

See
NOTE 1



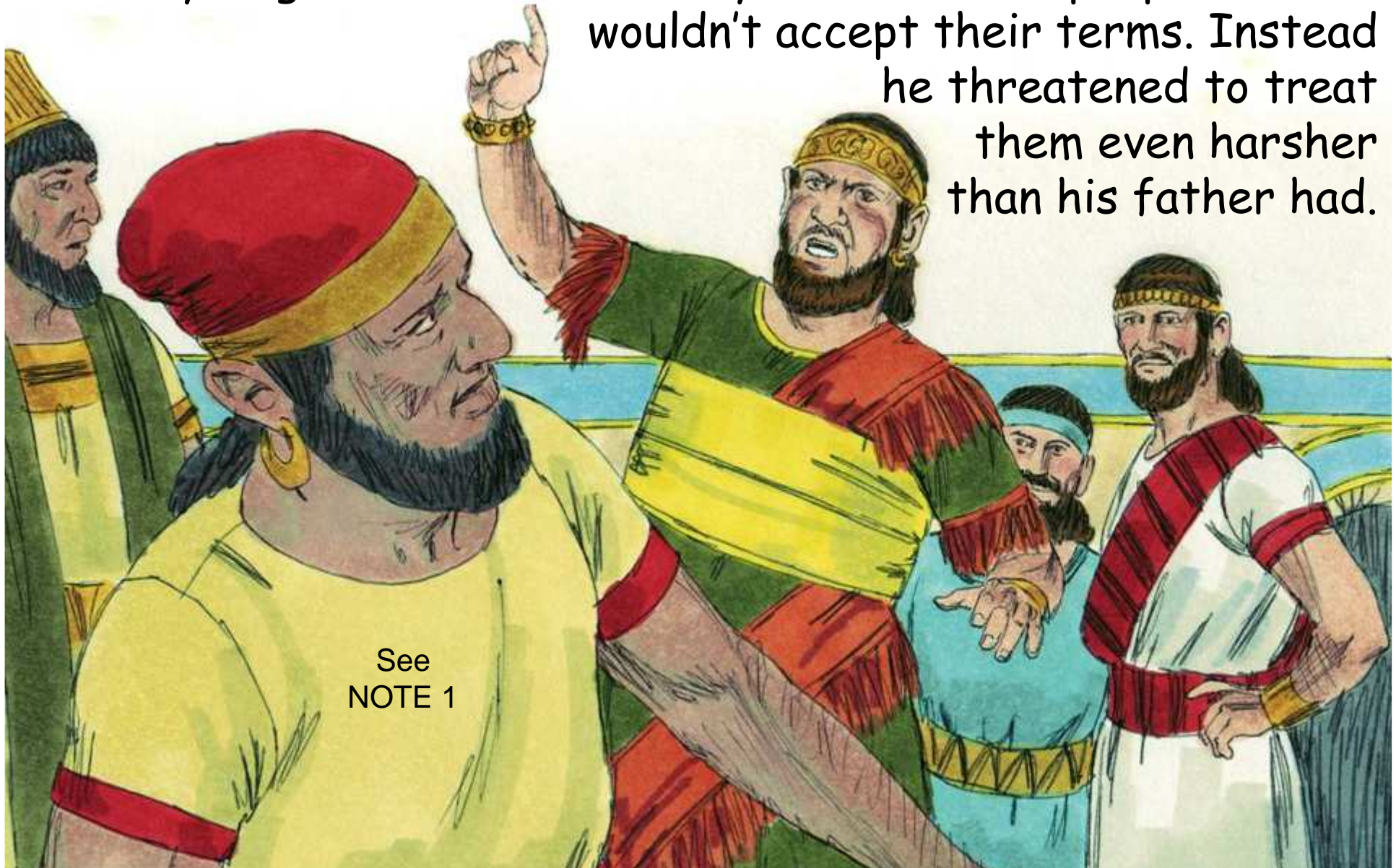
FALSE RELIGION

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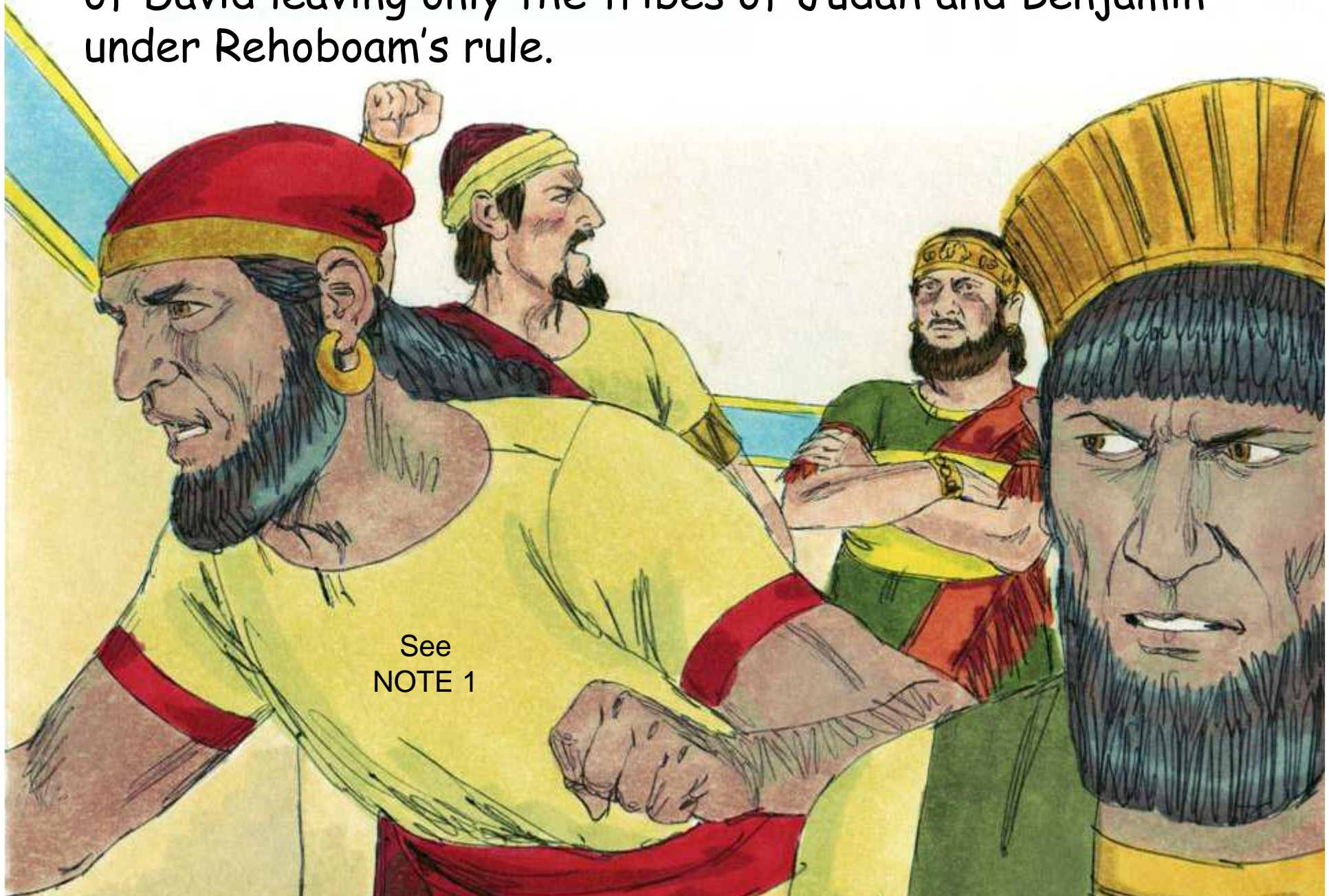
- ❑ When David's grandson Rehoboam was about to become king of Israel, the people led by Jeroboam gave him an ultimatum requesting better treatment for his subjects.

❑ Instead of listening to his father Solomon's trusted advisers, Rehoboam followed some bad advice from his young friends. He foolishly informed the people that he wouldn't accept their terms. Instead he threatened to treat them even harsher than his father had.



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- ❑ As a result 10 of the 12 tribes broke away from the house of David leaving only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin under Rehoboam's rule.

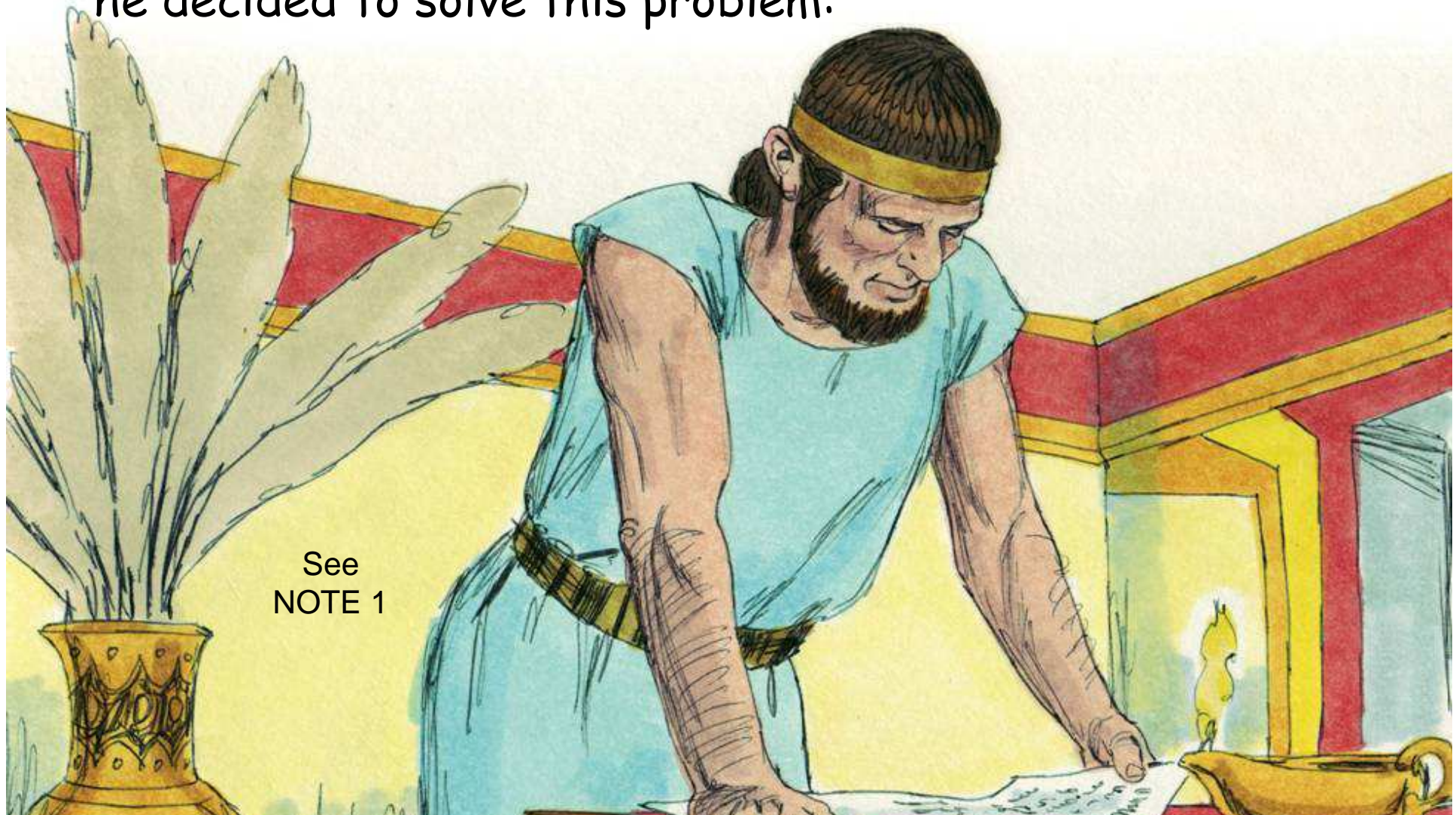


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- ❑ The southern kingdom under Rehoboam became known simply as Judah. It remained with the capital in Jerusalem which was of course the location of both the king's palace and God's temple. The 10 tribes in the north became collectively known as Israel and chose Jeroboam as their king.



