-generale.html

In simple terms, the view of the current vatican is that the thousand year reign is not actually a thousand years, and it is not literal. This is the amillennialist view – the idea that the final transformation of the world into a heavenly kingdom is a gradual process of improvement culminating in the new heaven and new earth, which may or may not also be literal. (Note the sentence “Other texts utilize the **image** of a “new heaven” and “new earth”, which implies that these are simply metaphors about a spiritual condition.)

The thing that is missing from this view is the context of the word of God, and this is something we must understand. The scriptures have been given to us so we may use them, or as Paul says it, “rightfully dividing the word of truth...”.

2 Timothy 2

15 Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

16 But shun profane and vain babblings; for they will increase unto more ungodliness.

17 And their word will eat as doth a canker, of whom is Hymeneus and Philetus,

18 Who, concerning the truth, have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already, and overthrow the faith of some.

There are temptations all around us, but we can be steadfast and sure without being conceited and stiff-necked. Jesus was clear about what it will take for us to endure to the end – it is a long road after all. But you know what? Jesus will be with us all along the way if we keep his commandments and do the things he asks us to do. He went to the cross for us, was raised from the dead for us, and has said that he will never leave us nor forsake us, and this is something we can count on if we do our part.

Matthew 28 (verses 18-20 in KJV)

17 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

18 Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,

19 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you always, unto the end of the world. Amen.