

SPEAKING CHRISTIAN

Understanding traditional religious language and new ways to state our faith.

Choosing words wisely helps us handle religious questions and controversies, while speaking with an open and caring Christian perspective.

Matt Jones,
Facilitator

SPEAKING CHRISTIAN: MARCUS BORG'S VIEW

*“For many, Christianity has become an unfamiliar language ... the faith itself is often misunderstood and distorted. **They think they are speaking the language like it has always been understood**, but what they mean by the words and concepts is very different than what these things meant originally.”*

--M.Borg

SPEAKING CHRISTIAN: OUR DISCUSSIONS

Week 1: What we say and what we mean –
Checking our assumptions about Bible basics.

Week 2: Words and the Word of God –
Understanding the vocabulary of religion.

Week 3: How language shapes our faith –
Knowing how others hear what we're saying.

Week 4: Reclaiming our message –
Rescuing Christian meaning from culture.

WEEK 1: WHAT WE SAY AND WHAT WE MEAN

Checking our assumptions about Bible basics.

WEEK 1: WHAT WE SAY AND WHAT WE MEAN

- ✘ Literal and Figurative.
- ✘ Commonly confused terms.
- ✘ Translating Bible words for today.
- ✘ Christian clichés?
- ✘ Symbolic language that's been lost.



LITERAL & FIGURATIVE

- ✘ Jesus of history and Christ of faith.
- ✘ Creeds and Experience.
- ✘ Doctrine and Belief.
- ✘ Telling and Retelling.
- ✘ One word and many meanings.



But when the Holy Spirit came,
we were not just a group of
the Spirit, over the church of
That's what you should do
for the...

The church is the body of Christ,
a group of people who are
all in it together. It's not
just a building.

COMMONLY CONFUSED CONCEPTS

- ✘ Son of God and Son of Man.
- ✘ Born Again and Salvation.
- ✘ Rapture and Resurrection.
- ✘ Trinity and One God.
- ✘ Scripture and Canon.



“TRANSLATING” BIBLE WORDS FOR TODAY

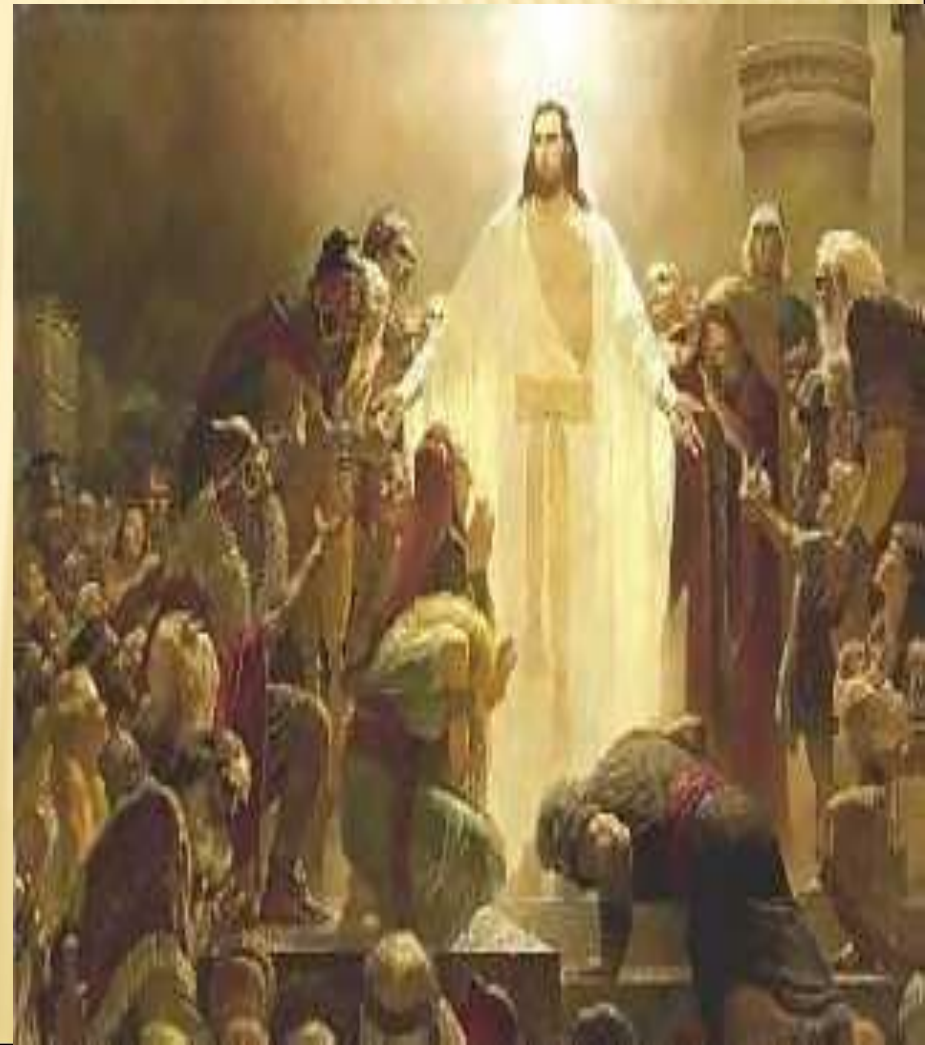
- ✘ Kingdom = Government?
- ✘ Pharisee = Politician?
- ✘ Prophet = Celebrity?
- ✘ Magi = Scientist?
- ✘ Disciple = Fan?



