



In his new book, *The Third Jesus, The Christ We Cannot Ignore*, New Age guru Deepak Chopra advises, "I have written what I think the New Testament actually means"¹ and further warns his readers that, "Jesus is in trouble. ... Most troubling of all, his teachings have been hijacked."²

The idea of tacking the name of Jesus onto offbeat and aberrational ideas and practices is nothing new. It is as old as Acts 19:11-16 and the failed Jewish exorcists.

YET ANOTHER JESUS

Now Chopra has entered the fray. His new book gives a unique twist on re-creating Jesus for our already confused age. Chopra's "Third Jesus" is his own fabrication and created in his own image. Chopra tries to squeeze Jesus into a Hindu hermeneutic until the Savior bears no resemblance to the biblical Christ.

Chopra was born in 1946. He is a physician and prolific author. Probably his best-known book is *Ageless Body, Timeless Mind*, which was written in 1993. His father was a cardiologist in India, while his grandfather followed Ayurvedic practice. The Ayurvedic way depends on herbal remedies and speculation about energy flows in the body. It also relies on meditation and sometimes Yoga. Chopra was influenced by a major Ayurvedic physician and himself be-

came prominent in the Transcendental Meditation movement. On the dust jacket of Chopra's latest book he is called, "the poet-prophet of alternative medicine."

OFF TO A REALLY BAD START

The opening statement of Chopra's book sets the stage for the volume and is a paradigm completely fabricated by Chopra:

"Jesus Christ left behind a riddle that two thousand years of worship haven't solved."³

Chopra's premise is that to really understand Jesus we have to understand that He cannot be understood unless Chopra gives us the key to understanding. Chopra is suggesting that he alone has discovered what Bible scholars have been missing for two thousand years. A riddle is a puzzling question that has to be answered by guessing. It also can be a puzzling person or situation. Is that who Jesus is? This may be a ploy to persuade readers to accept a Jesus that is a figment of his imagination.

Chopra goes on to say that the riddle is that no one can really live up to the teachings of Jesus. This is because we have not understood what Jesus was really saying and teaching. We have taken Jesus too literally, he says, and thus are trying to live up to impossible commands. Chopra's analysis is:

"What Jesus actually taught is much more radical and at the same time mystical."⁴

In the end, Chopra does not help us to live up to the teachings of Jesus, but rather twists them so we will understand them in a mystical way.

The question Chopra is not asking is, Why would Jesus be so obscure and not be clear about what He meant? Or maybe He was and it is only Chopra claiming the underlying mystical and esoteric meaning of Jesus' teachings. Perhaps Chopra is simply making the simple terribly complex. Chopra alleges that we have misunderstood Jesus, but it is clear that he is the one mired in misunderstanding. Jesus Himself disavowed riddles and secrets and Gnostic mystical meanings when He said, "I spoke openly to the world. I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where the Jews always meet, and in secret I have said nothing" (John 18:20).

Chopra is not a Gnostic in the official sense as he disavows the historical Gnostics of the third and fourth centuries.⁵ That being said, he is, however, Gnostic-like in his approach claiming insights into mystical meanings in Jesus' teachings. At times, he is not quite sure he dislikes the Gnostics completely. For example, he does concur with some of their myths about Mary Magdalene.⁶

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term “Presidential” in describing a National Merit Scholarship, so she suggested that perhaps Charles was referring to the Presidential Scholar’s Program and suggested checking there, too. Melissa Apostolides, in the United States Department of Education, confirmed that Ronal D. Charles never was named a Presidential Scholar.³¹

Charles also claims on his resume to be a Rhodes Scholar designate. Beth W. Maslowsky, of The Rhodes Trust, said after checking the records of the Rhodes Trust, that there is no Rhodes Scholar by the name of Ronal D. Charles. Because Charles claims to be a Rhodes Scholar designate, Maslowsky thought that perhaps he meant to say that he only applied for a Rhodes Scholarship. After checking those records too, they have no record of Ronal D. Charles even applying for a Rhodes scholarship.³²

Charles has a serious problem with the truth. Not only does he fabricate quotations from early Church Fathers to support his views in his book, *The Search*, he also questions the trustworthiness of the Scriptures.

It is hard to understand why Charles has made up so much about Jesus and himself. His book and resume wither under the light of scrutiny. In the light of the Bible, Church History, and just plain facts,

he is, in the words of Scripture, “weighed in the balances and found wanting” (Daniel 5:27).

Endnotes:

1. Ron Charles, *The Search*. Bloomington, Ind.: 1st Books Library (AuthorHouse), 2007, pg. vii.
2. *Ibid.*, pg. 12.
3. *Ibid.*
4. A. Cleveland Coxe, Editor, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1951, Vol. 1, pp. 154-155, brackets in original.
5. *The Search*, op. cit., pg. 13.
6. *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, op. cit., Vol. 1, pg. 155, brackets in original.
7. *The Search*, op. cit., pg. 14.
8. *Ibid.*, pg. 15, emphasis added.
9. Philip Schaff, *History of the Chirstian Church*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1910, Vol. 1, pg. 832.
10. Archibald Thomas Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1933, Vol. VI, pp. 272, 273.
11. *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, op. cit., Vol. 8, pg. 562.
12. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, pp. 559-560.
13. Paul L. Maier, *Eusebius — The Church History*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel Publications, 1999, pg. 126.
14. *The Search*, op. cit., pp. 93, 167.
15. *Ibid.*, pg. 100.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 93, 167, 169-170.
17. *Ibid.*, pg. 178.
18. *Ibid.*, pg. 232.
19. *Ibid.*, pg. 235.
20. *Ibid.*, pp. 294, 297.
21. Georgia Production Partnership, GPP News Room web page (dated Aug. 3,

2004). Document available at: www.georgiaproduction.org/public/newsroom/2004/id20040730_001.shtml.