- ❑ Jeroboam chose to rule from Shechem but was concerned about the fact that his people still had to go to Jerusalem to worship. He feared that they might be influenced by his rival Rehoboam and change their allegiance. Here's how he decided to solve this problem:



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1 KINGS 12:25-33

- 1 Kings 12:25-33 Then Jeroboam fortified Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim and lived there. From there he went out and built up Peniel. Jeroboam thought to himself, 'The kingdom is now likely to revert to the house of David. If these people go up to offer sacrifices at the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem, they will again give their allegiance to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah. They will kill me and return to King Rehoboam.'

After seeking advice, the king made two golden calves. He said to the people, 'It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.' One he set up in Bethel, and the other in Dan.

1 KINGS 12:25-33

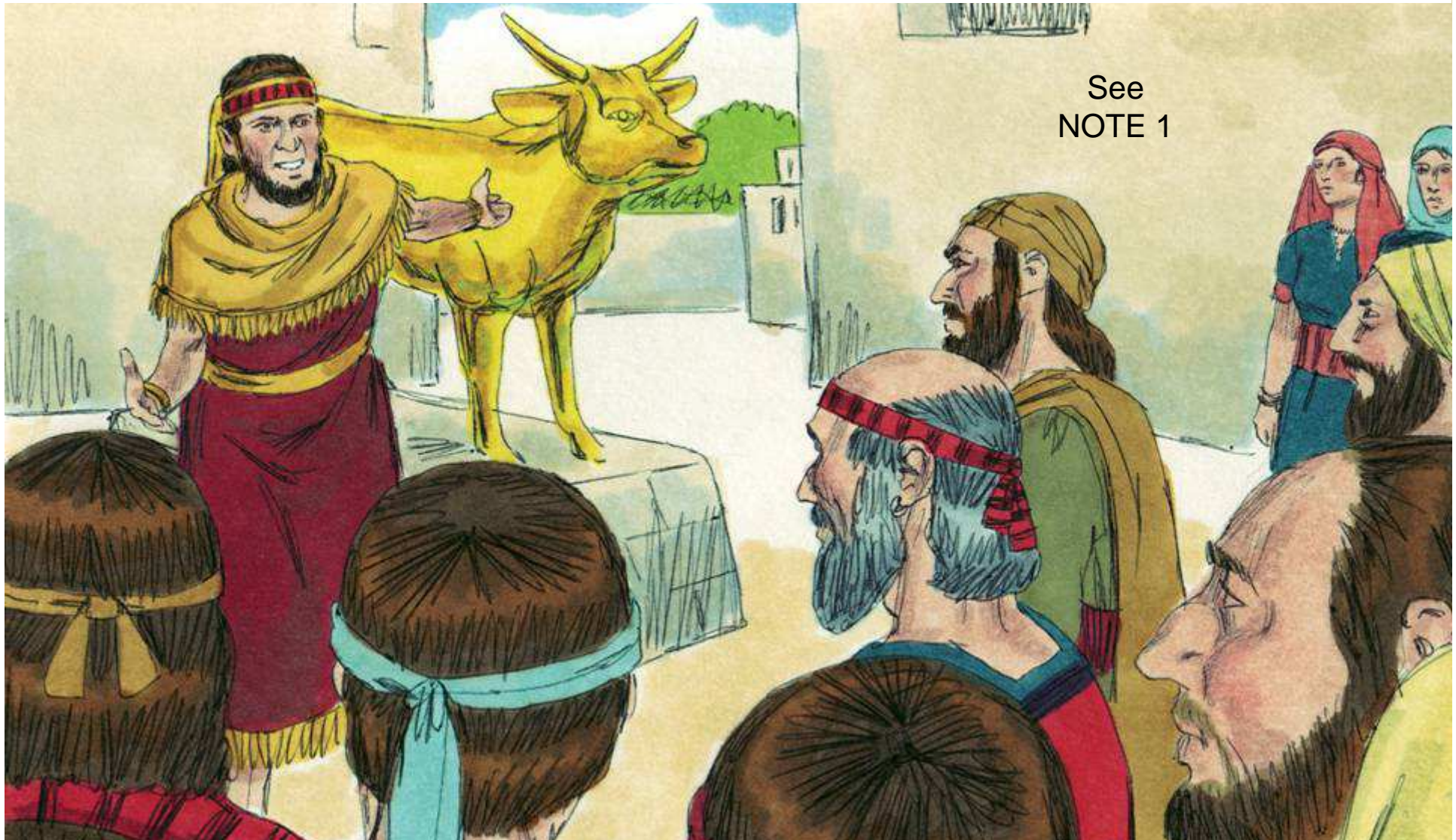
- And this thing became a sin; the people came to worship the one at Bethel and went as far as Dan to worship the other.

Jeroboam built shrines on high places and appointed priests from all sorts of people, even though they were not Levites. He instituted a festival on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, like the festival held in Judah, and offered sacrifices on the altar. This he did in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves he had made. And at Bethel he also installed priests at the high places he had made.

On the fifteenth day of the eighth month, a month of his own choosing, he offered sacrifices on the altar he had built at Bethel. So he instituted the festival for the Israelites and went up to the altar to make offerings.

- ❑ So out of fear that by going to Jerusalem to worship God, his followers might ultimately desert him, Jeroboam set up 2 golden calves and established a false religion in Israel as an alternative to the worship of the true God.

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FALSE RELIGION

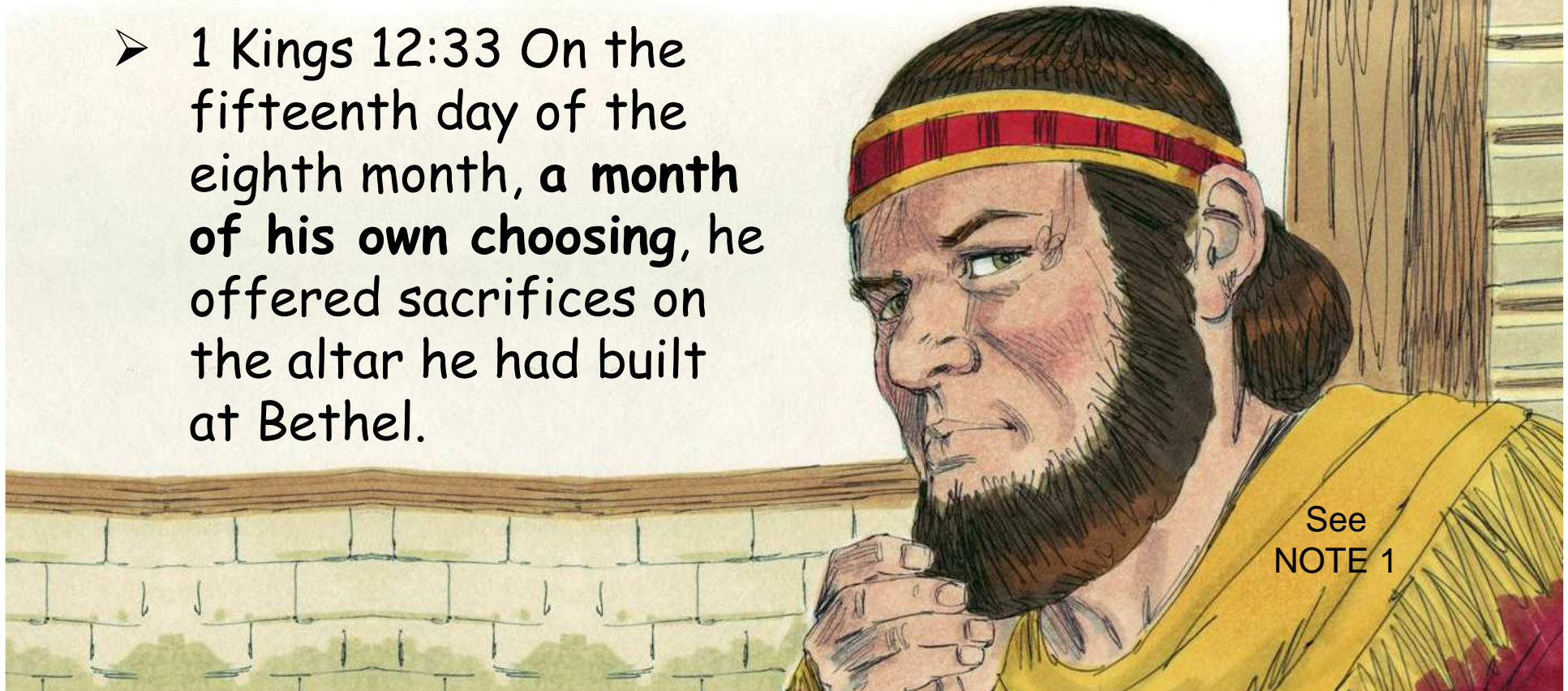
❑ What are the characteristics of false religion?

1. It is man-made:

➤ 1 Kings 12:28 **After seeking advice,**
the king made two golden calves...

➤ 1 Kings 12:33 On the
fifteenth day of the
eighth month, a month
of his own choosing, he
offered sacrifices on
the altar he had built
at Bethel.

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FALSE RELIGION

2. But it masquerades as true religion:

- 1 Kings 12:28...
"Here are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt."
- 1 King 12:32 He instituted a festival on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, like the festival held in Judah...