CHRISTIAN “CLICHES”?

- ✘ “God helps those who help themselves.”
- ✘ “God works in mysterious ways.”
- ✘ “God closes one door and opens another.”
- ✘ “What would Jesus do?”
- ✘ “Bad things happen to good people.”

(None of these sayings is in the Bible.)



SYMBOLIC LANGUAGE THAT'S BEEN LOST

- ✘ Shepherds and sheep
- ✘ Fields and harvests
- ✘ Wilderness and trails
- ✘ Fishing and feeding
- ✘ Heavens and signs



NEXT WEEK ...

Week 2: Words and the Word of God –

Understanding the vocabulary of religion.



WEEK 2: WORDS AND THE WORD OF GOD

Understanding the vocabulary of religion.

WORDS AND THE WORD OF GOD

- ✘ “Keywords” of the Bible.
- ✘ Antiquated terms.
- ✘ Religious symbolism.
- ✘ Myths and facts.
- ✘ Sources of our assumptions.



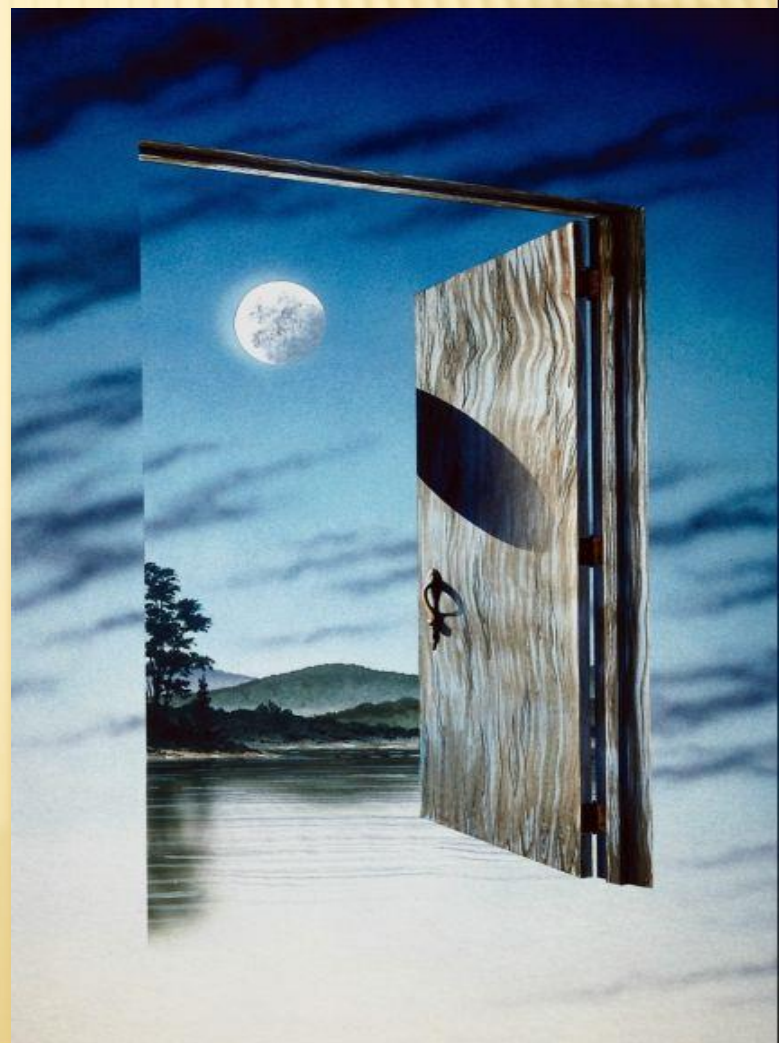
“KEYWORDS” OF THE BIBLE

- × **God and Jesus:** unique or interchangeable terms?
- × **Sin and Salvation:** old concept = “wrong”; new thinking = “separation.”
- × **Forgiveness and Faith:** repentance and redemption = transformation.
- × **Virgin birth and Born again:** Hebrew “virgin” = young maid; Jesus says: “born from above.”
- × **Atonement and Resurrection:** Jesus as our replacement for sin; “raised” in the body or the spirit?



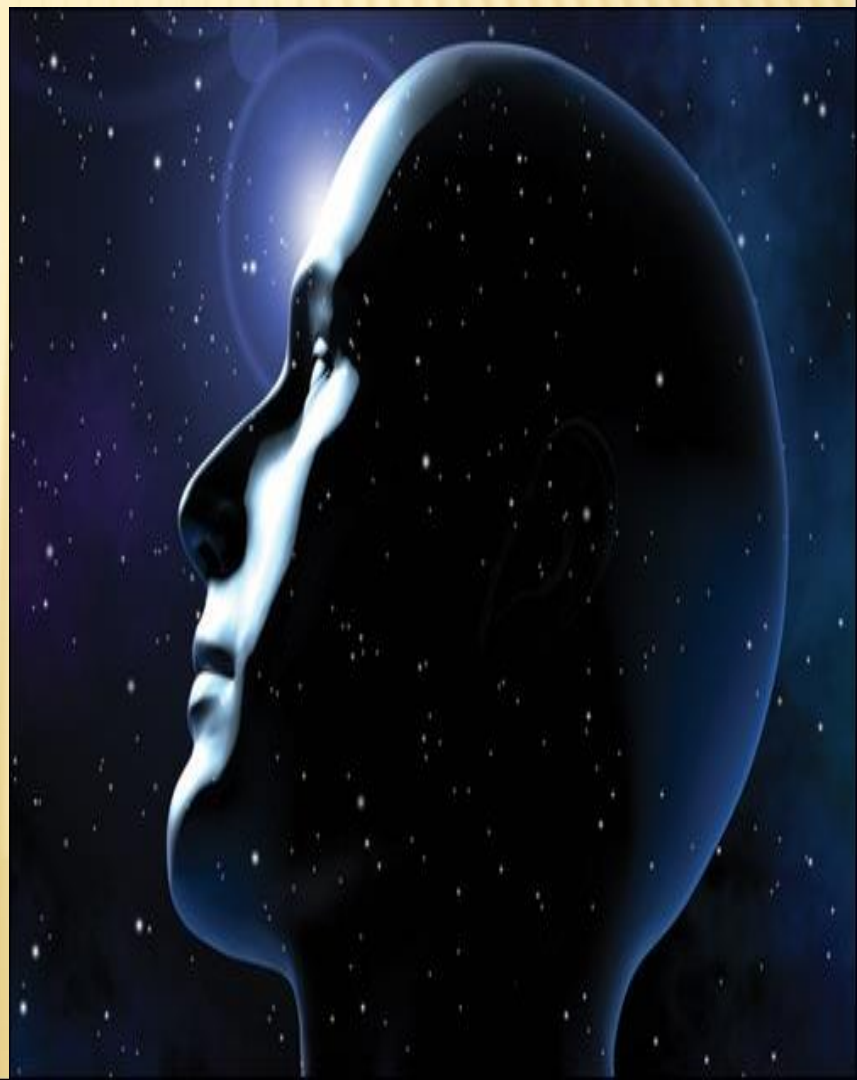
ANTIQUATED TERMS?

