



HAVE YOU BEEN TAKEN CAPTIVE?

Colossians 2:8

Introduction

- Because believers have died and been raised with Christ, believers don't have to submit themselves to the rules and religious commands of the world.
- Paul encourages the Colossians not to listen to the false teachers of their day.
- Look to Christ and find rest in His work on the Cross, not in empty manmade religious practices.

Legalism

- Colossians 2:16-17
- Paul wants to remind the Colossians what they gained through Christ: new life and spiritual freedom. Christ has done the work of complete salvation.
- Christ is centerpiece of the Gospel, not tireless work to make yourself look better and feel better.

Legalism

- These false teachers wanted the Colossians to believe that abstaining from certain foods and drink was necessary for spiritual maturity, as well as observing certain festivals and rituals.
- The practice of observing ritual holidays and staying away from food and drink has parallels to Judaism.

Legalism

- But perfection under the law was what Christ came to accomplish for the very men and women who are unable to keep such records. Christ is the Christian's hope.
- Spiritual maturity means deepening one's dependence on Christ and trusting in Christ's sacrifice; not finding one's salvation in one's own works added to Christ's work.

Legalism

- It doesn't make sense to trust Christ for new life this world can't offer while also feeling the need to supplement that life with worldly religious practices.
- If Christ was already victorious, why are Christians still working so hard to win what has been accomplished?

Legalism

- In verse 17, Paul says these practices are mere shadows of what is to come, but the substance, the true reality, is Christ.
- These false teachers sought religious experiences, spiritual visions, by swearing off certain physical pleasures.

Legalism

- They thought the more they rid themselves of their desires and things of this world, they would experience a deeper spiritual encounter with the Divine.
- No worldly practice can bring you closer to God and into deeper intimacy with Him.

Disqualify

- Colossians 2:18-19
- Just as Paul warned against being taken captive, he now parallels his warning with the admonition, “Let no one disqualify you.”
- The false teachers were not just criticizing the Colossians’ beliefs, but also convincing them of God’s judgment on their lack of self-denial.

Disqualify

- Paul says they are too concerned with the present world rather than the coming kingdom.
- Paul encourages the Colossians that what Christ has qualified and secured cannot be undone.
- These teachers put too much weight on severe self-discipline and abstention from physical pleasures.

Disqualify

- By denying their desires, they sought spiritual visions, so much so that they worshipped angels.
- The false teachers practiced angel worship, looking to angels for physical protection.
- Angels do not provide the believer with anything that Christ doesn't already freely give.

Disqualify

- These visions produced spiritual arrogance. But these visions were in vain.
- The phrase “puffed up” “translates a verb that occurs in 1 Corinthians. Its basic meaning, “blow up, inflate,” suits beautifully to express the idea of “arrogance.”
- Paul directs their attention back to Christ, who is supreme above all.

Disqualify

- Just as the body doesn't work together when it's disconnected from the head, so, too, the Christian doesn't function rightly when he or she is disconnected from Christ.
- Paul wanted the Colossians to remember Christ's supremacy, but also His sufficiency. Spiritual growth and strength come from God alone.

Self-Made Religion

- Colossians 2:20-3:4
- Paul begins with a question. If you have, in fact, died with Christ, why are you still attached to this world? If Christ has brought you freedom, why are you still living in bondage?
- Believers have been crucified with Christ and they no longer live, but Christ lives in them.