22. Copy on file.
23. Letter from DeWayne K. Bowie, Registrar of University of Louisiana, Lafayette, dated Feb. 11, 2008.
24. Phone conversation between Richard Peck and the Registrar’s Office of Kilgore College, Feb. 12, 2008.
25. Letter from Lynne Kroh, Global University Registrar, dated Feb. 7, 2008.
26. Cambridge University website. Information available at: www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/degrees/honorary/list.xls.
27. Cambridge University website. Information available at: www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/degrees/honorary/.
28. Phone conversation between Richard Peck and Joan Spering, Feb. 7, 2008.
29. Regarding the University of Tirana, PFO has been unable to obtain a reply from this university as to Charles’ alleged honorary Ph.D. degree in Foreign Relations which he said was granted in 1990. Such information is difficult to obtain due to the country’s political unrest at the time.
30. Phone conversation between Richard Peck and Elaine Detweiler, Vice President - Public Information, National Merit Scholarship Corp., Feb. 7, 2008. Confirmed with a letter stating the same, dated Feb. 11, 2008.
31. Phone conversation between Richard Peck and Melissa Apostolides, Executive Director, U.S. Presidential Scholars Program, Feb. 13, 2008. Confirmed with a letter stating the same, dated Feb. 13, 2008.
32. Phone conversation between Richard Peck and Beth Maslowsky at The Rhodes Trust, Feb. 13, 2008. Confirmed by an email stating the same, dated Feb. 13, 2008.



THE THIRD JESUS

(continued from page 4)

Chopra’s caricature of the early Church as a divided, squabbling group of failures is historically false. Early believers were not confused about “whether to follow Peter or Paul.”⁷ Chopra tries to paint the first-century Church as being in chaos and its members living in doctrinal ambiguity and division because they missed the mystical side of the “Jesus riddle.” The continuity and pattern of the apostles’ doctrine is clear from Acts 2:42 to the end of the book of Revelation.

Chopra needs to know that there was no division between Peter and Paul, with Peter calling Paul a “beloved brother” (2 Peter 3:15) as he affirmed Paul’s writings. It is clear that Paul spent time in the company of Peter (Galatians 1:18) and even when they disagreed about the exclusion of Gentiles in table fellowship with Jews (a new social situation created by the Gospel), Peter makes clear in his second epistle that Paul is still a “beloved brother.” Acts 15 shows all the early apostles in unity and harmony as they worked out together the unfolding questions of the relationship of Jew and Gentile in the infant Church.

COLORED BY HIS PERSPECTIVE

Chopra is a Hindu, so he will interpret things through a Hindu framework and worldview. Everything, including Jesus, will be flavored with Hindu presuppositions, and reconstituted for modern consumption. Hindus are committed to certain presuppositions, including “reincarnation” and finding “God deep within oneself.”⁸ Reincarnation becomes a form of self-atonement and a way of breaking bad karma or bad consequences. One cannot escape the cycle and may even come back as “a bird or a worm or an insect.”⁹

In just one verse, the Bible devas-
tates the concept of reincarnation.
Hebrews 9:27 says, "it is appointed
for men to die once, but after this the
judgment." The book of Romans
makes it clear that Jesus' death and
resurrection is our only atonement.
"God deep within oneself" (or self-
deification) is the lie as old as Satan's
promise to Adam and Eve that some-
how apart from God they could be
just like Him (Genesis 3:5).

It must also be understood that in
Hindu teaching the universe is only
an illusion. The statements of Genesis
1 and 2, that God created a literal
material universe are, according to
Hinduism, all wrong. Consider the
following:

"Many Hindus, under the heri-
tage of the 'way of knowledge,'
say that the most important
problem of all human beings is
that they have forgotten that they
are living in an unreal world.
There is only one true reality,
which is Brahman, the spiritual
being that is ultimately beyond
our understanding or descriptive
ability. As long as we treat the
world of our experience (*maya*)
as though it were real, we will
remain hung up in this illusory
cosmos and continue through the
cycle of reincarnations. However,
if we come to the point of
realizing that deep within our-
selves, deeper than our feelings
and our thoughts, there is a Self
(*atman*) that is identical with
Brahman, we are on our way to
escaping from the bondage of the
world once and for all."¹⁰

Chopra even misconstrues faith,
which is trust in God and His Word,
and tries to tell us, "*Faith* — When
you stop believing in the illusion of
the material world and see everything
for what it really is — light — you
have faith."¹¹ Try to tell a woman in
childbirth that her pains are an illu-
sion or that she is only bringing forth
an illusionary baby.

THE SAME OLD NONSENSE RESURRECTED

Chopra is trying to convince us that
we can find God within ourselves.

