2 Corinthians 11 (Part 1): 1-15 A Different Jesus, A Different Gospel

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2nd Corinthians chapter 11, we're going to cover the first 15 verses. If you're at 2nd Corinthians 11, I'm going to go ahead and read through those. Follow along with me as I do.

Paul writes and says, "I wish you would bear with me in a little foolishness. Do bear with me! ² For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. ³ But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

⁴ For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough. ⁵ Indeed, I consider that I am not in the least inferior to these super-apostles. ⁶ Even if I am unskilled in speaking, I am not so in knowledge; indeed, in every way we have made this plain to you in all things.

⁷ Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached God's gospel to you free of charge? ⁸ I robbed other churches by accepting support from them in order to serve you. ⁹ And when I was with you and was in need, I did not burden anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied my need. So I refrained and will refrain from burdening you in any way. ¹⁰ As the truth of Christ is in me, this boasting of mine will not be silenced in the regions of Achaia. ¹¹ And why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do!

¹² And what I am doing I will continue to do, in order to undermine the claim of those who would like to claim that in their boasted mission they work on the same terms as we do. ¹³ For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. ¹⁵ So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds." (ESV) Stop there, please, let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we open our hearts to You. We pray the ministry of Your Holy Spirit to touch each heart, to illuminate each mind, each spirit.

Lord and to guide and direct us into all truth, for You are the Lord of truth. You are the truth.

Speak to us, O God, as you desire. We pray it in Jesus name, amen.

When Jesus during His earthly ministry spoke of the Church, capital C, the Church universal, He said that it would be built on a rock. And He made some pretty amazing statements about it. He said that it could not be destroyed. In fact, His exact words were that the gates of hell would not prevail against it. (Matthew 16:18) Well, obviously Satan knows this too.

And since the church cannot be destroyed, we see almost from the very beginning right here in 2nd Corinthians. I mean, the church had just gotten going, but we already see the enemy working hard to create confusion about what the church really is by bringing people into the church to bring another message; a slightly altered message. A slightly different way of thinking about the gospel, or Jesus, or the ministry of the Spirit.

And that's something the enemy's been doing for a long, long time through what we call, counterfeits. And the word counterfeit, by the way, means a fraudulent imitation of something else. A counterfeit, a fraudulent imitation of something else.

You see, the message of biblical Christianity has always been very clear and it's laid out in the Word of God. But Satan has been successfully, ever since the beginning, bringing confusion by raising up individuals; men and women, who have come along during that time and claimed to have received a new revelation; a new insight; new information. New..., yeah, you know what I mean?

And all these new revelations that have come along, all of these visions that have supposedly been given, have served to create offshoots of the church, which are in most cases, counterfeits. They are a fraudulent imitation of the original article.

Let me give you some examples. In 1820, a man by the name of Joseph Smith claimed that God, the Father, and Jesus appeared to him and told him that all churches were wrong. It wasn't long before Mormonism was born.

And then there was the Millerite Movement in the 1830s and 1840s started by a man by the name of William Miller, who was convinced and managed to convince other people that Jesus was going to return in their lifetime. And when Miller's predictions didn't come to pass, which of course they never do, a man by the name of Hiram Edson claimed to have seen a vision in which he was told that Miller actually wasn't wrong about the timing of the Lord's return, he was wrong about the place of the Lord's return.

He claimed that the Lord actually returned spiritually, not physically. But there were 3 other people who jumped on that idea and they ran with it. And their names were Joseph Bates, and James and Ellen White, and Seventh day Adventism was born.

Then in 1869, a man by the name of Charles Taze Russell, a former Presbyterian, again, claimed to have had a special revelation from God, and before long, the Jehovah's Witnesses were born.

It would seem that the 1800s were a time of great gullibility here in America, and people were drawn away to belief systems that were in fact counterfeits. Fraudulent imitations of the original article rather than true biblical Christianity. Well, it's been happening a long time. It happened in the early church.

It happened in those churches. Paul, we hadn't even moved beyond the first generation of believers before this was happening. And that's what Paul is dealing with here as he writes in 2nd Corinthians about these things of which we read. He is addressing and confronting really that same gullibility and that work of the enemy as it was found in the Corinthian church, as individuals had begun to infiltrate that fellowship and they were having some success in drawing away people in the church there from the gospel that Paul had preached.