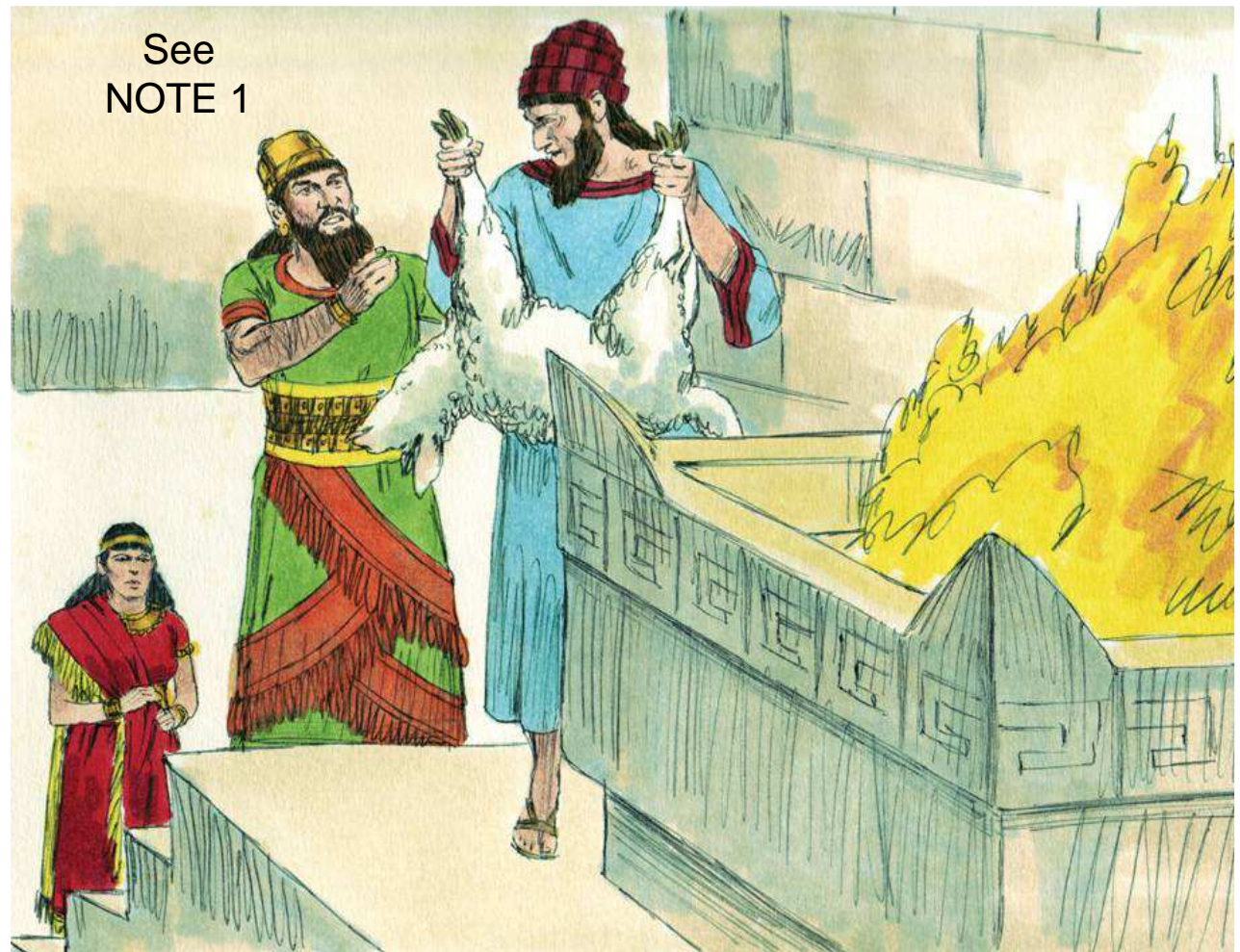


- ❑ Jeroboam's religion was "like the festival" - in other words it was a forgery made to look like the real thing.

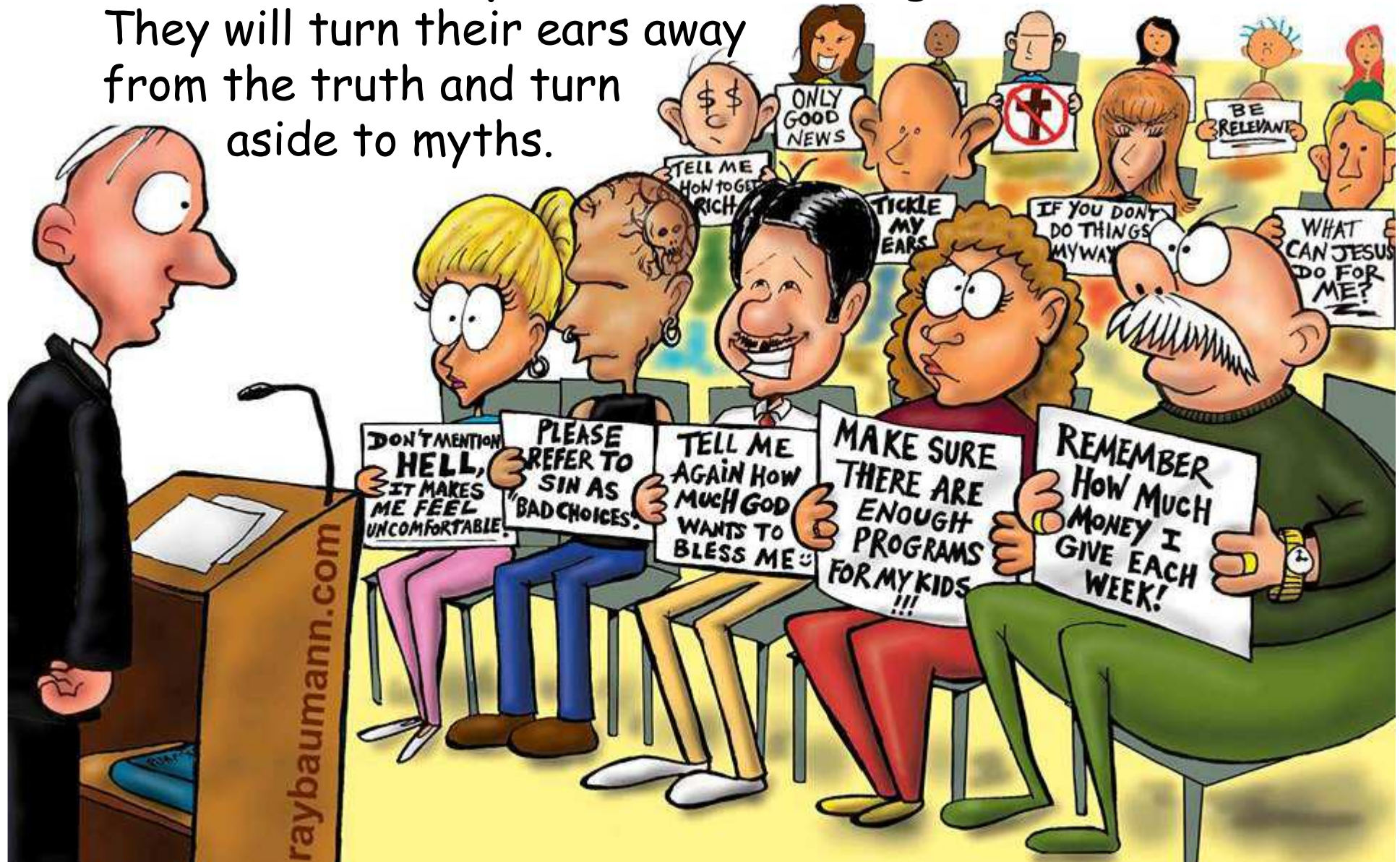
3. The appeal was convenience

➤ 1 Kings 12:28...
He said to the people, 'It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods...'

- ❑ Jeroboam set up golden calves in Bethel (south) and in Dan (north). Having these two local locations suggest that Jeroboam was trying to make worship easy. Why travel to Jerusalem (the site God had chosen for worship) when these sites were closer? So Jeroboam established "seeker sensitive" places of worship.



4. Message is not offensive: 2 Tim 4:4 Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.

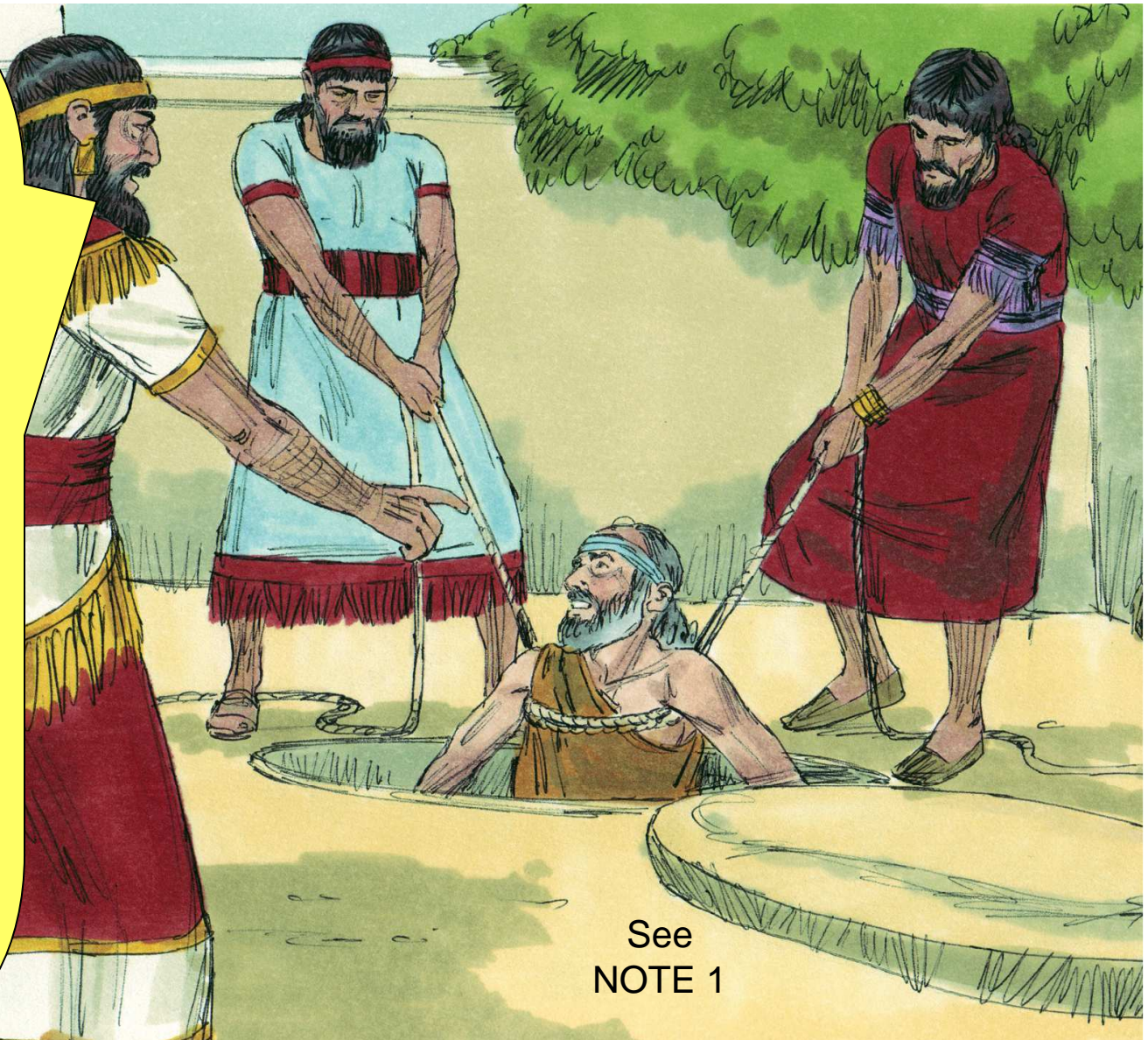


FALSE RELIGION

- ❑ The world doesn't feel threatened by the message of false prophets and as such, is generally friendly towards the proponents of false religion.
 - Jesus said "Woe to you when **all men speak well of you**, for that is how their fathers treated the **false prophets.**" (Luke 6:26)
- ❑ In contrast, speaking the truth is construed as being negative:
 - 1 Kings 22:8 The king of Israel answered Jehoshaphat, "There is still one man through whom we can inquire of the LORD, but I hate him because **he never prophesies anything good about me, but always bad.** He is Micaiah son of Imlah."