The god within he calls "God-con-
sciousness." In his view, we are no
different than Jesus and we all can
attain to His status. Actually, his New
Age mysticism is not so new. The
so-called Mind Sciences have been
around since the late 1800s.¹² The
Theosophical Society of occultist Ma-
dame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky
(1831-1891) taught that man was god,
as was every atom in the universe,
and that the Christ was the divine
part of every person.¹³ Heresy is
neither old nor a riddle. The pipe line
today runs through the books of
Neale Donald Walsch, as well as the
writings of Marianne Williamson who
wrote *The Gift of Change* and Eckhart
Tolle and his book, *A New Earth*.
Oprah Winfrey is vigorously promot-
ing the well worn New Age teachings
of Williamson and Tolle. Isaiah 5:20
warns us about those who would,
"put darkness for light and light for
darkness."

Now that we understand where
Chopra is coming from and where he
is trying to take us, we are better
prepared to proceed. Chopra's stated
goal is to get rid of everything that
has always been believed and taught
about Jesus. He writes:

"...we must begin with radical
surgery, cutting through the
timeworn Jesus that all of us
know. ... That traditional version
of Jesus was constructed as a
compromise ... so we must go
beyond it. Jesus did not physi-
cally descend from God's dwell-
ing place above the clouds, nor
did he return to sit at the right
hand of a literal throne. What
made Jesus the Son of God was
the fact that he had achieved
God-consciousness."¹⁴

So in just a few sentences, Chopra
has dismissed Christ's Ascension, His
position as High Priest and Mediator,
and His position of power in heaven.

Chopra says that Christians worship
a "mythical Jesus,"¹⁵ when just the
opposite is true. Chopra has created
his own mythical Jesus. The Apostle
Paul warned that when we turn from
true doctrine, we will be turned to
myths and fables (2 Timothy 4:1-4).

When Chopra talks about a "Third
Jesus" he is talking about his subjec-
tive re-creation of Jesus. In Chopra's
words:

"One Jesus is historical, and we
know next to nothing about him.
Another Jesus is the one appro-
priated by Christianity. He was
created by the Church to fulfill
its agenda. The third Jesus, the
one this book is about, is as yet
so unknown that even the most
devout Christians don't suspect
that he exists. Yet he is the Christ
we cannot — and must not —
ignore."¹⁶

The reason that this "Third Jesus" is
unknown is because so many Chris-
tians are ignorant of Church history
and the history of the heresies of
Theosophy.

Chopra seems ignorant of all the
historical research that has been done
on the life and times of Jesus. With
the Bible in hand and the illumination
and confirmation of archaeology,
along with the voluminous body of
work on the second temple period,
we can know enormous amounts of
information about the historical Jesus.
Chopra either is ignorant of all this or
is deliberately obfuscating.

Chopra disputes that Jesus could be
loving and yet judge sin. His lack of
understanding of who Jesus really is
has him undermining Jesus. He al-
leges that Jesus was full of inconsis-
tency, saying, "At the very least, the
living Jesus was a man of baffling
contradictions."¹⁷ Chopra also does
not have even an elemental under-
standing of the Trinity and says that
millions have built up another Christ.
Of this Christ, Chopra posits that,
"He is the Holy Ghost, the Three-
in-One Christ, the source of sacra-
ments and prayers."¹⁸ It is obvious
that Chopra is assailing the Roman
Catholic Church as he reminds us of
spiritual wars fought in the name of
Jesus, infant baptism, and sacraments.
He laments the various divisions and
sects within universal Christendom,
but seems unaware that he is propos-
ing still another fringe division. In
reality, biblical Christianity — which

adheres to the framework of the Reformation and the Bible — possesses remarkable uniformity when it comes to the major doctrines of the faith. Many have been, and are, in total agreement on the fundamentals of verbal inspiration, the virgin birth, the vicarious atonement, and the visible and victorious return of Jesus.

Chopra is intent on trying to sell us a Hindu mystic Jesus who taught us how to reach God-consciousness:

“I want to offer the possibility that Jesus was truly, as he proclaimed, a savior. Not *the* savior, not the one and only Son of God. Rather, Jesus embodied the highest level of enlightenment.”¹⁹

Jesus talked of false christs in Matthew 24:24 and the Apostle Paul warned that there would be those presenting “another Jesus” (2 Corinthians 11:4). Surely this is the case with Chopra and his “Third Jesus.”

Chopra negates the Gospel, dismisses Christ’s death for sin as well as His resurrection, and makes Jesus simply a way-shower:

“Jesus intended to save the world by showing others the path to God-consciousness.”²⁰

To Chopra, Jesus then is just another guru, just one who showed the way to inner enlightenment, and facilitator of self-salvation. Jesus never referred to Himself as one who showed the way, but rather as *the Way* (John 14:6). The apostles of Jesus certainly understood this and Paul was clear to say, “For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5). Paul’s words mean obviously that Jesus is the *only* Way and the *one* Mediator, and there is no other. Peter reminded his hearers, “Nor is there salvation in any other” (Acts 4:12).

Chopra catches himself in a dilemma as he teaches that words were put into Jesus’ mouth “by followers writing decades later.”²¹ However, when Chopra uses the words of Jesus to make his point, we can advance the same argument against him unless we

believe that Chopra, like the members of the Jesus Seminar, somehow knows which words are genuine to Jesus and which words were added later. Chopra cannot have it both ways. As well, he cannot be the last word on which sayings of Jesus are authentic and which are not. Jesus Himself left no such latitude when He said, “He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him — the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day” (John 12:48).

WHEN IS A RETURN NOT A RETURN?