And they did it a different ways, but they did it by boasting about themselves to the Corinthians while at the same time putting Paul down. They would puff themselves up and try to deflate Paul in order to get the people to listen to them. And of course while the Corinthians should have seen through, this whole thing, it seems that many of them, some of them, we don't know how many exactly, but some had actually been taken in.

Paul set out to write this letter in order to draw their hearts back. But please understand even though he is arguing for his own ministry, he is attempting to draw them back to a pure devotion to Christ. He's not trying to draw them back to himself. If he is arguing at all about himself, he is only arguing as one who

brought them the pure gospel so that they might know that he is genuine and therefore his gospel is genuine.

And apparently the Jewish legalists who had infiltrated the church there, spent a lot of time as we've said, boasting about their abilities, and trying to convince people that they were something very special.

And that's one of the reasons why Paul ended the last chapter the way that he did. Let me put this on the screen for you so you can take a look at it. From the previous chapter, he says,

2 Corinthians 10:17-18 (ESV)

"Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord." For it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends.

"Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord." For it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends.

And Paul believed that, and that's why he said that. Because these individuals were boasting about themselves. And Paul saw this boasting as an act of foolishness, and nothing less.

But that's why he begins this chapter, look with me again in verse 1 here in chapter 11. That's why he begins this chapter by saying, "I wish you would bear with me in a little foolishness." See, Paul believed that boasting was foolish. And yet, he was about to do it because he felt like he'd been driven to it.

These people were all excited about these Jewish legalists and they were believing everything that these guys said about themselves. And so Paul is like, you guys, what... And so he's like, okay, you want to talk about boasting? We'll talk about boasting.

And he's going to spend the next couple of chapters and he's going to be giving into that kind of foolishness in order to speak to these people where they are. And to address what's going on in their minds.

Now, in the following verses, Paul is going to lay out some reasons why he is addressing this matter. And the first one is in verse 2, look with me in your Bible. In verse 2, he says, "For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ." And by the way, this is the first reason that Paul is writing about this and speaking to them.

He says, "I betrothed you to one husband," to Christ. And as the one who originally and initially brought the gospel to Corinth, Paul felt a responsibility to help the people stay faithful to that simple message.

But I want you to notice here, when he speaks of this first reason of why he's writing to them, and talking to them, did you notice he uses the language of marriage? It's not necessarily language that you and I would use, but you'll notice here he says, "I betrothed you to one husband."

We don't use the word, I mean, when's the last time you, somebody came up and said, well, hey, we got betrothed. We just don't do that. Everybody would laugh at you. We say, we got engaged. And that's probably the closest similarity between our traditions and the traditions of the Jews, which is what Paul is speaking of here when he talks about betrothal. It's the same thing in the sense that it's a promise of a coming wedding. In our tradition, of course, we seal it usually with an engagement ring.

And you have to understand something about betrothal. And I think this is important so that you understand what Paul means when he says, "I betrothed you." Under Jewish marriage tradition, when a man and a woman were betrothed, during that engagement period, they would call them husband and wife. And the woman would say, I have a husband and the man would say, I have a wife.

Even though they haven't technically gotten married. They haven't even lived together. They've obviously not consummated the relationship. They are simply engaged, or again, in the Jewish idea, betrothed. But they are husband and wife. And that's pretty interesting.

Paul says, I betrothed you to Christ, but, you're not married yet. An engagement means you've made a promise to get married, but you're not married yet. Right? The wedding is still upcoming.

Do you guys understand that even though we are referred to as the bride of Christ, the wedding hasn't taken place yet? You guys know that, right? The wedding hasn't happened yet.

It's going to happen when Christ returns for His Church, and then we're going to enter into this Marriage Feast of the Lamb, the Bible calls it. Where we will consummate the relationship in a non-sexual sort of an understanding, but where we will then truly become married in that sense.

But the body of Christ, or the bride of Christ, which we are, is not yet married to the Groom. We are betrothed. Paul says to the believers, I betrothed you to one husband, and that's why he uses the word, husband. Because under betrothal terms, he was called your husband. Okay? I betrothed you to one husband, and that is Christ.

And, by the way, when, again, under Jewish tradition, when a couple finally got married, they would get married in a simple ceremony, and then they would have a week-long celebration. Isn't that... sound fun? Jesus actually attended one, we know that, very early in His ministry in Cana in Galilee. (John 2:11) But a week-long celebration, a week-long celebration. We have a reception after our weddings that lasts a few hours. They partied for a week, which probably gives you the sense that marriage was something to be celebrated. But a week? Seven days?