- ❑ Talking about God's judgement is not considered to be building people up. Note the words of the officials to the king before lowering Jeremiah into a cistern (Jer 38:4).

This man should be put to death. He is discouraging the soldiers... as well as all the people, by the things he is saying to them. **This man is not seeking the good of these people but their ruin.**

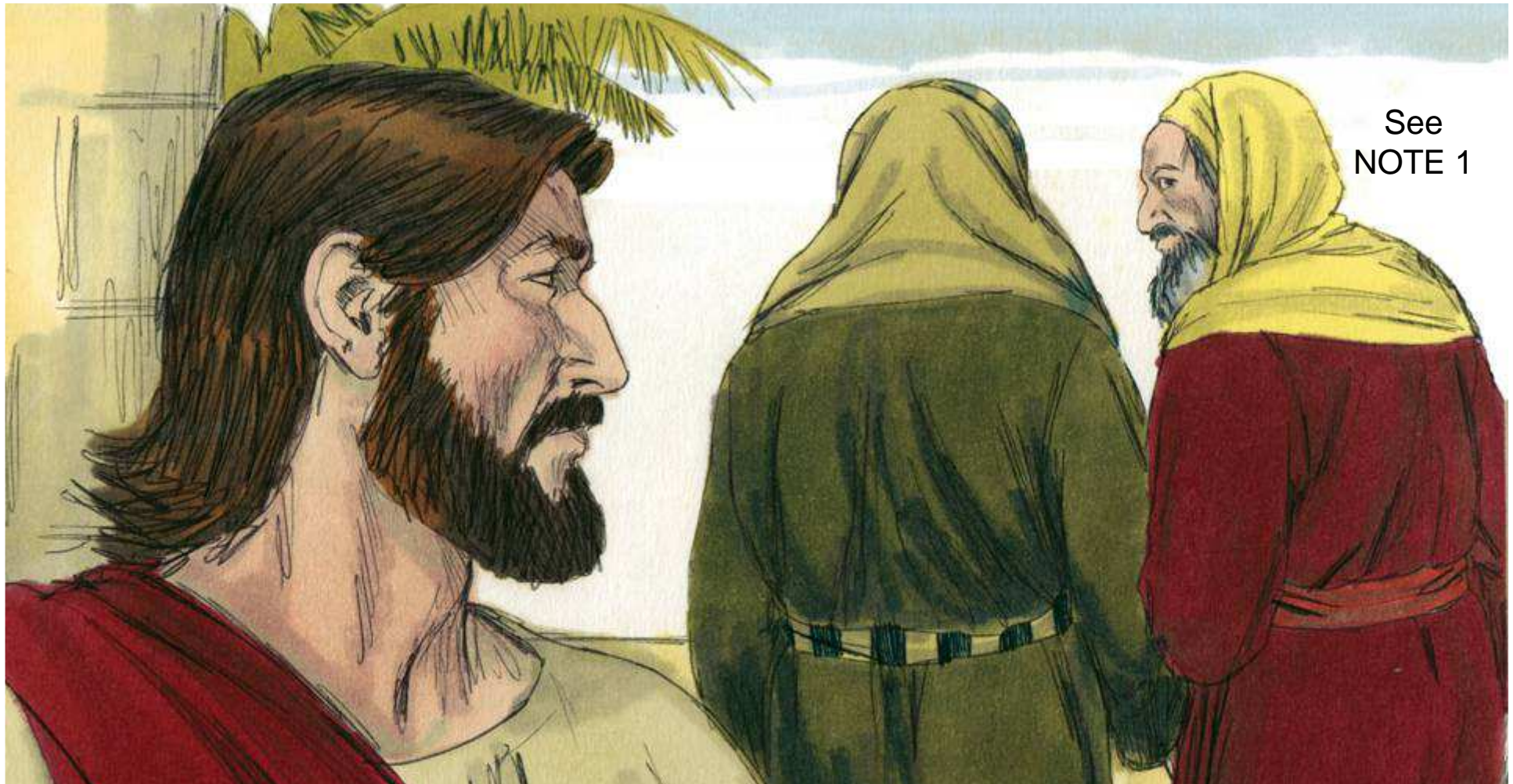


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5. Focus is on gaining followers

- The motive behind Jeroboam's religion was to gain and keep followers (1 Kings 12:26-27) - much like the motive behind some church growth programs today, where numbers are more important than preaching the truth. For the sake of church growth the truth is either diluted or not preached.





- ❑ Because when the truth is preached, numbers may suffer:
 - John 6:60,66 On hearing it, many of his disciples said, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?"
... From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

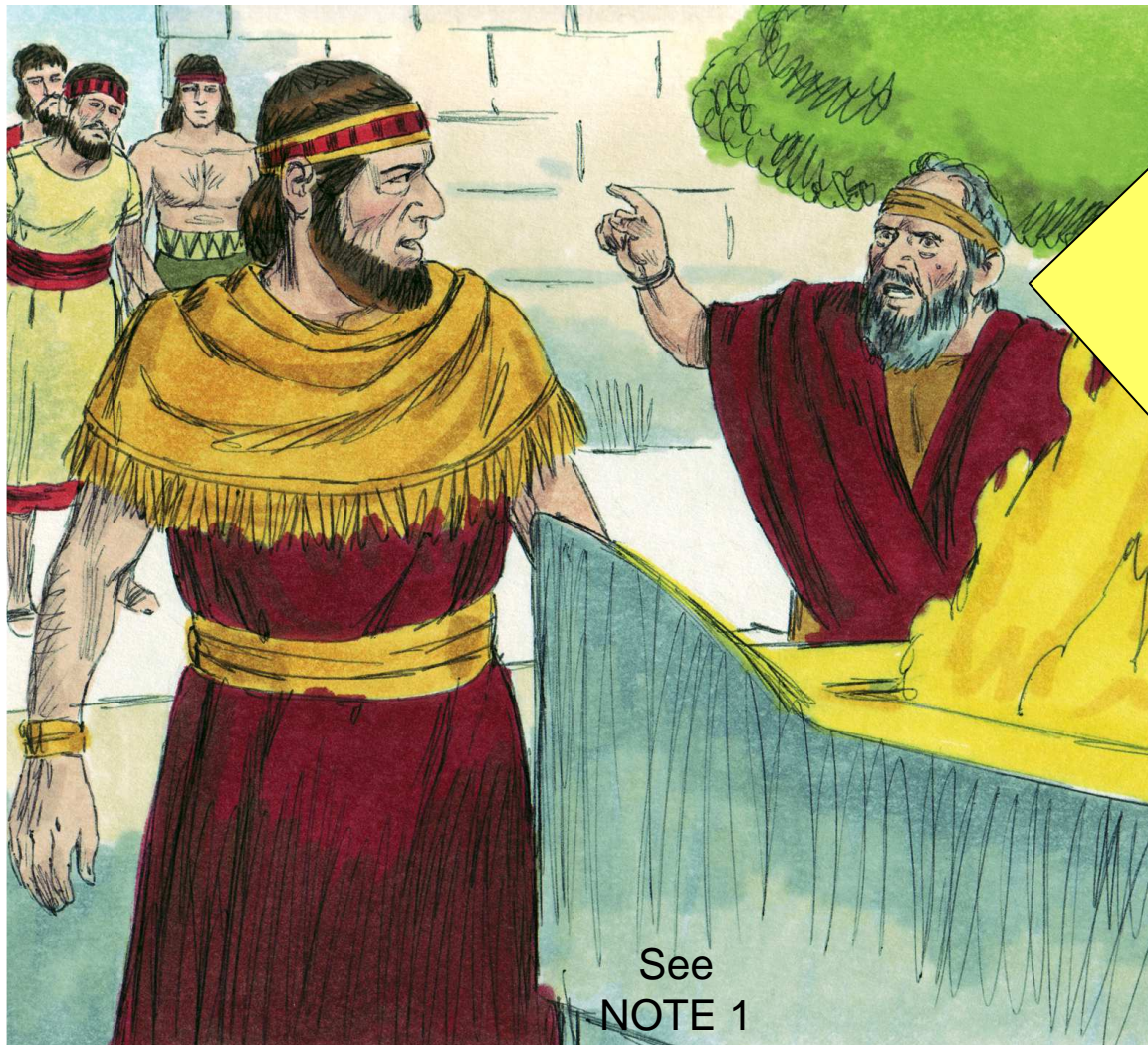
FALSE RELIGION

6. False religion appeals to the flesh

- 1 Kings 12:31 Jeroboam built shrines on high places...
- ❑ The "high places" referred to so often in the OT were pagan religious worship areas although some people even worshipped God there. These "high places" were usually located on natural heights such as hills and mountains.
 - Jer 3:2 (NLT) "Look at **the shrines on every hilltop**. Is there any place you have not been defiled by your adultery with other gods? ... You have **polluted the land with your prostitution** and your wickedness."
- ❑ Why were these high places such a constant thorn in the flesh? Because they appealed to the flesh. Sexual encounters with 'sacred' prostitutes was part of worship.

7. False religion ends with judgement:

- No sooner had Jeroboam instituted his false religion than a prophet of God from Bethel denounced it and prophesied a future judgement (1 Kings 13).



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O altar, altar! This is what the LORD says: 'A son named Josiah will be born to the house of David. On you he will sacrifice the priests of the high places who now make offerings here, and human bones will be burned on you.'

FALSE RELIGION

8. False religion lacks true power
(1 Kings 13:4)
- ❑ Angered by the prophet of God's words, Jeroboam attempts to have him seized. But the hand he stretches out toward the man shrivels and the king resorts to begging the prophet to intercede with God to heal him.



FALSE RELIGION

- ❑ The false religion today is powerless too:
 - 2 Timothy 3:5 having a form of godliness but **denying its power...**
 - 1 Cor 4:20 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.
- ❑ False religion has no power to save and no power to change men's lives. And those who have removed the cross from the Christian message have lost the power:
 - 1 Cor 1:17-18 ... but to preach the gospel—not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

THE LAST DAYS



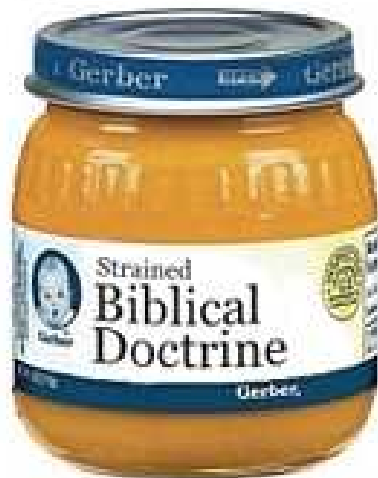
THE LAST DAYS

- Describing the last days the apostle Paul says:
 - 2 Timothy 3:1-5 But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be **lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— having a form of godliness but denying its power.** Have nothing to do with such people.