Chopra has everything wrong when it comes to Jesus and Christianity, so it comes as no surprise that he derails the doctrine of the literal Second Coming of Jesus and tries to replace it with a form of personal enlightenment:

“The idea of the Second Coming has been especially destructive to Jesus’s intentions, because it postpones what needs to happen now. The Third Coming — finding God-consciousness through your own efforts — happens in the present. I’m using the term as a metaphor for a shift in consciousness that makes Jesus’s teachings totally real and vital.”²²

Chopra has tried to single-handedly cancel Christ’s return. He sees it as no more than a metaphor. The return of Jesus, and the doctrines which accompany it, really mean that if we can get into an enlightened frame of mind and get into God-consciousness, we move past the “destructive” to Jesus’ true intentions.

A metaphor is defined as a word or phrase which describes one thing by stating another with which it can be compared without using the words “like” or “as.” For instance, when Jesus says He is bread, or water, or light, or a door, those are things which are clearly metaphorical.

A metaphor describes one thing as something else and the something else is a figure of speech that conveys a truth. Nowhere is the literal return

of Christ called something else or set up to parallel something else. The Second Coming is never set against a figure of speech. Paul speaks of Christ’s return as His coming again (1 Corinthians 11:26). It assumes as His first coming was literal, so too will be His return. There is nothing even close to a metaphor in Acts 1:11, “This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.” In other words, He was taken up literally, visibly, bodily, and He will return in the same exact way in His resurrection body.

The return of Jesus is always presented as something that will take place in the future, not as a subjective present experience. We look for a future appearance of Jesus (Matthew 24:30, Acts 3:10-21, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, 2 Thessalonians 1:7, Titus 2:13, Revelation 22:20). To even suggest that the return of Jesus is anything other than what it really is, one has to walk through the looking glass and ignore and obscure the clear meaning of words. Chopra seems to be suggesting that words only can mean what he says they mean. He uses Christian words, but has a dictionary straight from a Hindu bookshelf. The “Third Jesus” is Chopra’s way of looking at Jesus. Chopra’s Jesus came simply to make us all passive and to help us merge into equality of soul with all humanity. When that happens, Chopra teaches, there will be heaven on earth.

RIGHT AND WRONG

Occasionally Chopra has something right to say. He has it right when he says:

“Enlightenment and consciousness-raising are considered eastern concepts, not Christian ones. ... Westerners are scornful of outsiders coming in to claim Jesus as a teacher on the order of Buddha and Muhammad instead of seeing him as the one and only Son of God.”²³

Regarding biblical salvation, Chopra proposes that we all have light inside ourselves. This light is God-conscious-

ness and we all happen to have it, though Chopra does not offer to tell us how it got there. As such, one should inquire if he would extend that inner light to Charles Manson, Adolph Hitler, and Osama bin Laden. According to Chopra:

*“Salvation — You are redeemed when you move into the light. You’ve escaped your false self and arrived at your true self. ... The true self is as unbounded as the light.”*²⁴

The Greek word for salvation is *soteria*. Its primary meaning comes from a root meaning deliverance or safety. It is true that *soteria*, in some limited contexts, can mean a material and temporal deliverance. However, when the word is used in a theological context, it means “the spiritual and eternal deliverance granted immediately by God to those who accept His conditions of repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus, in whom alone it is to be obtained, Acts 4:12, and upon confession of Him as Lord, Rom. 10:10; for this purpose the gospel is the saving instrument, Rom. 1:16; Eph. 1:13.”²⁵ Likewise, “Man must be freed from the just punishment which God’s judicial sentiment requires so that he may without fear be reconciled to God, but in such a way that God may still be just in his justifying or saving action. Blood sacrifice, which develops its full meaning in Christ’s death, is that which propitiates God’s wrath and saves (Rom. 5:9).”²⁶

REAL OR UNREAL

Chopra suggests that we can pray to whomever or whatever we please (even ourselves), and in this way really connect with reality. Consider what Chopra recommends when he writes, “By praying to whatever deity or higher self you believe in, you are essentially making a connection with reality, asking to be reminded that illusion isn’t real.”²⁷ Praying to oneself, or some illusory deity, is not reality. Somehow Chopra believes reality is created by unreality. When he writes, “Behind the appearance of craziness lies profound wisdom,”²⁸ he

is saying that if we think he sounds crazy — think again — it is really wisdom. Wisdom is well-defined in the book of Proverbs and we find wisdom in Jesus (1 Corinthians 1:30, Colossians 3:16). By the biblical standard, Chopra is promoting craziness.

When godly people of the Bible prayed, they prayed to the God of heaven, the God defined by the Bible. Prayer is to be directed always to the true and living God of heaven. He is Creator and Lord, Yahweh the compassionate covenant-keeping Redeemer. How we petition the heavenly Father is beautifully laid out in categories in the Lord’s Prayer. Jesus Himself gives us all we need to know about prayer. He is the great Model and Teacher. From Jesus’ teachings we can derive the following:

“(1) The most important factor in Christ’s doctrine of prayer is his insistence upon the Fatherhood of God (*q.v.*). God is essentially *Holy Father*, however, who, while acting in a fatherly manner to all men, is a true father only to those who are his children through his grace and their repentance and faith. (2) Jesus also emphasized the value of the individual before God in prayer. Not only is the individual child of the Heavenly Father assured of a welcome to his presence; he is also assured that the Father had been going out in love toward him, to bring him home to himself. ... In addition to faith Christ emphasized two other conditions for success in prayer. Prayer must originate in a loving and forgiving disposition (Matt. 18:21-35), and it must be offered in Christ’s own name (John 16:23 f.).”²⁹