By the way, this is one of the reasons, and I'm not going to argue with anybody about this, but this is one of the reasons why I happen to believe that the church is going to be taken away prior to the Great Tribulation. Because while God's wrath is being poured out upon the earth for 7 years, and I believe that the 7 days of celebration in Jewish tradition of the marriage feast of the couple, is corresponding to a 7 year period of marriage feast for the body of Christ.

Again, during which time, upon the earth, the wrath of God is being poured out. But during that very same time, we are celebrating our marriage feast with the Lamb, our groom. That's just my opinion. You can take it or leave it, but it sure connects with the whole idea of Jewish tradition. And by the way, this whole idea of the marriage supper is talked about in Revelation chapter 19. Let me put this on the screen for you. It goes like this,

Revelation 19:6-9 (ESV)

Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure"— for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God."

Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters (John is writing) and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder,

crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage (look at this, for the marriage) of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure"—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God."

There's coming a time, there's coming a time when the marriage will take place between Jesus, the Lamb, the Groom, and His bride, the body of Christ. But that event has not yet happened.

And that is why Paul is using this idea of the language of marriage to describe the fact that I have betrothed you to Jesus and I have every desire to present you to Him as a pure virgin.

And what Paul is doing here, is he's using the language of a father because it was the duty of the father of the bride to watch over his daughter in such a way as to present her on her wedding day to her groom as a pure virgin, undefiled by any other man. That was the dad's responsibility. And I'm going to make sure that when you are presented on that day, you are presented as a pure virgin. And Paul is using that language, I betrothed you to one husband, and it is my passion to present you to Him undefiled.

We are engaged, we are betrothed, the wedding has not come yet. But as with any engagement or betrothal, the expectation is that both of the parties who are going to be married are going to wait for the wedding ceremony. And as they wait, and waiting is never easy, is it? Waiting is never easy. While they wait, it is expected that both parties will remain faithful to one another during that waiting period. That's the goal.

What happens when you have a couple who are engaged, and one of them begins to show special attention to someone else. Well, what you end up with is jealousy. And that's what Paul says in verse 2. Look with me again in your Bible. He says, verse 2, "I have a divine jealousy for you." What does he mean by that?

Well, when Paul uses that term, he's differentiating between human jealousy and divine jealousy. That's why he doesn't just say, I'm jealous. He says, "I have a divine jealousy" because you see, human jealousy is not a very attractive thing. In fact, it's pretty nasty, actually very painful, often ends badly. It can become all-consuming and it can devour all happiness within a relationship.

Godly jealousy, on the other hand, is a jealousy that is right and good. It desires only to safeguard whatever it is it's protecting. In this case, love, devotion. And Paul says, I have a godly jealousy because it is my passion and desire to safeguard the devotion that you had for Christ when I first shared you the gospel, but which now is beginning to be stolen by these individuals who have come into the church and who have begun to speak of themselves in such a way as to draw your attention, your pure devotion away from Christ and now to put it on them.

Look what he says in verse 3. He says, "But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ." Now you're putting it on something or someone else. Paul's thinking of another wife now. One who was beguiled and drawn away by the cunning of the enemy and he's seeing the same thing happening among the Corinthians.

Paul begins to describe their gullibility, look what he says in verse 4. "For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it (he says, you put up with it) readily enough."

And this is the verse that I was thinking about when I started off here this morning talking about all those aberrant systems of belief, counterfeits, that have risen up over the years. And I even talked about things that rose up in the 1800s alone. Good grief, there's 2,000 years of that kind of junk. I think the 1800s was just fairly unprecedented from the standpoint of how many things rose up as counterfeit religions and remain so today. And that's the reason I brought up those, because they remain so today.

Paul talks about another Jesus, a different gospel, a different spirit. Right? And by the way, the Jesus of Mormonism, the Jesus of Jehovah's Witnesses, it's a different Jesus. I'm sorry. It's not the same Jesus.

You look at the characteristics, you look at the nature of Christ within the context of biblical Christianity alongside those other aberrant belief systems, you find out it's different, it's not the same. And some people would say, well who cares? Well, I care Because you end up with a different Jesus you end up with a different salvation, you end up with a different gospel. You end up with a different truth and there cannot be competing truths. I don't care what you're told. There's no such thing as competing truths. There can only be one truth.

Now, as far as Seventh day Adventism goes, I think that's described in the second part of verse 4, where Paul says, "or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough."

As I've learned about it, the Jesus of Seventh day Adventism is pretty much the same as the biblical picture of Jesus, but the gospel is very different. It involves a lot of keeping of laws, rules, and of course, obviously, Sabbath keeping, which is factored right into the name.