DISREGARD FOR SOUND DOCTRINE

Pastor, why force solid doctrine on your congregation when there's a palatable alternative?

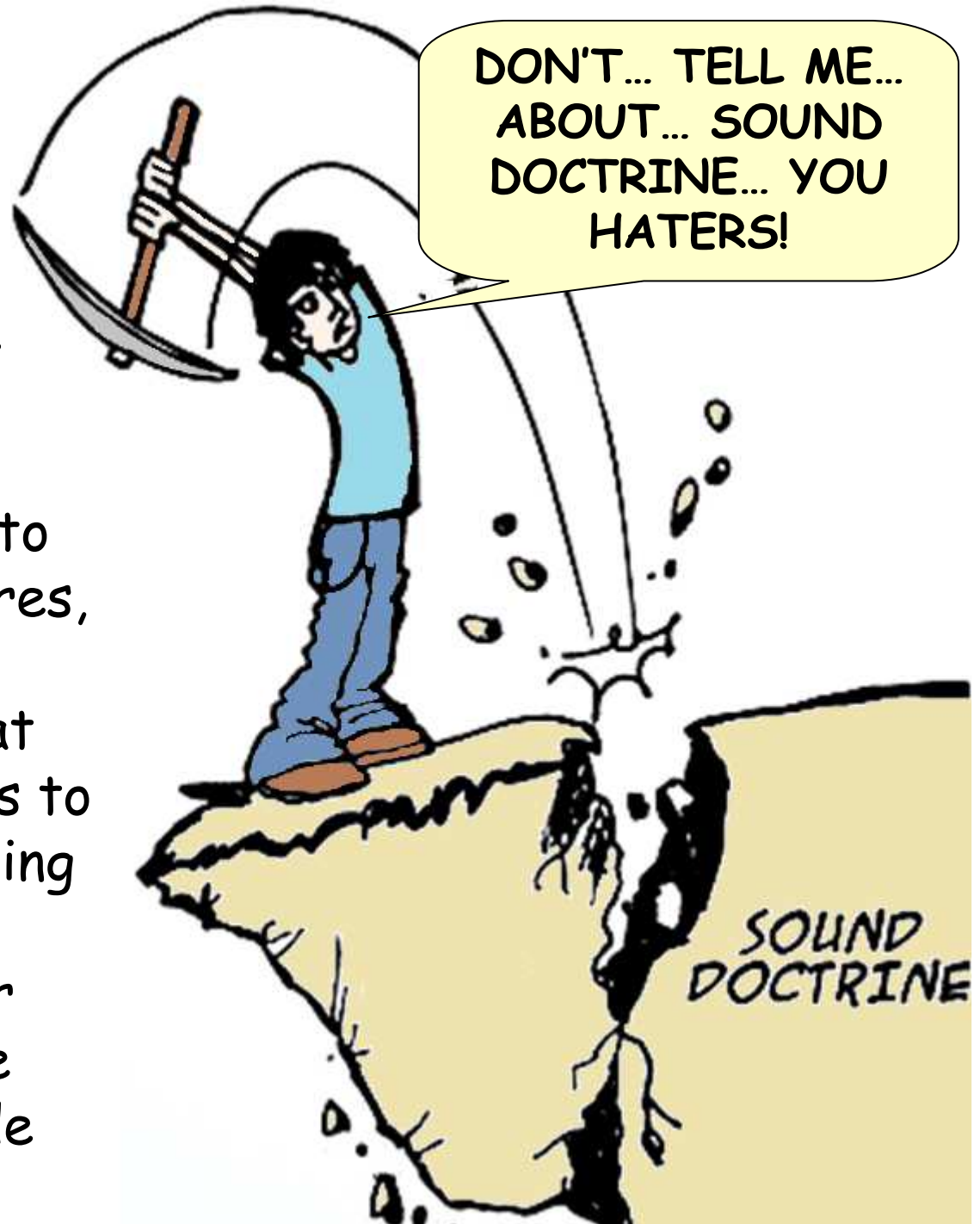
Gerber, a trusted provider of nutritious baby food, introduces their delicious new pabulum for professed Christians who still aren't ready to chew on God's Word. Perfect for busy pastors who don't have time to water down the gospel all by themselves, Gerber's Baby Christian Food will supply the needs of any growing seeker-sensitive church.



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- ❑ One sign of the last days is a disregard for sound doctrine:
 - 2 Tim 4:3-4 For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.



DISREGARD FOR DOCTRINE

- ❑ Is it Biblical to disregard sound doctrine? Paul tells Titus:
 - **You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine...**
In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us... These, then, are the things you should teach. **Encourage and rebuke with all authority.** (Titus 2:1-15)



DISREGARD FOR DOCTRINE

- ❑ We must not be childish in our approach to doctrine. A sign of childishness is to be swayed by every 'new' teaching or revelation that is on the circuit.
- Eph 4:14 (NASB) As a result, we are no longer to be **children**, tossed here and there by waves and **carried about by every wind of doctrine**, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;

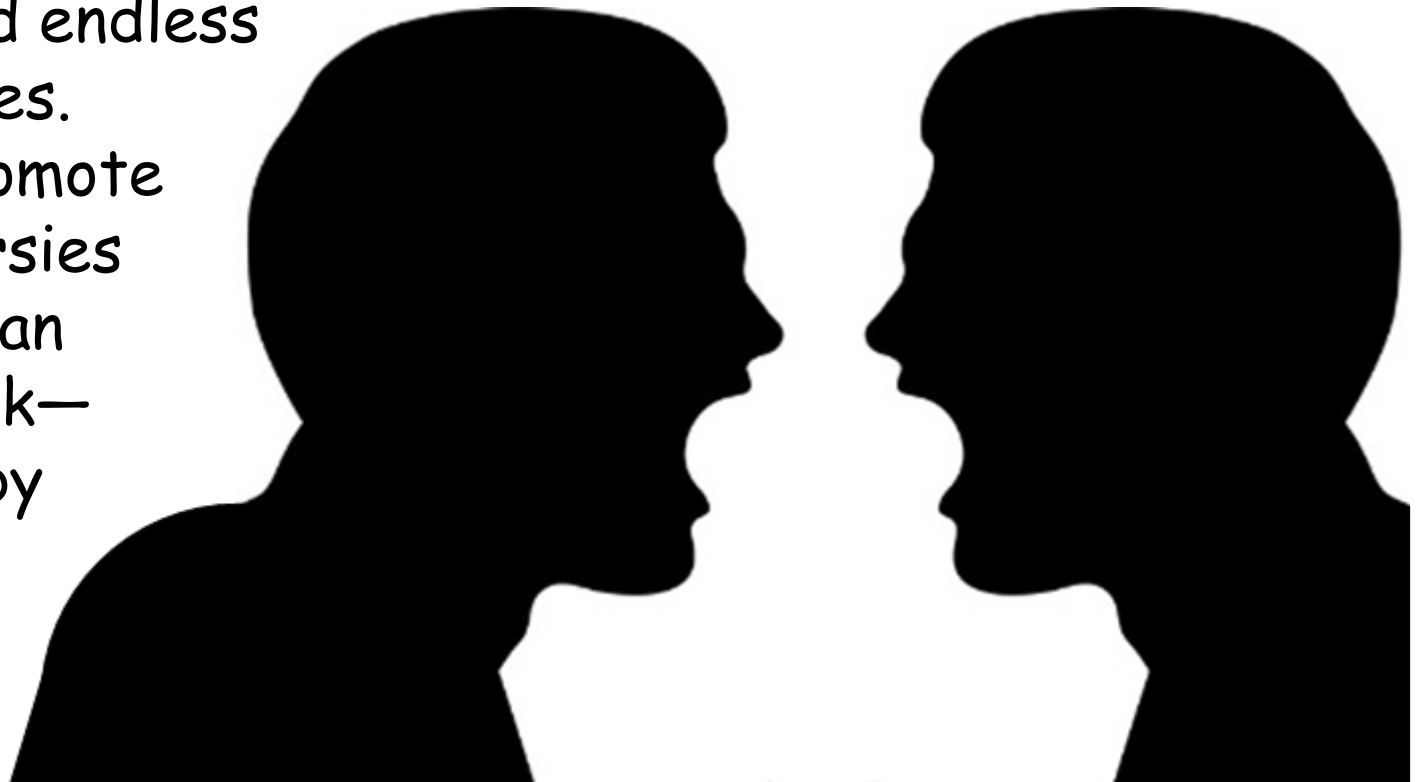


DISREGARD FOR DOCTRINE

- ❑ Many today feel that doctrine is not important as long as we all get along with one another. These statements by Paul would be considered too critical or divisive for some:
 - 1 Tim 6:3-4 If anyone **teaches false doctrines** and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, **he is conceited and understands nothing.**
 - 1 Tim 1:3-7 ... command certain men **not to teach false doctrines...** Some have wandered away from these and turned to **meaningless talk.** They want to be teachers of the law, but **they do not know what they are talking about** or what they so confidently affirm.

DISREGARD FOR DOCTRINE

- ❑ But it is in fact false doctrine which promotes controversy amongst Christians, and not the other way around as some would have us believe:
- 1 Tim 1:3-4 ... command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies.
These promote controversies rather than God's work—which is by faith.



TO JUDGE OR NOT?

- ❑ But didn't Jesus say we mustn't judge?
 - Matt 7:1 "Do not judge, or you too will be judged."
- ❑ Well further on in the same chapter of Matthew 7:1 - or the same Sermon (on the Mount) for that matter - Jesus tells us to do something that requires making judgement:
 - Matthew 7:15-16 "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them."
- ❑ We are told to judge whether a person is a false prophet by their 'fruit' - in other words some assessment of the way that they live is necessary.