SYNTHETIC SYNONYMS

Chopra also moves his readers into his theories regarding the kingdom of God. His views do not in any way resemble the Jewish Old Testament longing for God’s kingdom, nor can his views equate with any of the New Testament material. At one point Chopra describes reaching the kingdom of God as “arriving at a higher

level of consciousness.”³⁰ Chopra wrongly concludes that Christians see the kingdom of God as only heaven, or paradise as “a throne above the clouds”³¹ in eternity. To get at what Chopra really means, one simply has to understand how he defines the kingdom of God. Chopra reduces it to “you must find a place that is neither physical nor mental. Jesus calls this place the kingdom of God, *or the soul.*”³² So one need only look into the mirror, because that is all we get. The kingdom is us!

Essentially the kingdom of God is, in Chopra’s view, our own souls. Moving our souls into God-consciousness or enlightenment (meaning buying into Chopra’s mystical meanderings) will bring us into our godhood. We are to understand that the soul and the kingdom of God are interchangeable. If two words roughly mean the same thing, they should be interchangeable in a sentence.

To demonstrate the folly of Chopra’s premise, let’s survey a few Scripture verses and insert “kingdom of God” (rendered in italics) where “soul” is used. Genesis 2:7 informs us, “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living *kingdom of God.*” David referred to his soul on a number of occasions. Psalm 23:3 says, “He restores my *kingdom of God.*” In Psalm 42:1-2, 4-5, we find, “So pants my *kingdom of God* for You, O God. My *kingdom of God* thirsts for God, for the living God” and “I pour out my *kingdom of God* within me. ... Why are you cast down, O my *kingdom of God?*” And lest we forget God’s warning through Ezekiel, “The *kingdom of God* who sins shall die” (Ezekiel 18:4). There definitely is something wrong here.

New Testament passages fare no better as with Jesus’ warning, “fear Him who is able to destroy both *kingdom of God* and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28). In the garden, Jesus prayed, “My *kingdom of God* is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death” (Matthew 26:38). Neither does it work with other New Testament writers,

“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of *kingdom of God* and spirit” (Hebrews 4:12). And then in Revelation we would be told that John “saw under the altar the *kingdom of God* of those that had been slain” (6:9). Substitute the word “soul” in the “kingdom of God” passages and it gets even worse.

Chopra has no understanding of the biblical teaching of the soul. Putting together all the pertinent Scriptures we find that in the Old Testament the soul (*nepes*) “often comes to be used for the ego itself ... [It] is then simply the individual in his totality. ... The NT, although it continues the idea of the soul (*psyche*) as the life-principle (Acts 20:10; Rev. 8:9) which becomes personified (Acts 2:43), yet also views it as a spiritual entity which continues to exist after death.”³³

Chopra tries to prop up his argument with the use of Luke 17:20-21, “And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation. Neither shall they say, Lo here! Or, Lo there! For, behold, the kingdom of God is within you” (KJV).

The first thing to notice is whom Jesus is addressing: the religious leaders (Pharisees) whom He has previously called hypocrites and white-washed tombs in Matthew 23. He has also told them that they were of their father the devil in John 8:44. He is not telling them that they had the kingdom of God in them. The rendering of *the kingdom of God is within you* in the King James Version is a mistranslation. The Greek word for “within” is *entos* and, depending on the context, can be translated as among or in your midst. Vine concludes that, “‘in the midst of,’ is to be preferred; the Kingdom of God was not in the hearts of the Pharisees.”³⁴ *The Jerusalem Bible* translates Luke 17:21 as “the kingdom of God is among you.”

Charles Ryrie concludes the same, saying, “*the kingdom of God is in your*

midst. The necessary elements of the kingdom were there present and needed only to be recognized. It cannot mean ‘within you,’ for the kingdom certainly was completely unconnected with the Pharisees to whom Jesus was speaking (v. 20).”³⁵

Another scholar observes the same thing:

“Jesus would hardly say that the Kingdom of God is within the hearts of the Pharisees, the better translation is, ‘The Kingdom of God is among you,’ but ye do not perceive it.”³⁶

Jesus would not have instructed His apostles to pray, “Your kingdom come” (Matthew 6:10), if somehow it was already inside of them. The kingdom of God was being foreshadowed in the ministry and miracles of Jesus Himself. He was in their midst. Alva McClain, in his classic work on the kingdom of God, brings this all together:

“...as to the personal presence of its *King*, the Kingdom was actually ‘in the midst’ of men. Answering the query of the Pharisees as to ‘when’ the Kingdom of God would come, Christ said, ‘The kingdom of God is in the midst of you’ (Luke 17:21, ASV margin). The King James rendering, by ‘*within*,’ cannot be true; for surely in no sense could the Kingdom of God have been ‘within’ the hearts of the Pharisees to whom our Lord was speaking, and who had charged blasphemously that His miracles were being accomplished through the power of the devil (Matt. 12:24). But in the Person of its divinely appointed King, visibly present in incarnate form on earth where He must eventually reign, the Kingdom was in that sense already ‘in the midst of’ men regardless of their attitude, whether for or against Him. ... In truth, the long-awaited Kingdom of Old Testament prophecy had come so near to the men of that generation that they had actually seen the face of the King and also had witnessed the super-

natural works, which were the predicted harbingers of His Kingdom.”³⁷

Many look forward to the day when the fullest manifestation of the kingdom will occur in the millennial reign of Jesus. This will ultimately issue out into the eternal kingdom.

