

# Counterfeit Doctrines

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A local business owner told me he received a bogus \$20 bill from a customer and did not realize it. It was discovered by a bank teller when he was making his daily deposit. When the bank showed him the fake bill next to a real one, he could not believe how little difference there was between the two. The color, shape, detail, and even fiber looked identical. The only difference was in texture, which the teller noticed right away because of her experience in handling real money.

If we are wise, we will realize there are many false doctrines in circulation today. Like ignorant store owners, we assume that everything handed to us is real and authentic without testing it. The Sadducees did this in dismissing a belief in life after death (Matthew 22:23-28). They thought they were in alignment with God's will by upholding that doctrine. Jesus told them, "You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God" (verse 29). They may have been sincere and zealous, but they were "mistaken" for accepting a doctrine not found in the word of God. They were like all others who blindly follow manmade doctrines—

*"they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God" (Romans 10:2-3).*

Unless we are looking for counterfeit doctrines, we may accept things not taught in the word of God and still feel right. Many are now convincing themselves that God approves of any religion, any form of sexuality, and any religious holiday as long as a person is sincere. Yet God warns: "evil men and imposters will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived" (2 Timothy 3:13). There is no point in issuing that alarm if false doctrine and self-deception do not exist, or if any belief is okay. Why warn us of that which is not a threat? Obviously, the Sadducees were not the only ones who were mistaken. I imagine that most people would be surprised to learn the Scriptures do not support many of the long-held doctrines in circulation today: infant baptism, denominationalism, the Rapture, the earthly reign of Christ, Christmas, Easter, church-sponsored entertainment, and so on. Where are these doctrines taught in the Bible? What does the word of God say about these? And if the Bible does not teach them, who put them in circulation? Jesus warned:

*"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" (Matthew 7:21-23).*

That should be all the warning we need to carefully examine all that we do in religion.

Elsewhere, John said, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). Paul added, “Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil” (1 Thessalonians 5:21-22).

If these verses were telling us to watch out for fake money, would we take these instructions more seriously? Yet Jesus and His apostles are telling us to carefully examine every doctrine and belief before we consent to it. Apparently, there is a lot to lose (much more than money) in accepting counterfeit doctrines.