Self-Made Religion

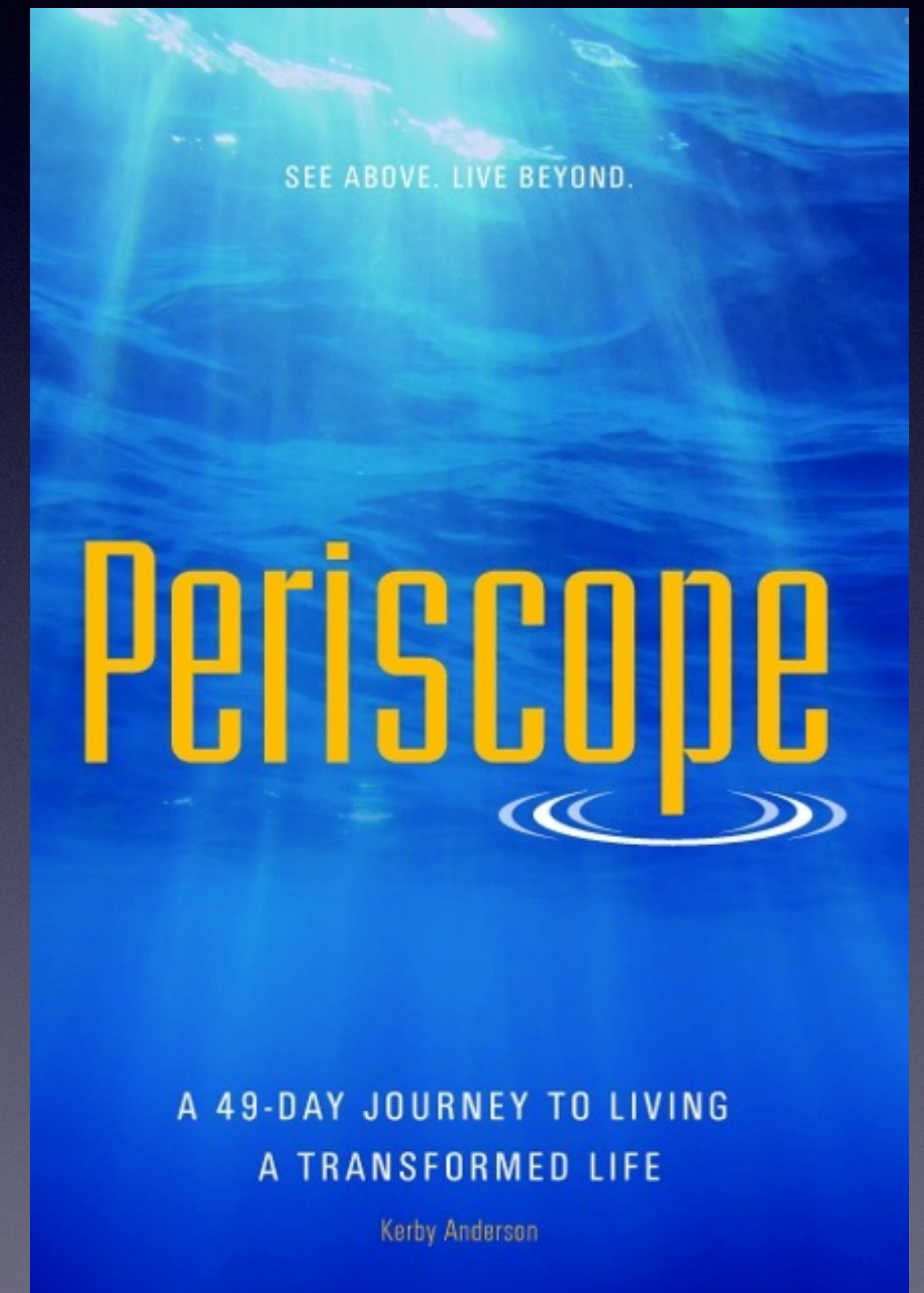
- God's power, not our own works, is what we need to conquer sin in our lives.
- There is too much weight put on issues that do nothing for actual spiritual freedom and growth.
- These restrictions and regulations don't produce holiness. They don't produce Christlikeness.

Self-Made Religion

- Not one of these stipulations does anything in stopping sin.
- Without inward transformation, performing outward spiritual acts is simply a religious facade.
- That's Paul's reminder in 3:1–4.
- Remember your life in Christ.

Major Worldview Errors

- Legalism (Col. 2:16-17) - Chapter 17
- Mysticism (Col. 2:18-20) - Chapter 18
- Asceticism (Col. 2:21-23) - Chapter 19



Legalism

- This is the worldview of cults and even within Christianity.
- When we give people an ever expanding “to-do list” that is uncoupled from God’s power, we wear people down and ultimately drive people away from the gospel.
- Paul warned Timothy that in the last days there would be people “having a form of godliness but denying its power” (2 Timothy 3:5).

Legalism

- Not only does it drive people from the gospel, but it is the reason for so many church splits.
- It encourages people to pick and choose what they do.
- In our 2020 survey, we found that less than half (45%) of born-again Christians used biblical principles in making moral decisions about their life.

Islam

- Every Muslim must follow the Five Pillars of Islam.
- In addition, there are at least 60 important rules from the Qur'an and Hadith that every Muslim must follow.
- Islam (like so many other religions) is a works-oriented religion that is full of legalistic rules that must be performed in order to merit salvation.

Mysticism

- Paul was writing to a church that was a mixture of Jews and Gentiles.
- Many were young Christians and may have brought their pagan ideas into the church.
- These Christians also lived in a culture where many claimed they were receiving visions from the gods.