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY GUY

Chopra does not want to leave anyone behind:

“When Jesus said that the Kingdom of God is within, he meant within everyone. This would be in keeping with his injunction to love your enemies. The same God is in them as in you. Killing an enemy would be the same as killing an aspect of God as well as of yourself.”³⁸

Chopra’s twisted logic goes like this: If God within is simply your enlightened higher self (which is universal reality), then because yourself is within yourself, God is in you. So because everyone’s self is already within them, then everyone has the kingdom of God within (which is in fact their souls). Because our higher self is part of some ultimate universal reality (that is, shared by all), to kill another is to kill an aspect or part of ourselves. If it sounds confusing, it’s because it is and really makes no sense. One of the repercussions of this is that we can conclude that if we already possess God within, how we live is of little or no consequence.

The middle section of Chopra’s book³⁹ is a meandering compilation of what he thinks of various sayings of Jesus. It is interspersed with ideas about karma and pacifism as he twists, bends, manipulates, and misinterpreted verses in an effort to support his mystical-riddle thesis. He isolates verses, thereby allowing for a lack of any historical or immediate context. There is no attempt at proper hermeneutics. Every verse always tails back to Chopra’s skewed blasphemy, which is:

“...faith in God becomes the same as faith in yourself. ... You don’t

need to have faith in the Messiah or his mission. Instead, you have faith in the vision of higher consciousness. ... Jesus helps a great deal here, because no one in history was more secure in the reality of God and the Kingdom of Heaven to be found within ourselves."⁴⁰

WE ARE THE PLANTS AND THE PLANTS ARE US

Pantheism is the philosophical view that sees the entire universe as God. The word "pantheism" translates out literally as — all is God. The 18th-century British Deist John Toland coined the term. The idea though really stretches back to ancient India and is also called monism. Nothing could be further from the personal Savior and Father God of the Bible. Toland insisted that, "God is the mind or soul of the Universe."⁴¹ Chopra is deeply rooted in pantheism and follows in the footsteps of Toland and others like him. He wants us to know that:

"The physical world itself came from God's mind, and when we draw close to God, all of creation becomes part of us. In a very real sense we are clothed by divine glory. Without faith, this glory is hidden from sight. We feel that the world is separate from us and often hostile to our needs. It is necessary for Jesus, in his higher state of consciousness, to hold out a vision that will free us from this limited perception. Once that happens, we find ourselves basking effortlessly in glory, like the lilies of the field."⁴²

In other words, if we will only have faith in Chopra and all he is telling us, and have faith to believe that Jesus was a pantheist, our higher consciousness will rally Him. The truth is Jesus was a Jew. Even with a cursory study of the Jewish Old Testament and the theology of Judaism, one thing is clearly and consistently seen: God created the material world (Genesis 1:1) and there is a distinction between creature and creation that is never violated.

In pantheism there is not only the loss of the true God, but the loss of morals:

"Pantheism not only destroys the foundation of morals, but it renders all rational religion impossible. Religion supposes a personal Being endowed not only with intelligence and power, but with moral excellence; and to be rational, that Being must be infinite in all his perfections. Pantheism, however, denies that an infinite Being can be a person; that is intelligent, self-conscious, or possessed of moral attributes. It is just as impossible to worship such a Being as it is to worship the atmosphere, or the law of gravitation, or the axioms of Euclid."⁴³

IT IS ALL IN YOUR HEAD

Chopra reduces Jesus to an entity who only "exists in our own awareness at the level of God-consciousness."⁴⁴ He further says that, "Jesus isn't reachable as a personality."⁴⁵ Despite these claims, there are ways that we can get this Jesus experience. One of the ways is to focus on religious paraphernalia and even talk to it:

"Usually I ask people to say, 'Our Father, who art in Heaven,' but you may prefer 'Hail Mary, full of grace.' Silently repeat the words to yourself, letting them settle naturally into your awareness, becoming softer and deeper. Continue for at least five minutes and up to twenty minutes. This kind of sacred repetition is common to every religious tradition. When you open your eyes, let your gaze settle on a sacred image, such as an icon, a picture of Jesus, a statue of Mary. Ask this figure to embody itself through you. Gently feel a connection. Don't force this, just put out the intention that the archetype of Christ, Mary, or a chosen saint merges with your being. Some people use angels for this purpose, which is the same as asking for the essence of God to reach you."⁴⁶

Here Chopra goes from the bizarre right into the occult. He suggests that we go into mind-altering mystical chanting and channeling, which are forms of spiritism and necromancy. Altered states leave one open to believe anything.

MORE RECYCLED HERESY

Chopra continues to try to undermine our confidence in Scripture and rob us of the promises of God:

"It is likely that many unknown scribes altered the original texts of the New Testament before a final version was settled on between the third and fourth centuries AD. There is no agreed method for sorting out when a verse entered the gospels or what the original wording might have been."⁴⁷

Chopra then parrots the Marcionite heresy of the second century, writing, "The difference between the vengeful God of the Old Testament and the loving God of the New Testament is that human consciousness was ready for a shift in perception."⁴⁸ Everywhere in the Old Testament God is shown, not as vengeful, but as a just and righteous Judge full of compassion, loving kindness, and mercy. He is a covenant keeper whose mercy endures forever and the psalmist found shelter under His wings. The false dichotomy of the evil Old Testament God vs. the loving New Testament God is a fabrication constructed by Marcion and soundly condemned by the early Church Fathers.