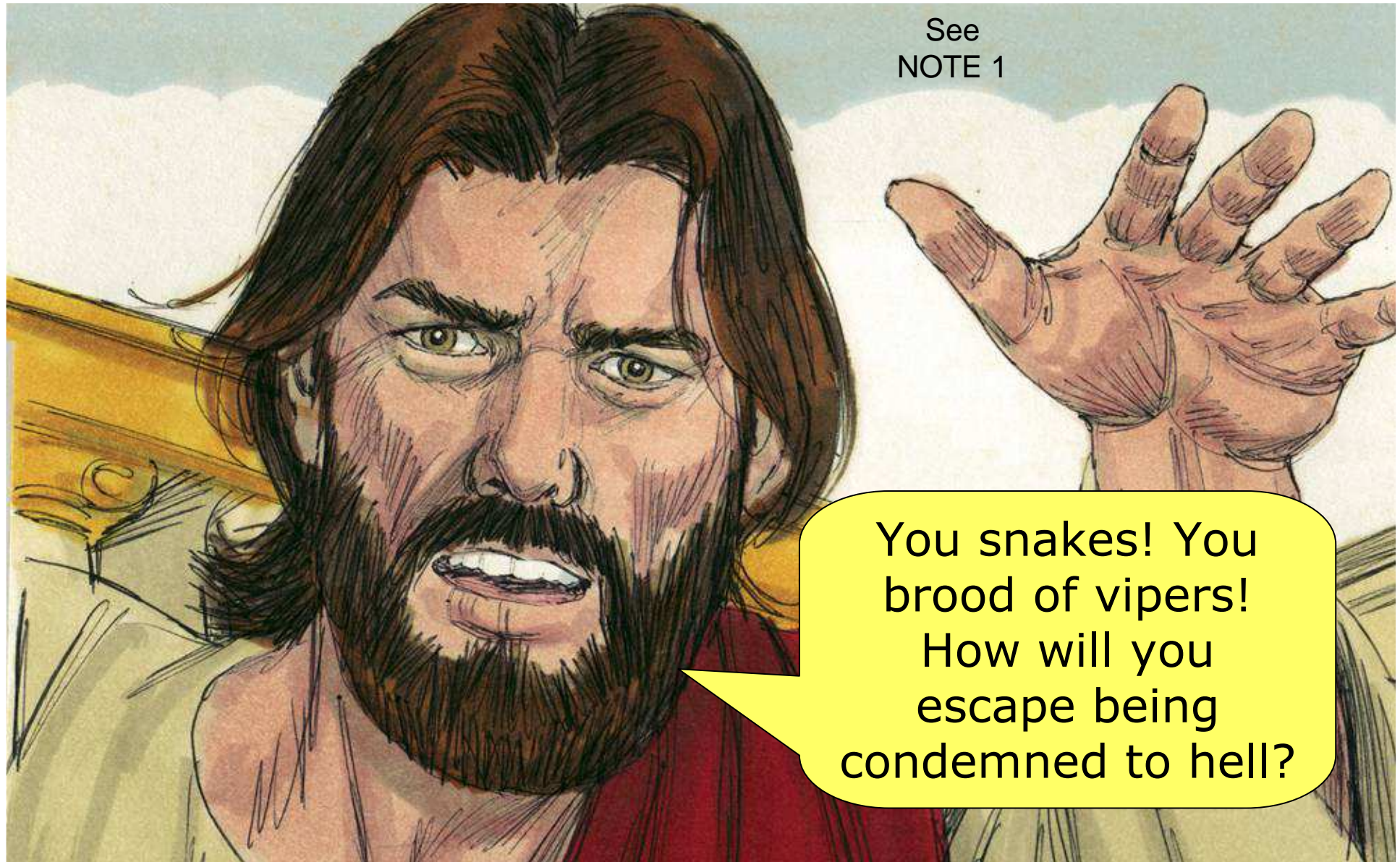
TO JUDGE OR NOT?

- ❑ So Matthew 7:1 has been misunderstood, misapplied and generally taken out of the context of the overall teaching of Scripture. People have used it to their own advantage in an attempt to remove all discrimination between good and evil. Jesus' words don't mean that we should not - on the basis of God's word - call sin 'sin' and expose false doctrine.
- ❑ On the contrary we are taught that at times we are required to judge and at other times we must "judge not". But when do we have jurisdiction to judge?

TO JUDGE OR NOT?

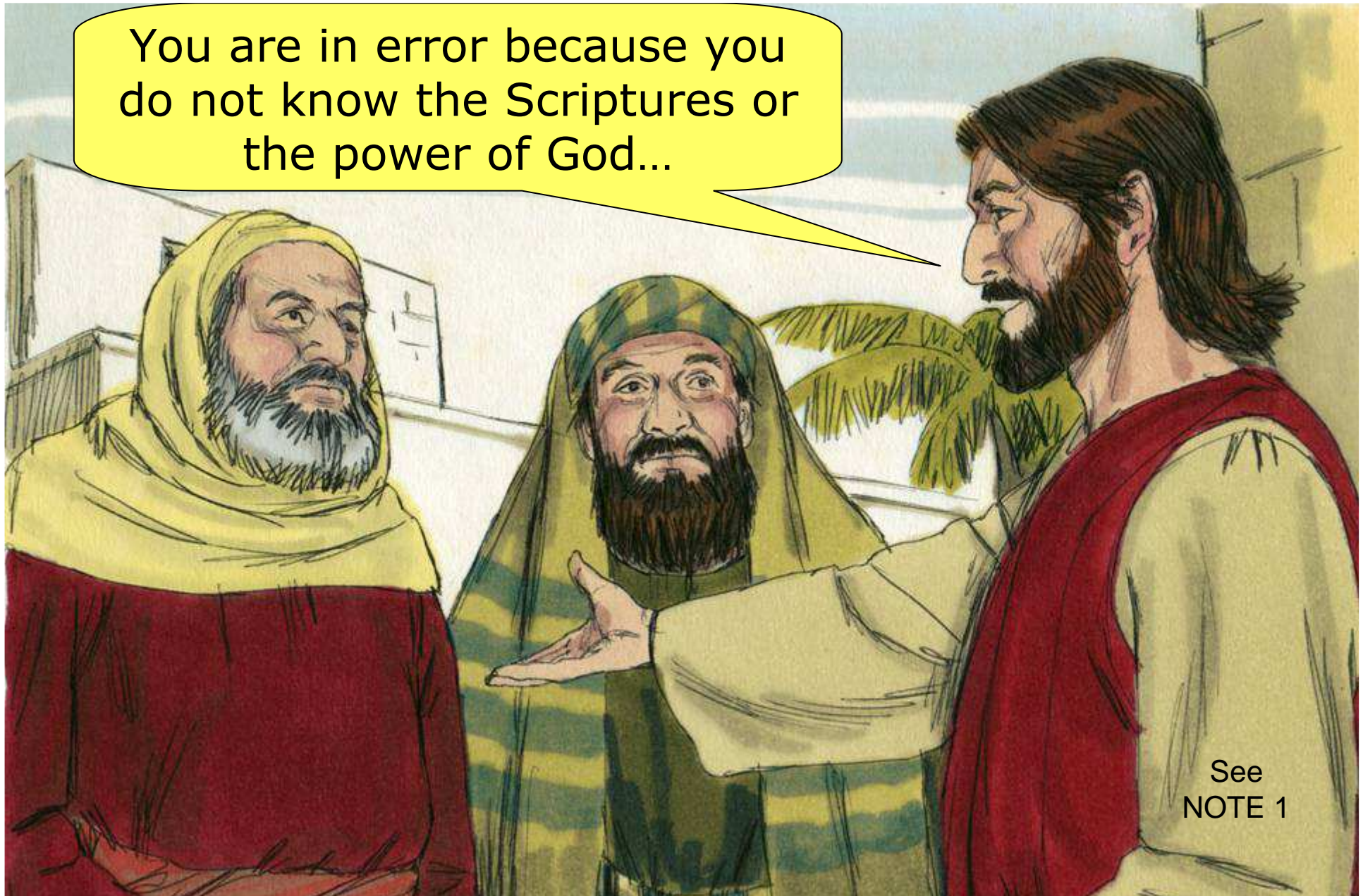
- ❑ We are told not to judge those outside the church (that is God's jurisdiction), but we are clearly instructed to judge those inside the church.
 - 1 Cor 5:12 What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? **Are you not to judge those inside?**
 - 1 Pet 4:17 For it is time for judgement to begin with **God's household**; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

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- ❑ And so we find that Jesus spoke out against the Pharisees (Matt 23) amongst other things calling them hypocrites, blind guides and whitewashed tombs:

You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God...



- ❑ He also attacked the doctrine of the Sadducees, accusing them of ignorance of Scripture (Matt 22:29).

TO JUDGE OR NOT?

- ❑ Jude passes judgement on some fellow Christians at their love feasts who are “shepherds who feed only themselves”:
 - Jude 12 These men are blemishes at your love feasts, eating with you without the slightest qualm—shepherds who feed only themselves. They are clouds without rain, blown along by the wind; autumn trees, without fruit and uprooted—twice dead.
- ❑ John speaks of people associated with the church who had a false belief system which was in fact “antichrist” in nature:
 - **1 John 2:19-22 They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us...** Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist—he denies the Father and the Son.

TO JUDGE OR NOT?


- ❑ Peter warns of false prophets who teach heresy and exploit people because of greed:
 - 2 Pet 2:1-3 But there were also false prophets among the people, just as **there will be false teachers among you**. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. **In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up**. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.

TO JUDGE OR NOT?

- ❑ In 2 Cor 11:13-15 Paul condemns men he calls "false apostles, deceitful workmen, **masquerading as apostles of Christ.**"
- ❑ He passes this judgement on two Christian workers:
 - 1 Tim 1:20 Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme.
- ❑ He instructs Titus to refute those who don't have sound doctrine in the church at Crete.
 - Titus 1:6-9 An elder... must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and **refute those who oppose it.**

- ❑ On one occasion in Antioch Paul even reprimanded the apostle Peter when he was in error:
 - Gal 2:14 When I saw that **they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel**, I said to Peter in front of them all...

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An illustration depicting a confrontation between two men, likely Paul and Peter, in a historical setting. On the left, a man with a dark beard and a blue and red striped headband looks towards the right. On the right, another man with a dark beard and a green headband looks back at him. A large yellow speech bubble is positioned between them, containing text. The background is a simple, light-colored wall.

You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?

TO JUDGE OR NOT?

- ❑ Again Paul tells Timothy to refute unsound doctrine in Ephesus:
 - 1 Tim 1:3-4 As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may **command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer...**
 - 2 Tim 4:2-3 Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; **correct, rebuke** and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine.

REBUKE IN LOVE

- ❑ The rebuke must be motivated by love and not spiritual pride though.
 - 1 Tim 1:3-5 ... command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer... **The goal of this command is love**, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.
 - After a stern rebuke to the Laodicean church, Jesus says, **"Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent."** (Rev 3:19)
- ❑ And a wise person will of course accept an appropriate rebuke:
 - Prov 9:8 Do not rebuke mockers or they will hate you; rebuke the wise and they will love you.

FALSE TEACHING DANGERS

- ❑ People must be warned of false teaching because it can ultimately destroy their faith:
 - 1 Tim 6:20-21 Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the **opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge**, which some have professed and in so doing have **wandered from the faith**.
- ❑ Speaking of those “who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain”, Paul warns: “People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction... Some people, **eager for money, have wandered from the faith** and pierced themselves with many griefs. (1 Tim 6:9-10)

SAVE YOUR HEARERS

- ❑ Sound doctrine is a safeguard for a teacher and their followers so that they will not fall away from the truth:
 - 1 Tim 4:16 **Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.**
- ❑ So teachers have a responsibility to teach sound doctrine and as a result they will be judged more strictly:
 - James 3:1 Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.