- ✘ **God's Kingdom:** "Kingdoms" today = country, corporation, college, etc.?
- ✘ **Prophet, Messiah:** Charismatic leaders today Ghandi, M.L. King, Mandela, etc.?
- ✘ **"God the Father"** And Mother? And Brother?
- ✘ **Sacrificial lamb:** Today's "sacrifices" = taxes, military, voting, etc.?
- ✘ **Heaven and Hell:** Metaphysical states or metaphors of spiritual conditions?



RELIGIOUS SYMBOLISM

- ✘ **Numerology:** 40 years/days, 12 tribes/disciples, 3-in-One, 7 days of creation/forgive 7 x 70, etc.
- ✘ **The Temptation:** What would tempt Jesus today?
- ✘ **“Midrash” interpretation:** Retelling of old into new covenant.
- ✘ **The Trinity:** God/Sophia/Son.
- ✘ **Revelation:** Modern “signs” in global warming, financial meltdown, epidemics, etc.



MYTHS AND FACTS

- ✘ **Evangelism vs reporting:** Gospels written “so that you may believe.”
- ✘ **Parable vs. literal:** Moral of the story vs. factual account.
- ✘ **Theology vs history:** Jesus of faith vs Jesus of narrative.
- ✘ **Believing vs seeing:** Faith by testimony vs faith by experience.
- ✘ **Spiritual vs science:** Intuition vs investigation.



SOURCES OF OUR ASSUMPTIONS

- ✘ **The canonical gospels vs “lost” scripture:** Who decides what’s holy scripture?
- ✘ **Paul’s teachings:** “God’s salesman.”
- ✘ **First liturgies:** Based on eye witness accounts of Jesus.
- ✘ **Early doctrine:** Writing the creeds to define faith.
- ✘ **Church tradition:** Interpreting Jesus life over time.



NEXT WEEK ...

Week 3: How language shapes our faith –

Knowing how others hear what we're saying.



WEEK 3: HOW LANGUAGE SHAPES OUR FAITH

Knowing how others hear what we're saying.