Which tells you right then and there that this group has adopted things from the Mosaic Law and placed them upon the shoulders of believers and said, you must do this. Which adds to grace, which takes grace and adds to it, and that's always a problem.

And Paul says that whether it was a different Jesus, whether it was a different gospel, the Corinthians just accepted it. And the reason was, is because these Jewish legalists were like expert boasters. And they convinced the people that they were special, that they'd received something special, that they knew something special, and that always seems to attract people. Whether it's Joseph Smith, or Russell, or Ellen White, or whoever else comes along, they basically tell people, I have a special something. And see, it's not in the Bible, and these other people don't know about it. I know it, and I'll share it with you, if you come and listen to me.

Or you can just be over there, where those people are wrong, right? Boy, there's something that appeals to the pride of man. When somebody comes along and seems to have authority and they say, all those other idiots over there, they're wrong, and God has shown me they're wrong. But I have been given the truth. Come with me.

And the gullibility factor of human beings being what it is, we just go, okay. And we just blindly walk along and yeah, that sounds good to me. Oh, and doesn't it just stroke our pride to think, huh, we have the truth. They don't, they think it's in the Bible. No, it's way deeper than that, and I have it.

And whether it's golden tablets that you need special glasses to look at, or a vision from heaven, an angel, I don't care what you call him, or whatever. It just all appeals to people's pride.

Look what Paul says in verse 5. In the light of these people being such expert boasters Paul says, "Indeed, I consider that I am not in the least inferior to these super-apostles." And that's of course tongue in cheek. He says, "Even if I

am unskilled in speaking, I am not so in knowledge; (he says,) indeed, in every way we have made this plain to you in all things." And he's gently reminding them of his time with them. And he says, did you hear God's wisdom and knowledge when I came?

You see, Paul had spent quite a bit of time there in Corinth and he had patiently taught the church about Jesus. And he had written to them also in his letters about some fairly challenging theological issues, and he explained the mysteries of God. And he showed them that he had knowledge from God, clearly demonstrated, if they only cared to remember.

And I love what he says in verse 7, "Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached God's gospel to you free of charge?" In other words, have you guys lost respect for me because I didn't charge you for what I did?

In fact, he says, "I robbed other churches..." That doesn't mean he actually physically robbed them. He's saying essentially I took support that those churches offered and I used it when I was there with you.

And look what he says in verse 9. This is really interesting. He says, "And when I was with you and was in need, I did not burden anyone,..." You know what that means? Means he means when I was there and I was ministering to you guys, and I didn't have any money for food, I didn't tell you. When I didn't have any money for new clothes and the ones I had were wearing out, I didn't tell you.

I didn't get up to you and in front of you and say, boy if you guys would just take a little love offering, I'm sure take the heat off here things a little bit. He said, I never breathed the word to you guys of my financial needs. Never once. In fact, I just waited patiently until the brothers from Macedonia got there and they refreshed me with an offering from the Macedonian churches. I used what they gave, when technically you guys should have been supporting me, but I never asked for that support. He says, did I wrong you by doing that?

One of the reasons that Paul never did that is because he never wanted the people in Corinth to question his sincerity for why he brought them the gospel. Because even during these early stages of the Christian faith people were already going around thinking that godliness was a means to financial gain.

And so now this is his boast. He says in verse 10, "As the truth of Christ is in me, this boasting of mine will not be silenced in the regions of Achaia. ¹¹ And

why? Because I do not love you? (he says) God knows I do! ¹² And what I am doing I will continue to do, ... "That means I'm not going to take any support even now that I've told you about it you offer me money, I'm not going to take it You know why? Because, I'm going to, at every turn, "undermine the claim of those who would like to claim that" their mission is just like ours.

Because you know what? Paul knew those guys wouldn't have left home if they would have thought for a moment, they were doing it on their own dime. Paul did. He was willing to do it because he knew God was going to take care of him.

But he knew that they wouldn't, and so he challenged the Corinthians to look into this thing and see and understand that what these guys are really doing is they're just trying to line their pockets with what you have to give them.

And then I want you to notice how Paul takes the kid gloves off here beginning in verse 13 and talks about what these guys really are. Look at this. "For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ."

He says, "¹⁴ And no wonder, … even Satan (does the same thing, he) disguises himself as an angel of light. ¹⁵ So (he says, you know what?) it is no surprise (to me) if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness."