David Bercot informs us about Marcion:

"Marcion, who founded his own church, was one of the leading heretical teachers of the second century. His teaching incorporated many Gnostic elements, including the belief that the God of the Old Testament was a different God from the Father of Jesus. Marcion accepted only the Gospel of Luke and the writings of Paul for his New Testament canon, and he was forced to alter even these to fit his teachings."⁴⁹

Justin Martyr, around A.D. 160, wrote, "There is Marcion, a man of Pontus, who is even at this day alive. He teaches his disciples to believe in some other God greater than the Creator."⁵⁰ Irenaeus (A.D. 180) warned the Church that, "By dividing God into two, declaring that one is 'good' and the other is 'just,' Marcion actually puts an end to Deity altogether. ... The spiritual man will also examine the doctrine of Marcion — how he holds that there are two Gods, separated from each other by an infinite distance."⁵¹

It follows that Chopra does not believe in the existence of Satan or demons. He believes these are products of our imaginations. When we begin to imagine these things, Chopra says, we create our own personal drama believing the demons and temptation are real. Our minds only create the delusion of demons and spiritual warfare. Chopra tells of a man who believed that demons were tempting him and Chopra then asks:

"Can anyone tell this man that he created his life-and-death scenario in his mind? The demons who pursued him were conjured up from his own images of the Christian struggle between good and evil. Vivid images lurked in his memory, placed there by things he first heard, no doubt, in Sunday school."⁵²

So we are just deluded victims of silly stories and religious fairy tales told to us as children. We are to believe then that when Jesus spoke about (and spoke to) demons, He was deluded and only imagining things. We can only conclude then that Jesus was not really *the truth* because He was teaching something imaginary and untrue. If Jesus was just accommodating Himself to the false beliefs and imaginations of the era, He Himself was misled and was misleading others.

COULD JESUS CARE LESS?

Chopra misrepresents Jesus when it comes to the issue of homosexuality. Chopra seems open to homosexual "rights," as if any form of immorality

should be favored and promoted. Under the topic of gay rights, Chopra insists:

"There is a long tradition of condemning homosexuality in Judeo-Christianity. Again, this stricture was transferred from the Old Testament, since Jesus himself is silent on this issue. It isn't possible to limit Jesus to the conventions of his time. ... If fundamentalists want to take their cue from Jesus, this teaching demonstrates that he was on the side of the despised. ... homosexuality isn't mentioned by Jesus."⁵³

What Chopra is subtly suggesting is that because Jesus did not address homosexuality directly, this implies that either He was unconcerned about it or perhaps even for it. Nothing could be further from the truth. As Chopra admits there are strong prohibitions in the Old Testament against homosexuality and any and all forms of sexual immorality. Jesus affirmed the Old Testament law. He said, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill" (Matthew 5:17). Then He added, "Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven" (v. 19). Jesus completely affirmed all the morality of the Old Covenant. The fact that Jesus held up heterosexuality in male and female marriage speaks volumes. Monogamy between husband and wife is the absolute standard.

Joe Dallas, who has been on both sides of the issue, counters the old canard about Jesus being unconcerned about homosexuality:

"Or, put another way, are we really to believe that Jesus didn't care about wife-beating or incest, just because He said nothing about them? Aren't the prohibitions against incest in Leviticus and 1 Corinthians, as well as Paul's admonition to husbands to love their wives, enough to instruct us in these matters without being mentioned in the Gospels?

There are any number of evil behaviors Jesus did not mention by name; surely we don't condone them for that reason alone! Likewise, Christ's silence on homosexuality in no way negates the very specific prohibitions against it which appear elsewhere, in both the Old and New Testaments. ... Homosexuality, while absent from Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, is conspicuously present in both Testaments and, just as conspicuously, it is forbidden."⁵⁴

One of the reasons Chopra takes such a cavalier attitude toward homosexuality is that he proposes that forgiveness in Jesus' mind means that Jesus simply either condones or overlooks all sin. One does not have to repent and confess sin as so many Scriptures affirm (Psalm 51, 1 John 1:9). Chopra argues his proposition in this way:

"Jesus came into the world to forgive all sins. ... We know that the thieves on either side of the cross were grave sinners, and yet Jesus offered them entry into the Kingdom of God without condemnation or approval."⁵⁵

So we can live as we please because in the end there is neither condemnation nor approval, and everyone makes it. Chopra's statement is downright false. We know only one malefactor was offered entrance into paradise, and only after he pleaded for entry which strongly implies his repentance and an acceptance of who Jesus was (Luke 23:39-43). Throughout his book, Chopra is very selective in his choice of New Testament verses and he avoids any verses that speak of future judgment and the need for confession of sin as a requirement for forgiveness. Even those verses which he does employ, he distorts as we have seen with the case of the two criminals on either side of Jesus' cross.