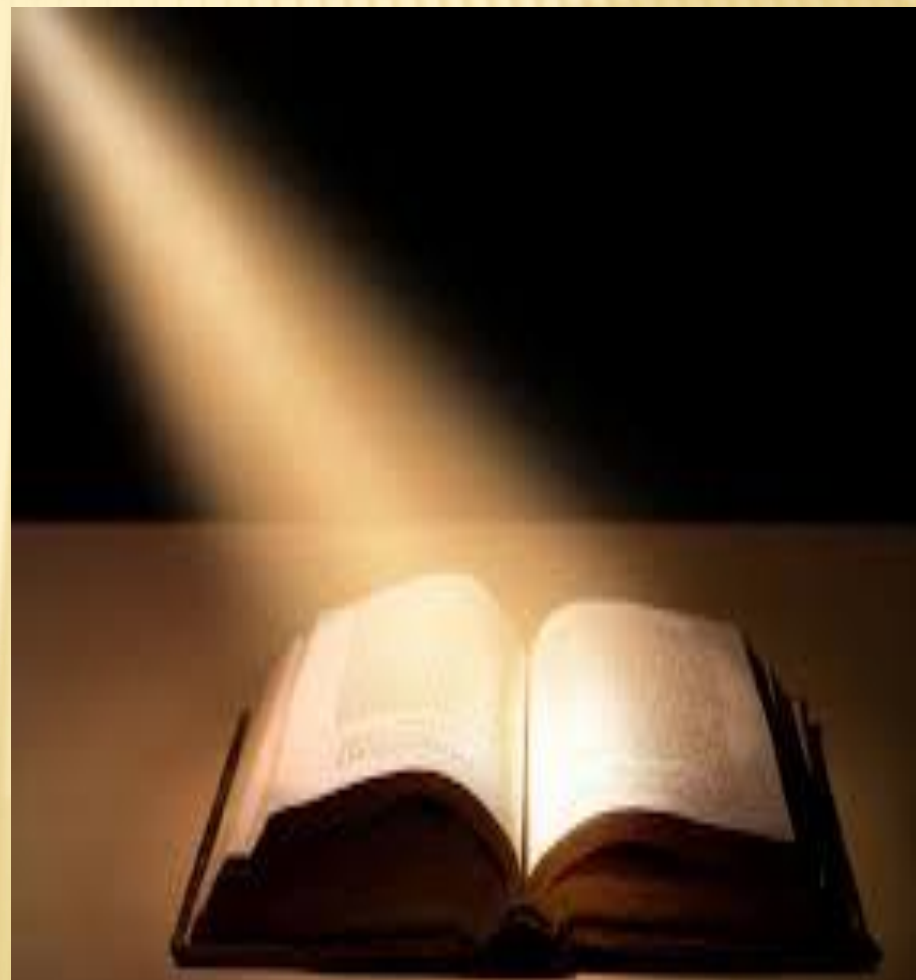
HOW LANGUAGE SHAPES FAITH

- ✘ Bible-speak.
- ✘ Christian jargon.
- ✘ Televangelist pitches.
- ✘ Sermon sayings.
- ✘ Prayer language.



