

Arguing With Jesus – No. 2

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As strange as it seems, some who profess belief in Jesus Christ “argue” with Him by their doctrines. Their doctrines also contradict the Lord’s apostles and other inspired men (which equals arguing with Jesus, since He supplied their words). Further, those whose doctrines disagree with Jesus and the inspired writers also place Him and them at variance with one another – and even with themselves.

Biblical inspiration implies that its writers speak from One Source and that their words do not (yea, cannot) contradict one another. Thus any interpretation of Scripture that creates a clash with other passages cannot be correct. Correct interpretation and application always produce harmony – never conflict – between Biblical statements.

Let us now apply the foregoing principles to a prevalent Protestant doctrine. John Calvin, the 16th century Reformer, included in his five-point doctrinal formula the doctrine of “perseverance of the saints” (variously called “eternal security,” “unconditional security,” “the impossibility of apostasy,” and “once saved, always saved”). As these terms imply, the doctrine avers that one who is truly saved can never apostatize so as to be lost. Consider some passages to which perseverance adherents turn: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life” (John 5:24). Rather than an unconditional promise that one who is saved cannot be lost, this promise applies to those who keep on hearing and believing (the force of the Greek verbs). Far from being a “blank check” for misbehavior, Jesus clearly makes avoiding condemnation conditional. “... And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out...that all of that which he hath given me I should lose nothing” (John 6:37b; 39b). In verse 37 the Lord merely says that any who are lost will not be lost because He rejected them. In verse 39 Jesus states the Father’s ideal will – that none should be lost (2 Pet. 3:9). However, His permissive will allows disciples to turn back – and be lost (2 Pet. 2:20–22).

The *perseverance* doctrine rests on perverting a few passages, all the while ignoring scores of explicit warnings of apostasy and its eternal consequences. This error pits the Lord against Himself (e.g., Luke 8:4–15; 12:42–46; John 8:51; 15: 1–6; et al.) and against the other inspired writers (e.g., 1 Cor. 15:1–2; Jam. 5:19–20; Jude 19–21; 1 John 2:23–25).

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