Chopra seems to be against nothing except fundamentalist Christians (that is, those intolerant toward evil). Somehow he cannot see his way clear to overlook what he views as their

intolerance toward sin. Fundamentalism seems to be the only evil that Chopra allows to exist. Why can't he tolerate and love fundamentalists? Why don't they have the kingdom of God within them? So we can conclude that evil exists after all, at least in some cases for Chopra.

The Third Jesus is a truly pathetic book. There is not a shred of evidence to support a so-called "Third Jesus." This book presents nothing new, but simply conjures up a fantasy Jesus spun together by heresies from the past, then compacted together with the sticky paste of mysticism and pantheism. We also have to question the soundness of anyone who teaches, "If I sense the presence of God, then in some way I have entered God's identity and taken it as my own."⁵⁶ Chopra and his book are far removed from Christianity and the Jesus of the Bible. He in no way presents anything that even remotely resembles the true Jesus of history and the Gospels.

Endnotes:

1. Deepak Chopra, *The Third Jesus*. New York: Harmony Books, 2008, pg. 4.
2. *Ibid.*, pg. 7.
3. *Ibid.*, pg. 1.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 30-35.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 225-227.

7. *Ibid.*, pg. 3.
8. Winfried Corduan, *Pocket Guide to World Religions*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2006, pg. 69.
9. *Ibid.*, pg. 71.
10. *Ibid.*, pg. 72, italics in original.
11. *The Third Jesus*, op. cit., pg. 24, bold italic in original.
12. See further, John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *Encyclopedia of Cults and New Religions*. Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House Publishers, 1999, pp. 390-417.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 443-444.
14. *The Third Jesus*, op. cit., pp. 3-4.
15. *Ibid.*, pg. 7.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.
17. *Ibid.*, pg. 8.
18. *Ibid.*, pg. 9.
19. *Ibid.* pp. 9-10, italic in original.
20. *Ibid.*, pg. 10, italics in original.
21. *Ibid.*
22. *Ibid.*
23. *Ibid.*, pg. 20.
24. *Ibid.*, pg. 24, bold italic in original.
25. W.E. Vine, *The Expanded Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*. Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1984, pg. 988.
26. Everett F. Harrison, Editor-in-chief, *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1960, pg. 470.
27. *The Third Jesus*, op. cit., pg. 28.
28. *Ibid.*, pg. 30.
29. *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, op. cit., pg. 413, italics in original.
30. *The Third Jesus*, op. cit., pg. 36.
31. *Ibid.*, pg. 37.
32. *Ibid.*, pg. 29, emphasis added.
33. *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, op. cit.,

- pg. 492, italic in original.
34. *The Expanded Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, op. cit., pg. 1236.
35. Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *The Ryrie Study Bible*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1976, note on Luke 17:21, pg. 1580, italics in original.
36. J.R. Dummelow, Editor, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1958, pg. 762.
37. Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1968, pp. 272, 273, italics in original.
38. *The Third Jesus*, op. cit., pg. 40.
39. *Ibid.*, pp. 47-139.
40. *Ibid.*, pg. 62.
41. *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, op. cit., pg. 391.
42. *The Third Jesus*, op. cit., pg. 64.
43. Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999, Vol. 1, pg. 333.
44. *The Third Jesus*, op. cit., pg. 130.
45. *Ibid.*, pg. 143.
46. *Ibid.*, pp. 144-145.
47. *Ibid.*, pg. 132.
48. *Ibid.*, pg. 159.
49. David W. Bercot, Editor, *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998, pg. 419.
50. *Ibid.*
51. *Ibid.*
52. *The Third Jesus*, op. cit., pg. 191.
53. *Ibid.*, pg. 224.
54. Joe Dallas, *A Strong Delusion*. Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House Publishers, 1996, pp. 155, 156.
55. *The Third Jesus*, op. cit., pg. 225.
56. *Ibid.*, pg. 212.



TO HELL AND BACK

(continued from page 1)

also boxes himself in when he states, "What Scripture states is all that matters ... Examine the verses, as Acts 17:11 states, and then decide for yourself."⁵ This article intends to do just that. Wiese then lays the ground rules:

"One thing I was sure of: if what I experienced was true, then I should be able to find proof of it in the Bible. ... The Bible tells us not to add or take away anything from His Word."⁶

Then he adds, "any spiritual experience should be viewed in light of the Scriptures."⁷ However, within the

confines of his book's covers, he repeatedly violates his own ground rules. Many of his experiences have no remote relationship with what's in the Bible.

It is clear from the start of Wiese's book that Scripture will not be the ultimate court of appeal. All he offers us is his unverifiable and experiential claims. For instance, Wiese writes, "I believe Scripture indicates that currently in hell (*Sheol* or *Hades*), God does allow the demons to torment the lost souls."⁸ Wiese himself admits the idea of demons tormenting the lost in hell is suspect teaching when he writes, "This may not be absolutely conclusive in Scripture."⁹ In fact, it is absolutely absent from Scripture. So, apparently, what the Bible actually

teaches *does not* matter to Wiese. This clearly is a case of modern Gnosticism — believing one can receive private revelations of new truth — and a clear violation of Revelation 22:18-19, which forbids adding new content to the Bible. And this is only the start.

Wiese is either totally confused or not being truthful when he claims:

"I have since discovered that my story coincides with what Scripture details about hell. This is of far greater importance than what I have to say."¹⁰

Serious students of the Bible agree wholeheartedly that Scripture is more important than what any of us has to say, but something cannot be absent from Scripture, contrary to Scripture,