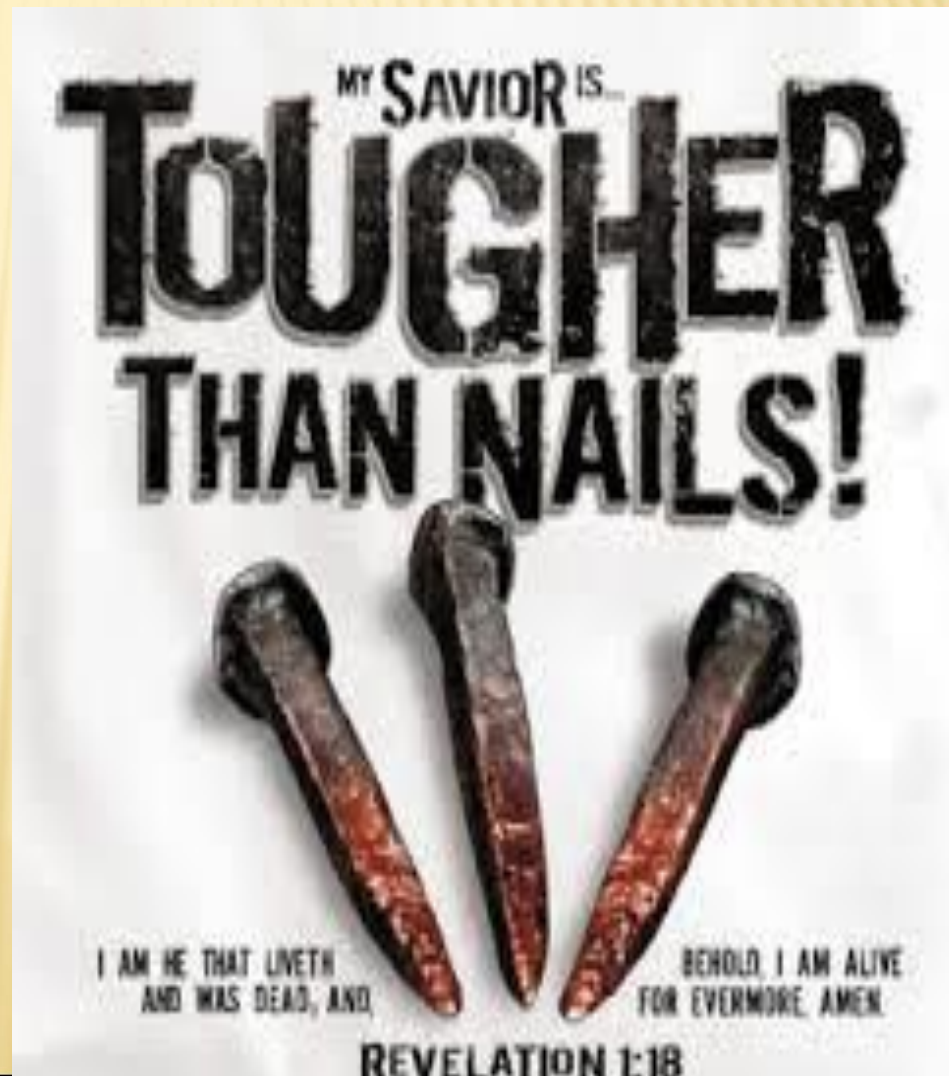
BIBLE-SPEAK

- ✘ **Which translation?** Aramaic, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, English, other?
- ✘ **Who wrote gospels?** “Schools” of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John.
- ✘ **Edited scripture:** “Midrash” re-telling.
- ✘ **Heresy & scripture:** Church rejected “popular” tales
- ✘ **Experience & scripture:** Feeling vs dogma.



CHRISTIAN JARGON

- ✘ **By-the-book literalism:** Do Bible stories hold up to modern science?
- ✘ **Marketing Jesus:** Talking points about Jesus.
- ✘ **Christian clichés:** Phrases that generalize Christian truth.
- ✘ **Bumper-sticker theology:** Promoting Jesus with slogans.



TELEVANGELIST PITCHES

- ✘ **Christianity in 25 words or less:** Captivating catch-phrases.
- ✘ **What to say to be saved:** Conversion closers.
- ✘ **Impulse responses:** Reaction over reflection.
- ✘ **“Hidden” language:** Speaking in tongues.



SERMON SAYINGS

- ✘ **Priestly language:** What can/can't be said?
- ✘ **Trusting the messenger:** Preaching and personal connection.
- ✘ **Surprise meanings:** Spontaneous insights.
- ✘ **Sermon as dialogue:** God in conversation.
- ✘ **Pondering ideas:** Seeds are planted.



PRAYER LANGUAGE

- ✘ **Finding the words:** Using creeds.
- ✘ **The power of shared thoughts:** Communal prayer.
- ✘ **Internal dialogue with God:** Unspoken prayer.
- ✘ **Without words:** Feeling prayer.
- ✘ **Interpreting events:** Answered prayers.



NEXT WEEK ...

**Week 4: Reclaiming
our message –**
Rescuing Christian
meaning from popular
culture.



WEEK 4: RECLAIMING OUR MESSAGE

Rescuing Christian meaning from culture.

RECLAIMING OUR MESSAGE

- ✘ The Jesus of culture.
- ✘ End times messages.
- ✘ God is “dead?”
- ✘ God, tech, and the future.