And you know what really stands out about this description of these men is that, how they emulate the one they serve. And how Paul emulated the one he served.

Paul literally describes here in verse 15, these men as, servants of Satan. He's calling them servants of Satan. And he's basically saying, they do as their master does. They "disguise themselves as servants of righteousness."

Sometimes I think that we Christians get the idea somewhere I don't know where we got it, that if we were to come upon Satan, we'd recognize him instantly. I don't think so. I think you and I came across Satan, I think we'd be in awe. Actually, I think he's probably visually be very beautiful. I mean how else can he disguise himself as an angel of light?

He masquerades and that means that he can even be the driving force behind someone who claims to be a minister of the gospel, who claims to be an evangelist, who claims to be a teacher. He can be behind those kinds of people. They use words right out of the Bible and yet their Jesus is not the Jesus of the Bible. The gospel is not the gospel of the Bible. It's another gospel. It's another Jesus.

This was happening so, this was so prevalent this attempt of people to come into the church and infiltrate it and change the essence of the gospel that Paul even wrote similar things when he wrote to the churches in the region of Galatia. Let me share this with you on the screen. He says this,

Galatians 1:6-9 (ESV)

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

I am astonished (he said) that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. (look what he says here) But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed. (even if it's an angel from heaven)

Those are powerful words. Seems for you and I almost prophetic, when you point to the 1800s and you have claims of angels from heaven, revealing a different gospel, a new gospel. Because all these other people are wrong, and the writings of the Bible, well, they've been tampered with. You can't trust them. Now we've got new books, new revelations, new understanding. It's been going on for a long time, you guys. We just happen to have different flavors of that same deception going on in our day.

And that's one of the reasons, guys, we're going to stick to the Word of God. We're going to keep teaching through the scripture, chapter by chapter, verse by verse, until Jesus comes to get us. And we're going to do everything we can to hold fast, because that is what we're called to do, to hold fast.

Hold fast to biblical Christianity, the biblical idea, who is Jesus? What is the Gospel? What is true? God has, to use an anthropomorphism, He's bent over backwards to keep the scriptures for you and I, to keep them, to maintain them.

It's crazy. It's crazy. If you've ever done any studies in things like manuscript evidence, textual criticism, things like that, which I've touched on.

Just as an example, the New Testament, when you have manuscript evidence for something that's a document of antiquity or an ancient document, you say that it is attested by these manuscripts. The New Testament of the Bible is more thoroughly and powerfully attested by manuscript evidence than any other document of antiquity. I mean the next closest document of antiquity is laughably behind the New Testament in terms of manuscript evidence.

That's why I say God has bent over backwards to make sure that what we have in our Bible is what was written originally. And even though this Bible is attacked viciously, over and over again by individuals who want nothing more than to come into where you and I are and break us up, we're going to hold fast. We're going to hold fast to the Word of God.

I had a guy, I alluded to this on Wednesday night in our study through Deuteronomy. But I've had a guy the last week and a half who's just been peppering me with emails. I have no idea where he lives, where he's from. He has challenged everything I've ever believed about the Bible. Well, he's been sending me challenging emails.

And I finally wrote to him and I said, what is your goal? He says that you would leave Christianity and leave the Bible behind. I mean, he just came straight out and I mean, I don't necessarily think that's weird from the standpoint of there's people like that. But as we continue to correspond, he finally gave me his motivation.

He said to me, I hate Christianity from the bottom of my heart. And I wrote him back and I said, sir, you have now tipped your hand. It is not of a desire for truth. It is not a desire that you have in your heart to make me a better person or to make other people better. Your motivation is one thing, and one thing only, and that is hatred. And that's sad.

Because you see, when people hate, when they're filled with that darkness, they will gather around themselves any number of people who will simply tell them what they want to hear. And believe me, there are plenty of people out there, and especially with the propagation of information on the internet today, good grief.

You want to go out to disprove Christianity? Just get out Google, and Google whatever question you have and you will find a plethora of people just like the

ones who infiltrated the Corinthian church and just like the people who infiltrated the churches in Galatia, who will come to distort the gospel and bring you another Jesus. They're plentiful. Believe me.

But you scratch that deep enough and you'll find out there is not a motivation there for truth. There is not a desire there for illumination. There is a hatred for God. That is what you will find in back of it all.

The real motives will eventually be exposed. It is what it is. Be on your guard. Because there are people who want to do the same thing that we see Paul was battling with right here in 2 Corinthians.

We're going to stop there.