Mysticism

- Throughout church history, certain churches and denominations have brought mystical rituals and practices into their worship experience.
- They may take the form of chants, icons, or prescribed practices not found in Scripture.
- These practices are found today not only in American churches but in churches in other parts of the world.

New Age Movement

- In *The Secret*, Rhonda Byrne teaches “the Law of Attraction.” She believes that thoughts become things.
- Eckhardt Tolle, author of *A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life’s Purpose*, teaches a version of Eastern mysticism.
- Marianne Williamson, author of *A Course in Miracles*, offers a year-long course of study on this book that was channeled from a demon.

Asceticism

- Asceticism is the belief that we need to live a life of extreme self-denial or self-abasement in order to release our soul from bondage in our body.
- This philosophy was found among the Jews (the Essenes) and among the Greeks (Stoics) at the time when Paul was writing to the Colossians.
- This idea is the foundation of Hinduism and Buddhism.

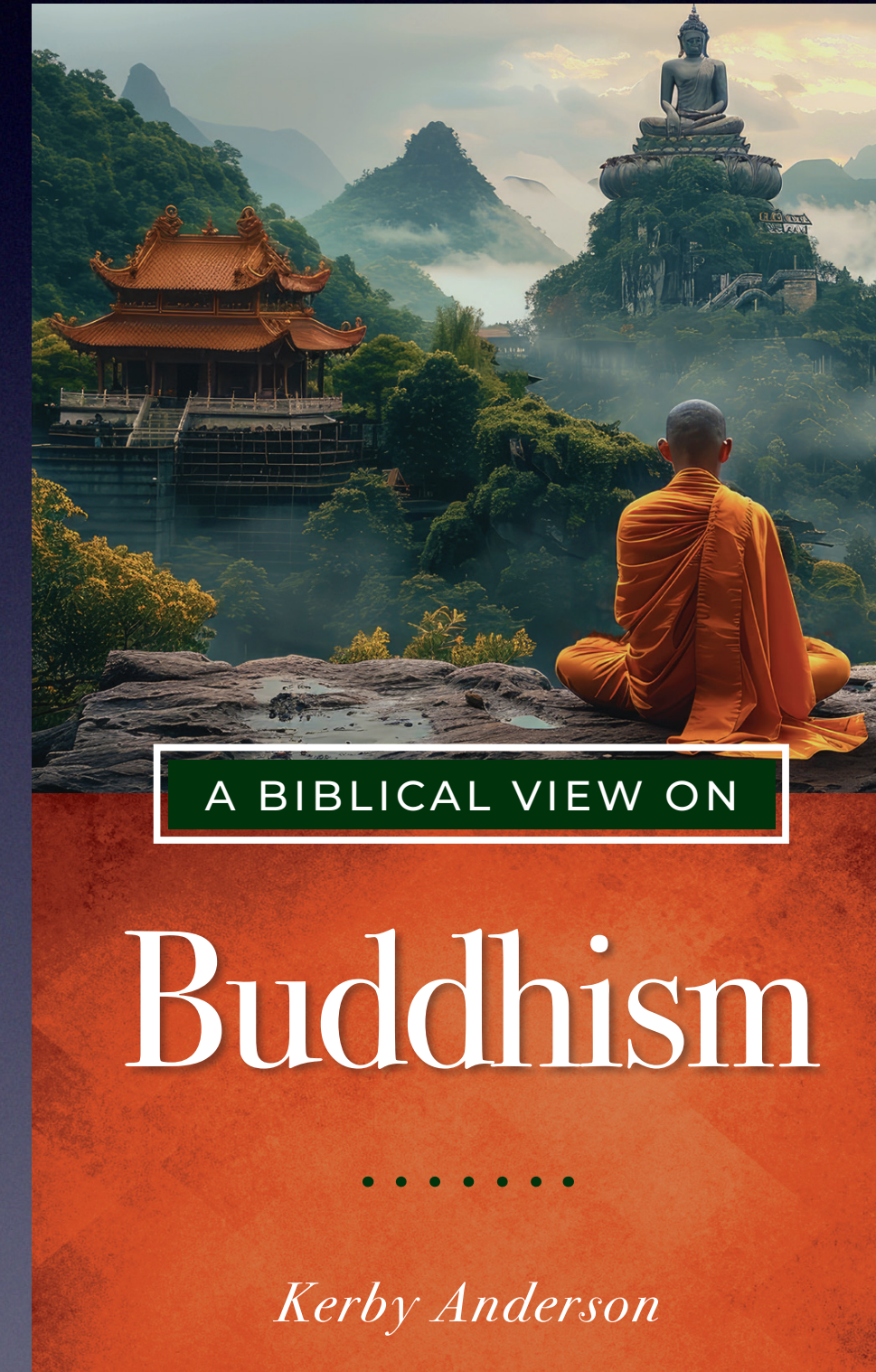
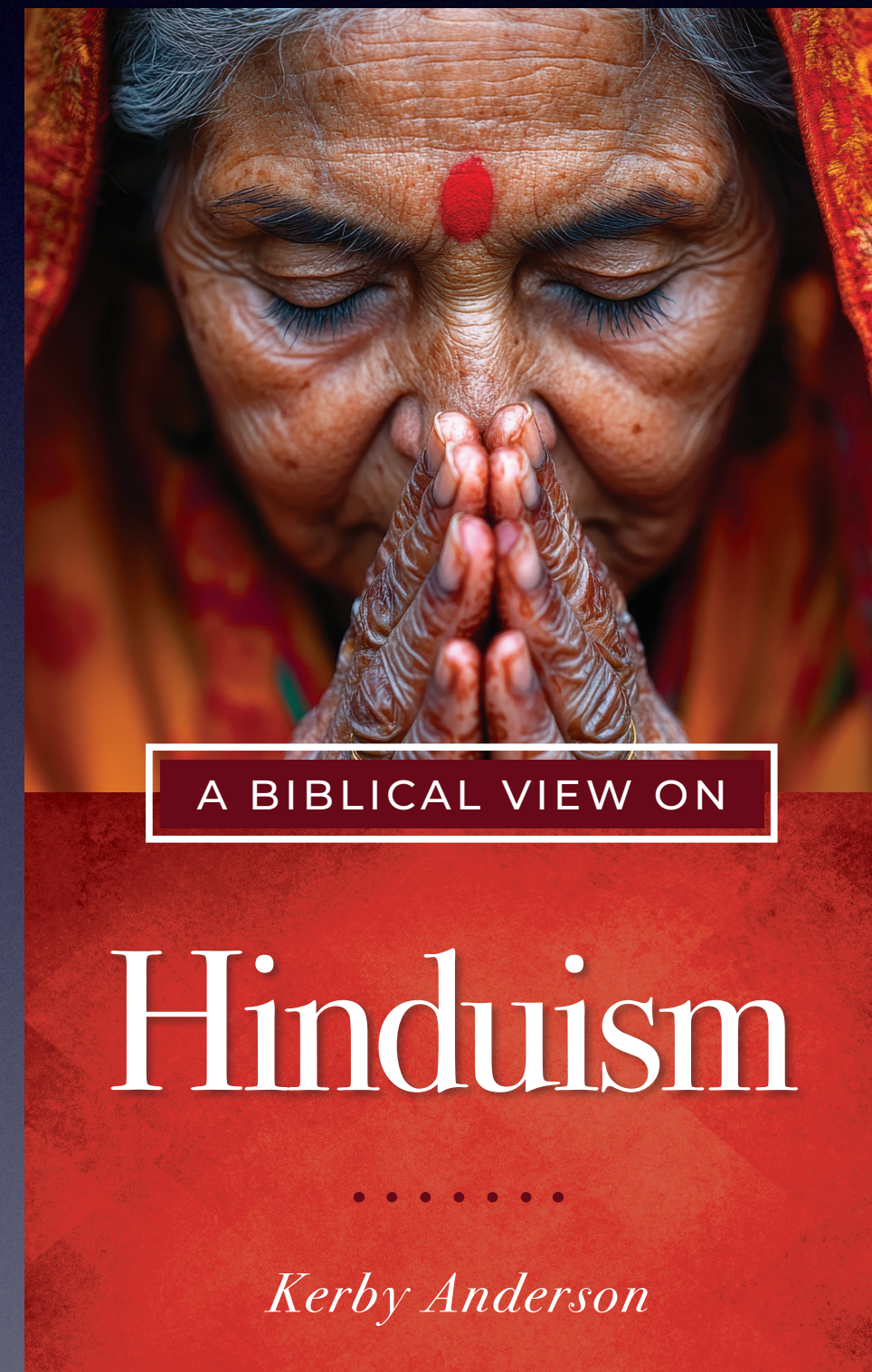
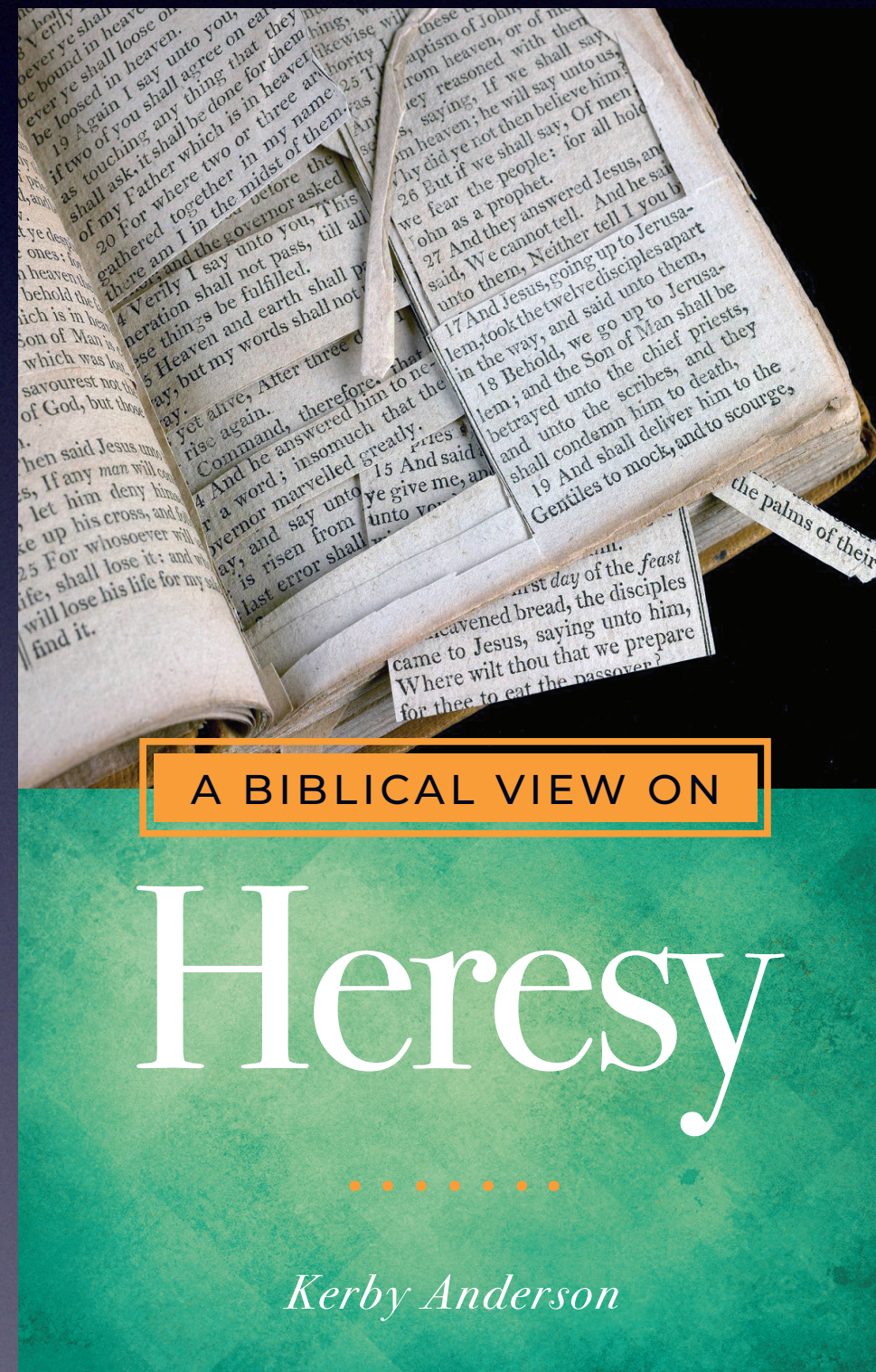
Asceticism

- Some of the false teachers of that day promoted the idea that since human beings are material, they cannot approach God because He is spirit.
- They saw angels as these intermediaries. That explains why many of them worshipped angels.
- We are not to worship angels. We are only to worship God (Exodus 20:3-6; Deuteronomy 6:13-14).

Asceticism

- Paul says if “an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed” (Galatians 1:8).
- Notice how many religions (Islam, Mormonism) and false teachings (*Course in Miracles*, *Life after Life*) started because of contact with angels or other spiritual beings (demons).

Resources



Resources