THE JESUS OF CULTURE

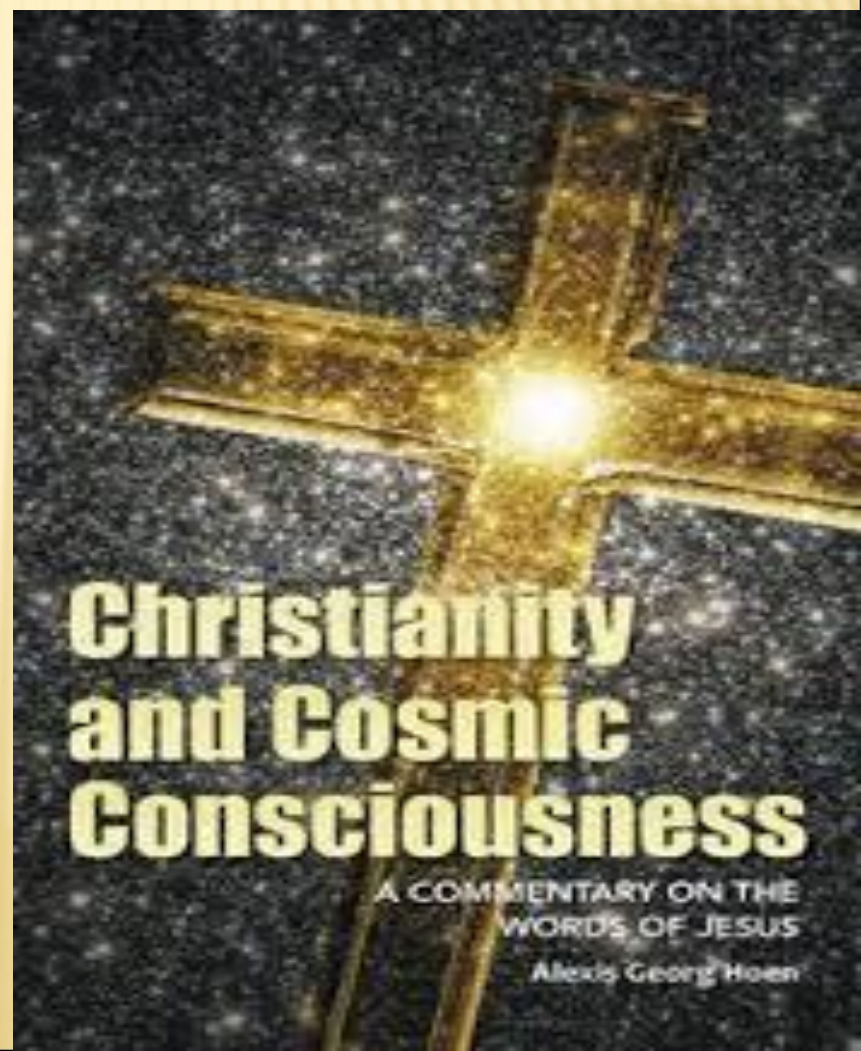
- ✘ **Jesus in the movies:**
Biography or caricature?
- ✘ **The Church in the world:** The politics of religion.
- ✘ **Embracing all:** inclusive language.
- ✘ **Remaking Christ for today:**
New Age Jesus?
- ✘ **Expression without works:**
Spiritual chic.

UNIVERSAL
RELIGION



END TIMES MESSAGES

- ✘ **Signs:** Many perspectives, many interpretations.
- ✘ **Setting the date:** But no one knows the hour?
- ✘ **Shunning the creation?** God loves the world and all things in it.
- ✘ **The Rapture:** Pre-selected survivors?
- ✘ **God “ends” the world:** Or does God transform the world?



GOD IS “DEAD?”

- ✘ **Science and religion:** Room for both to be “right”?
- ✘ **Is the Bible outdated?** Has humanity outgrown religion?
- ✘ **Culture as God:** Human progress replaces need of God.
- ✘ **Competing religions:** No one is true?
- ✘ **Redefining God:** Need a “bigger” God?



GOD, TECH, AND THE FUTURE

- ✘ **Clones, robots, androids:**
What is "human"?
- ✘ **Artificial intelligence:** God in the machine?
- ✘ **Does God talk through technology?** Biblical "code"?
- ✘ **Indefinite return of Christ:**
Can Christianity last another 2,000 years?

