

c. sin

d. fellowship

INTERPRETATION – Lord, help me to understand it.

Starting on page 5 there is supplemental information about Gnosticism and a simplified two-page diagram comparing the world views of Christianity and Gnosticism (the early seeds of which John was disputing.) The issues John addressed are more than misunderstandings – they are heretical. Some of the false teachings may sound current.

3. How do John's points in chapter 1 address the following fallacies?

The false teaching:	John's teaching:
a. Jesus was only a man, a historical figure.	
b. Jesus only had the spirit of Christ from his baptism until right before the cross.	
c. The [unknowable] supreme being sent the Christ spirit to earth and he only appeared to have a physical body.	

d. Look at all the suffering in the world; God is not good.	
e. I can live my life in habitual sin – God has forgiven my sins, so how I live doesn't matter.	
f. I am not a sinner.	
g. I don't need to confess my sins.	
h. I am going to heaven and having fellowship there because of the special knowledge I have – the supreme being has revealed the divine spark within me.	
i. My sin is too great for God to forgive; I can't even forgive myself.	

j. I have studied Greek philosophy. I am well-versed in what is truth and I know that *logos* (Greek for *word*) is synonymous with reason, cosmic order, and the search for truth.

(You may find it helpful to read John 1:1-5, as well as Colossians 1:15-17.)

APPLICATION – Lord, help me to live it!

4. What is John's attitude toward those who are being led astray by false teaching? How is your attitude toward those led astray similar or different? What is something you plan to do differently now?

5. Reflect a moment on the fellowship which John states believers have (at present, not future!) Considering the parties within the fellowship, jot a few words to describe this fellowship. Now respond to this [your!] reality; you may wish to write a prayer of thanksgiving, thoughts about what this means for your walk on this earth, or something else entirely!

FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION OR CONTEMPLATION:

- I) History is full of religious derivatives spinning off from biblical Christianity. Why do you think this is? What is it about mankind's nature that drives this propensity?
- II) How is confessing one's sin a step toward the Light, toward healing?

Additional Scripture for Study Guide 3

□ John 1:1-5

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him not even one thing came into being that has come into being. ⁴ In Him was life, and the life was the Light of mankind. ⁵ And the Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not grasp it.

□ Colossians 1:15-17

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation: ¹⁶ for by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or rulers, or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

SUPPLEMENT TO STUDY GUIDE 3

Comparing Christianity and Gnosticism

As we read John's epistles, it is helpful to have an understanding of the Gnostic worldview in John's day. For the purpose of our study, there is no pressure to deeply understand all of the ins and outs of Gnosticism. Use the information if you find it valuable to establish context, ignore it if you do not!

Parts of Gnosticism seem in line with Christianity – there is a God, Jesus existed, salvation is possible, etc. But when a closer look is taken, we discover that while the words may be the same, their meaning is not.

The Gnostics added a whole new tier to the hierarchy of creation and established the idea of a supreme being higher than God. Furthermore, their characterization of God maligned His character. Their view of Jesus Christ was incomplete; it only had pieces of the biblical truth. Ultimately their tenets reduced the glory, honor, and majesty due the Father and the Son; therein lies the greatest offense.

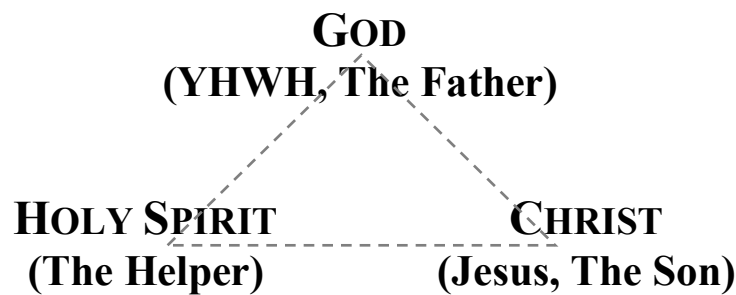
The diagrams on the following pages illustrate [some of] the differences between Christianity and Gnosticism.

CHRISTIANITY'S VIEW OF THE SPIRITUAL AND PHYSICAL REALMS

Deuteronomy 4:39

Know therefore today, and take it to your heart, that the LORD, He is God in heaven above and on the earth below; there is no other.

HEAVEN



Romans 5:8-10

⁸ But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. ¹⁰ For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

Genesis: 1:31a – God saw all that He had made and behold, it was very good.



man



Jesus, the Christ, Son of God

CREATION

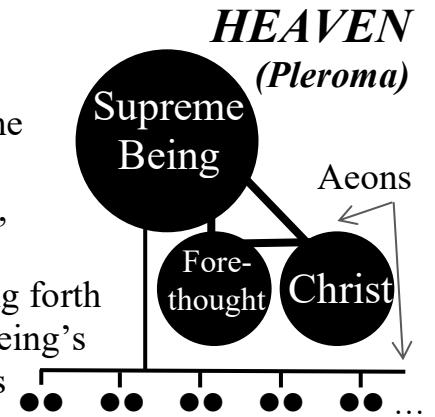
- ❖ The fall of man (Genesis 3) caused creation to be cursed & man to be out of right relationship with God.
- ❖ Jesus, who is fully God & fully man, paid mankind's penalty & will restore creation.
- ❖ Salvation is by faith in the atoning work of Jesus Christ & that faith restores the relationship between God & the believer.

GNOSTICISM'S VIEW OF THE SPIRITUAL AND PHYSICAL REALMS

The SUPREME BEING

(various names)

- ❖ He is unknowable, perfect, and eternal.
- ❖ Aeons are his 30 embodied attributes – Christ is one of the highest aeons. Other aeons include traits such as truth, immovable, paternal, maternal, happiness, understanding, love, faith, union, pleasure, and hope.
- ❖ One of the lower aeons, Wisdom (Sophia) wanted to bring forth something like herself and did so without the Supreme Being's consent. The attempt was unsuccessful – the creature was flawed. She hid it away and it was named Yaldabaoth.
- ❖ The Supreme Being sent the Christ [spirit] to Jesus [a man,] to impart the knowledge to selected people to escape the physical world and access the Pleroma.



Yaldabaoth

(The Hebrew GOD, the demiurge (the craftsman))

- ❖ He is imperfect, a failure. In art he is depicted as a snake with a lion's head.
- ❖ He is ignorant of the Supreme Being; he thinks he is the only god.
- ❖ He is evil, full of darkness, cruel, malevolent toward his creation.
- ❖ He created a flawed, imperfect world; everything made of matter is corrupted.
- ❖ The Supreme Being, unbeknownst to Yaldabaoth, added to mankind a divine spark, making it possible for man to know of the Supreme Being if man acquires the secret knowledge.



CREATION

- ❖ Imperfect, flawed, a place of suffering
- ❖ Bad, corrupt, a place of spiritual entrapment
- ❖ Jesus was a man with a pure heart; his biological parents were Joseph and Mary
- ❖ Salvation (via secret knowledge of the Supreme Being) is a means of escaping the physical world



man



Jesus



Christ spirit



 *Cole Women's Bible Study Writing Team, 2023*