ACCOUNTABILITY

- ❑ In fact God will hold us accountable if we do not warn people about their sin:
 - Ezek 3:18-19 When I say to a wicked man, 'You will surely die,' and you do not warn him or speak out to dissuade him from his evil ways in order to save his life, that wicked man will die for his sin, and **I will hold you accountable for his blood**. But if you do warn the wicked man and he does not turn from his wickedness or from his evil ways, he will die for his sin; but you will have saved yourself.



FALSE PROPHETS

- ❑ Peter warns of false prophets within the umbrella of Christianity who preach a message that appeals to the flesh.
 - 2 Pet 2:17-18 These men are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them. For they mouth empty, boastful words and, **by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature**, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error.
- a) But he says **their message cannot bring freedom.**
 - 2 Pet 2:19 They **promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity**—for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him.

FALSE PROPHETS

b) False prophets are **deceptive**. They appear sincere and innocent but they will ultimately destroy their followers.

- Matt 7:15 "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves."



FALSE PROPHETS

- c) Don't judge a prophet by the **signs** they perform - look at their **character** (fruit):
- Matt 7:15-23 "Watch out for false prophets... **By their fruit you will recognize them.** Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit... "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, **did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?**' Then I will tell them plainly, '**I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!**'"

LOVERS OF PLEASURE



LOVERS OF PLEASURE

- ❑ In the last days Paul says that people will prefer entertainment to God, being "lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God" (2 Tim 3:1-5).
- ❑ And so we have the phenomenon of "seeker sensitive" churches, which have transformed the church into a religious entertainment centre. Church members are viewed as consumers, and consumers must be given what they want. What they want is to be entertained so God must be presented as a 'consumer-friendly' God. Several components of the seeker-sensitive churches will typically include state-of-the-art sound technology along with hi-tech lighting. The shekinah glory has been replaced by the smoke machine and worship is reduced to musical entertainment. Theatrics are the norm so that the seeker doesn't get bored as they may do in a traditional church.

SEEKER SENSITIVE

- ❑ A seeker-sensitive church tries to reach out to the unsaved by making the church experience as comfortable and non-threatening as possible. In effect these churches try to remove everything that may offend or turn away 'seekers' (formerly known as sinners or unbelievers). The focus is mainly on church numerical growth and the belief that a successful church depends primarily upon the staff's ability to professionally and seamlessly conduct the meetings - rather than the presence of God. The 45-minute Bible-based sermon is replaced with a 20-minute motivational "feel-good" talk focused on self-improvement. It is aimed at addressing the "felt needs" of the congregation while continually stressing that being a Christian will dramatically improve your happiness and quality of life both at home and work.

SEEKER SENSITIVE

- ❑ Certain topics are avoided in order not to offend the big givers. Songs are eliminated from the worship which speak of man's sinfulness, the cross or the need of a Saviour. Proponents say that the reason behind all the expense, state-of-the-art tech equipment, and the theatrics is in order to better reach the unsaved with the gospel. But it is questionable if it is the gospel that is being preached. God's holiness, wrath and justice are not mentioned; only his love. Rarely if ever are sin, hell, or repentance spoken of, and Jesus as the exclusive way of salvation won't be mentioned. Such topics are considered too "divisive."
- ❑ The focus of a seeker church in reality is totally man-centred. Actually we should have God-sensitive churches, not seeker-sensitive.

SEEKER SENSITIVE

□ Bill Blankschaen, the founder of FaithWalkers, lists 3 problems with Seeker-Friendly Churches:

1. **There are no seekers...** "As it is written: None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; **no one seeks for God**. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one." (Rom. 3:10-12 ESV) So if the Bible is true, no one shows up at your church seeking God - unless God is already at work within their hearts... We all need to be reconciled to Him, to be sure, but **it's not as if there's a bunch of people desperately trying to find God but can't because your service isn't cool enough.** ¹

¹ <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/faithwalkers/2013/08/bill-blankschaen-why-i-left-your-seeker-friendly-church/>

SEEKER SENSITIVE

2. **Seekers can't worship...** It's not that they struggle to do so, but that they simply are not capable of doing so due to the pernicious effect of sin. They can go through the external motions, but "the natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Cor. 2:14 ESV) No matter how hard he or she might try, all our supposedly righteous deeds are like filthy rags to God. (Is. 64:6) Worship can only happen in spirit and in truth - two things that unbelievers do not yet have. **So why design your worship services to appeal to those who cannot possibly truly participate?** ¹

¹ Ibid

SEEKER SENSITIVE

3. **The Gospel looks stupid to seekers.** Deal with it. Like Paul said above, it's all foolishness until the Spirit opens their eyes... We should expect the gospel light to be offensive to those in darkness - not us, the gospel. Jesus warned us that would be the case. **So why are we so focused on creating an environment that makes those who are perishing feel comfortable?**¹



¹ Ibid

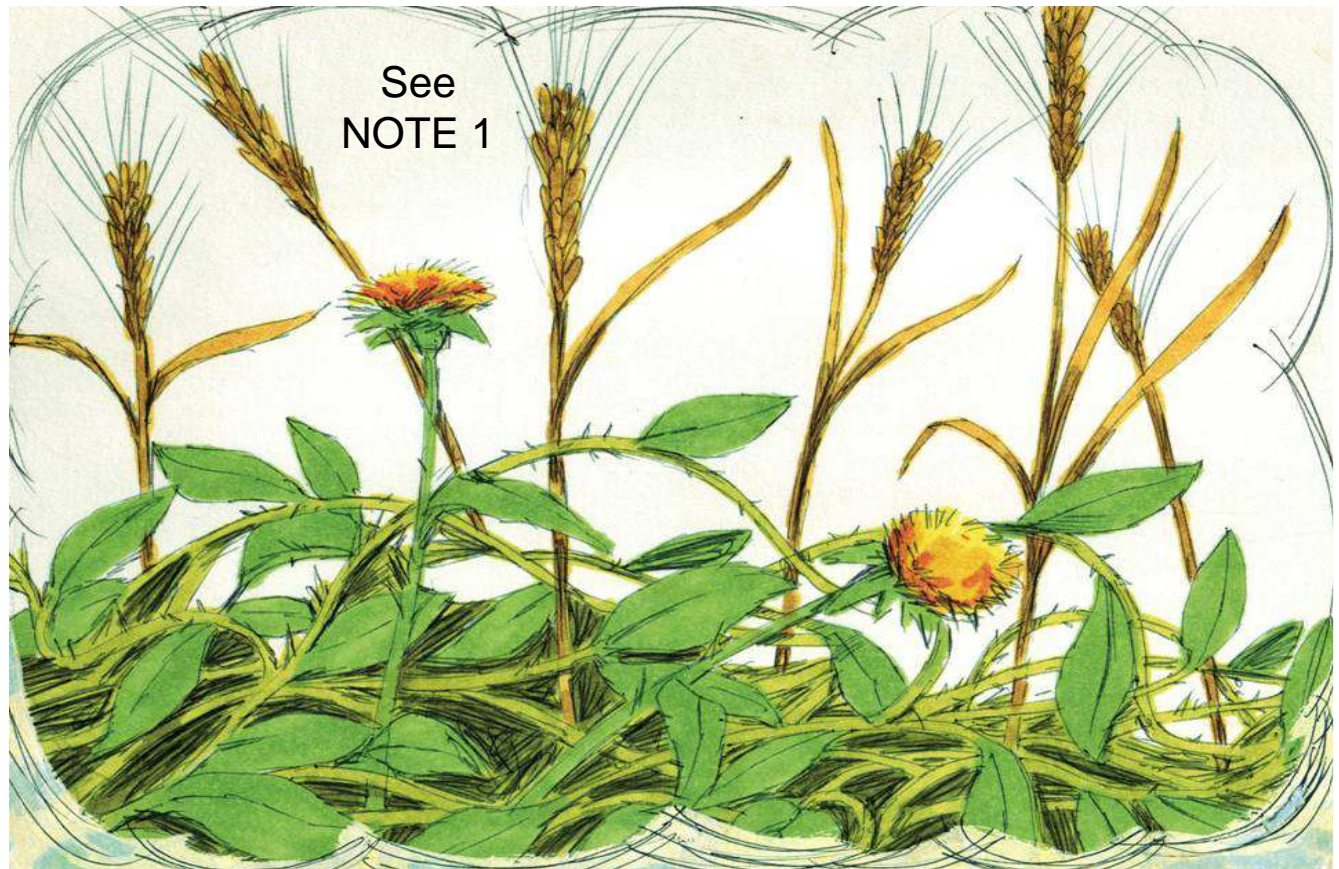
LOVERS OF PLEASURE

- ❑ Hedonism is the philosophy that pleasure is the most important pursuit in life.
- a) The problem with the hedonistic lifestyle is that it **enslaves** you. Paul tells Titus:
 - "At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and **enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures**" (Titus 3:3).
- b) It is a sign of **spiritual immaturity**: Jesus tells of the seed which is:
 - "choked by ... riches and **pleasures**, and they do not **mature**." (Luke 8:14)"

LOVERS OF PLEASURE

c) Jesus warns that pleasure-seeking will make you **unfruitful** and spiritually barren:

- “The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are **choked** by ... riches and pleasures...”
(Luke 8:14)



LOVERS OF PLEASURE

d) The satisfaction it gives is **fleeting**:

- Heb 11:25 He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to **enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time**.

e) Living for pleasure results in **spiritual death**:

- 1 Tim 5:6 But the widow who lives for pleasure is **dead even while she lives**.

f) It will result in **judgement**:

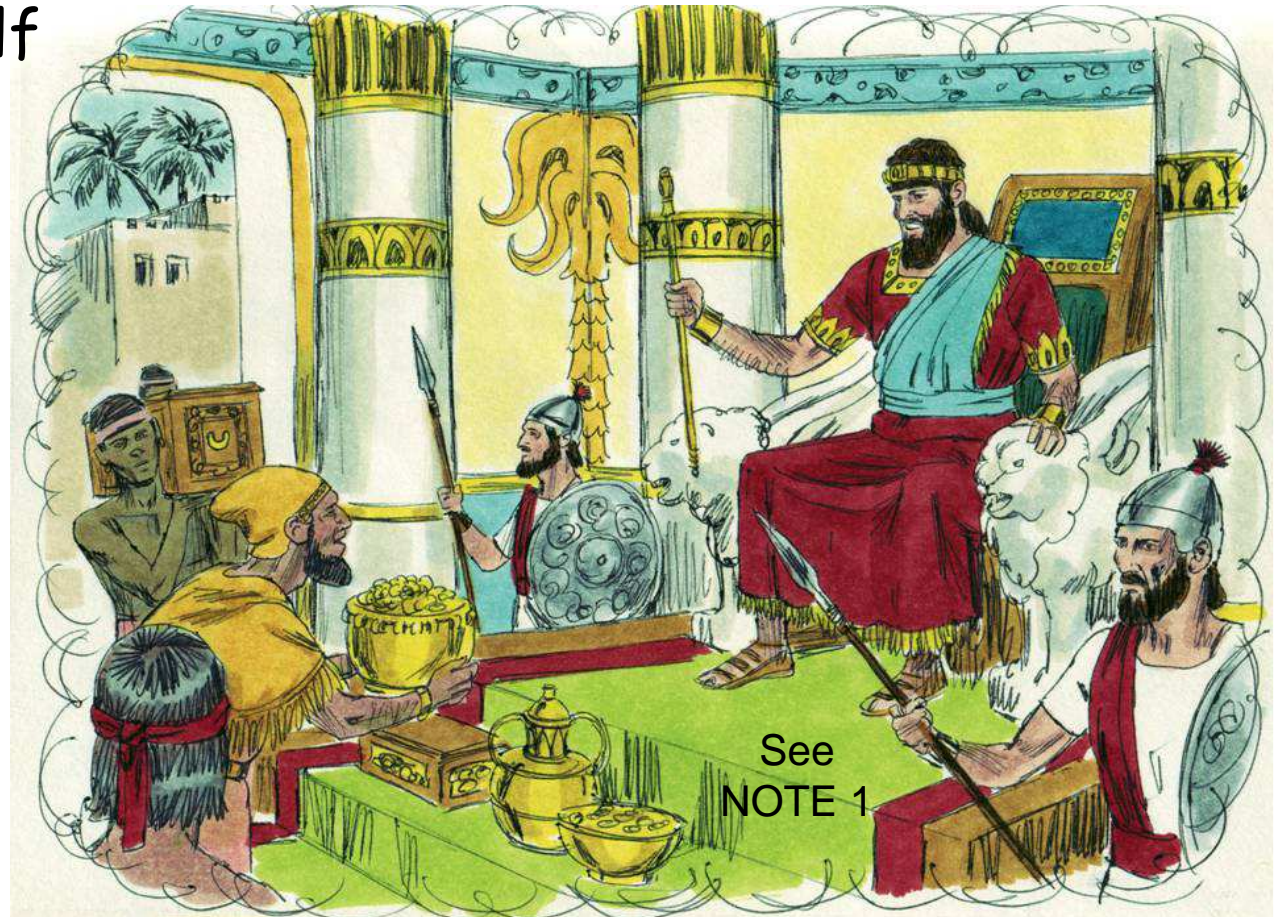
- James 5:5 (NASB) You have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of **wanton pleasure**; you have **fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter**.

g) It is a **substitute for God**: "lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God" (2 Tim 3:1-5).

h) But it is a poor substitute. Solomon found that seeking after pleasure is **futile**.

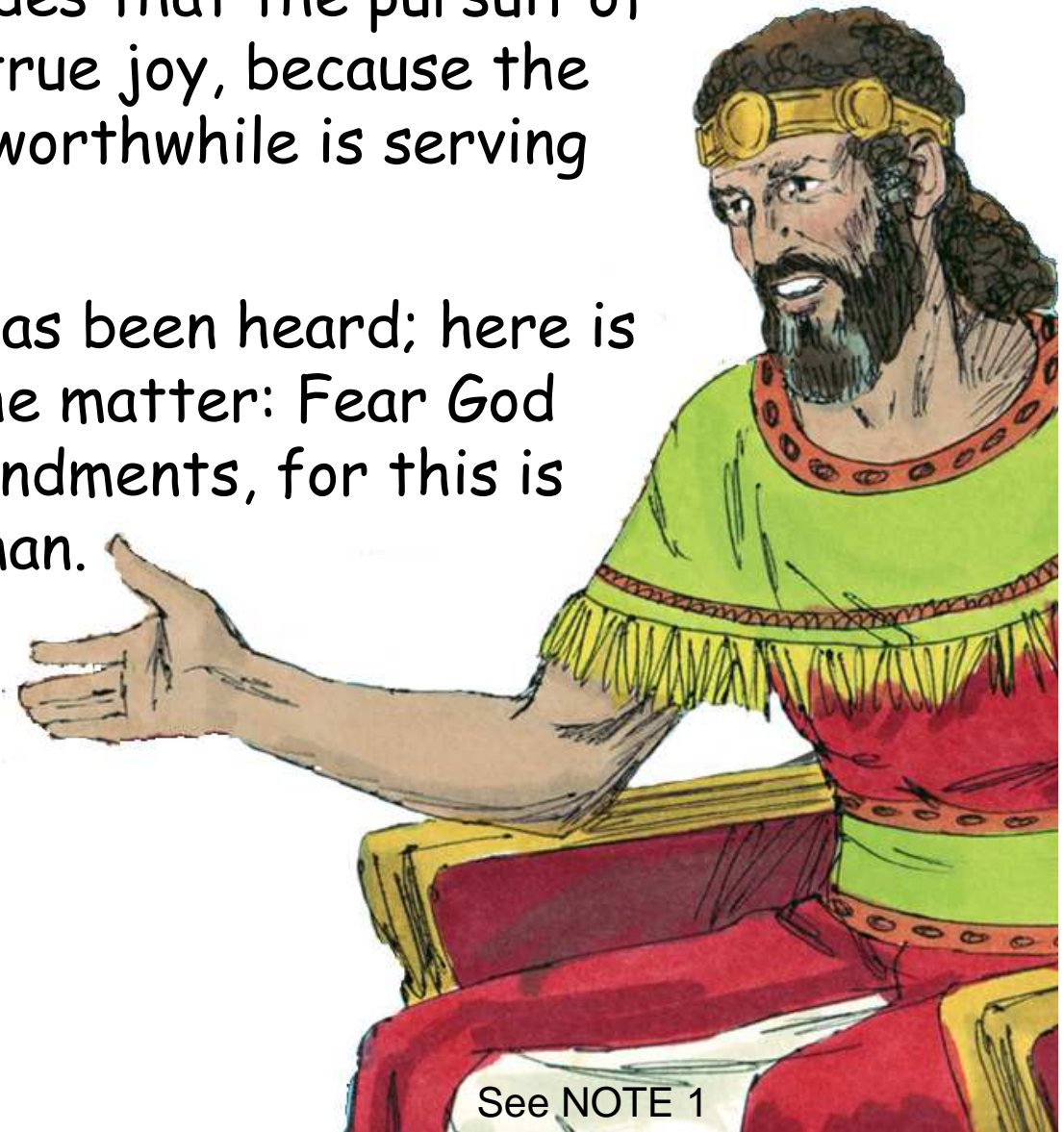
- Eccl 2:1-11 ... I thought in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure to find out what is good." But that also **proved to be meaningless... what does pleasure accomplish?"**

I denied myself
nothing my
eyes desired;
I refused my
heart no
pleasure... Yet
... everything
was
meaningless,
a chasing
after the
wind...



LOVERS OF PLEASURE

- i) And so Solomon concludes that the pursuit of pleasure cannot bring true joy, because the only thing in life truly worthwhile is serving God:
- Eccl 12:13 Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.

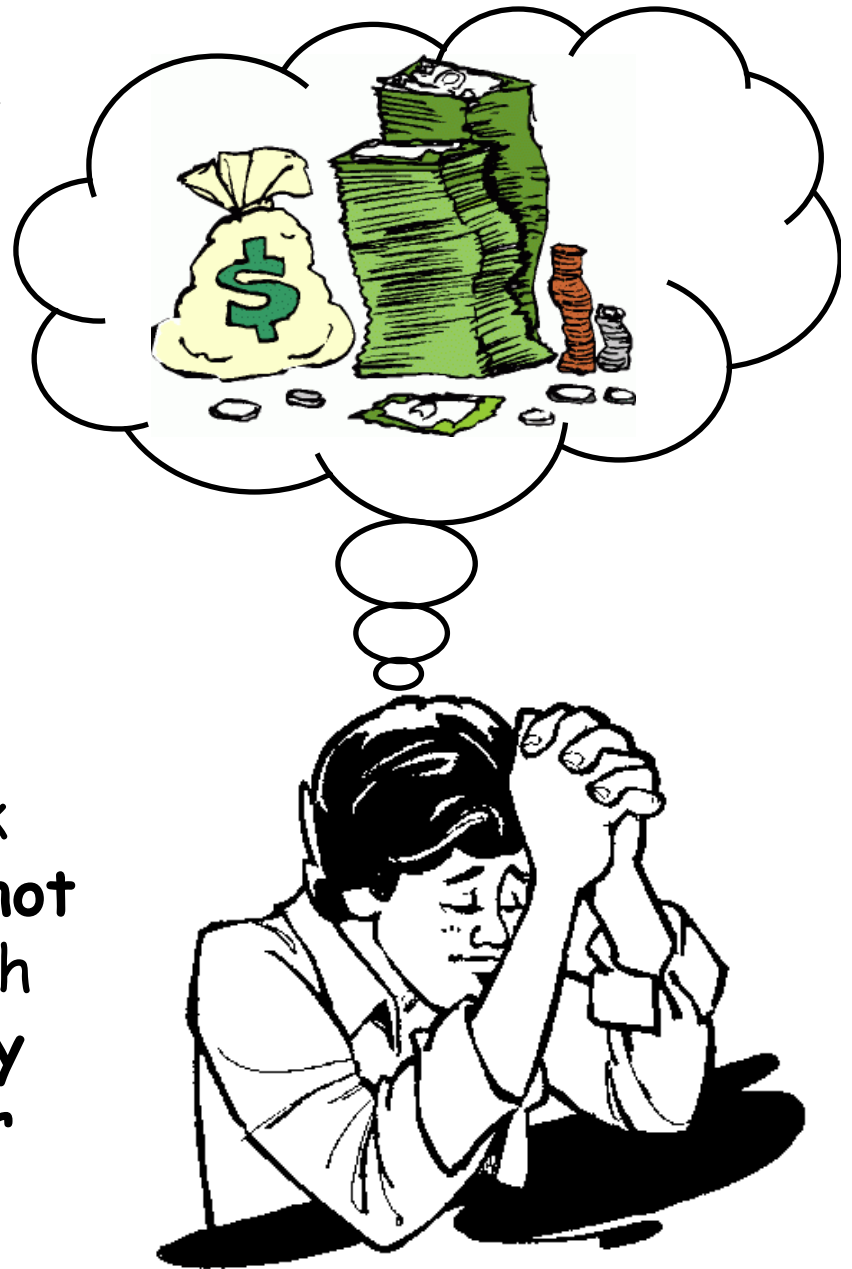


See NOTE 1

LOVERS OF PLEASURE

j) And despite the fact that some have been taught that God will answer selfish prayer (provided you get the formula right), God makes it clear that he will not answer prayer that is aimed at simply satisfying a desire for pleasure:

- James 4:2-3 ... You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, **you do not receive**, because you ask with wrong motives, **that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.**



WHAT TO PURSUE

- ❑ We have no command in God's Word to pursue pleasure. Instead we are instructed to:
 - pursue justice (Deut 16:20)
 - pursue wisdom and understanding (Prov 4:7)
 - pursue knowledge (Prov 18:15)
 - pursue peace and mutual edification (Rom 14:19)
 - pursue that which is good for one another and for all people (1 Thess 5:15)
 - pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness (1 Tim 6:11)
 - pursue holiness (Heb 12:14)



SUCCESS

BASED

CHRISTIANITY

CHRISTIANITY

BASED

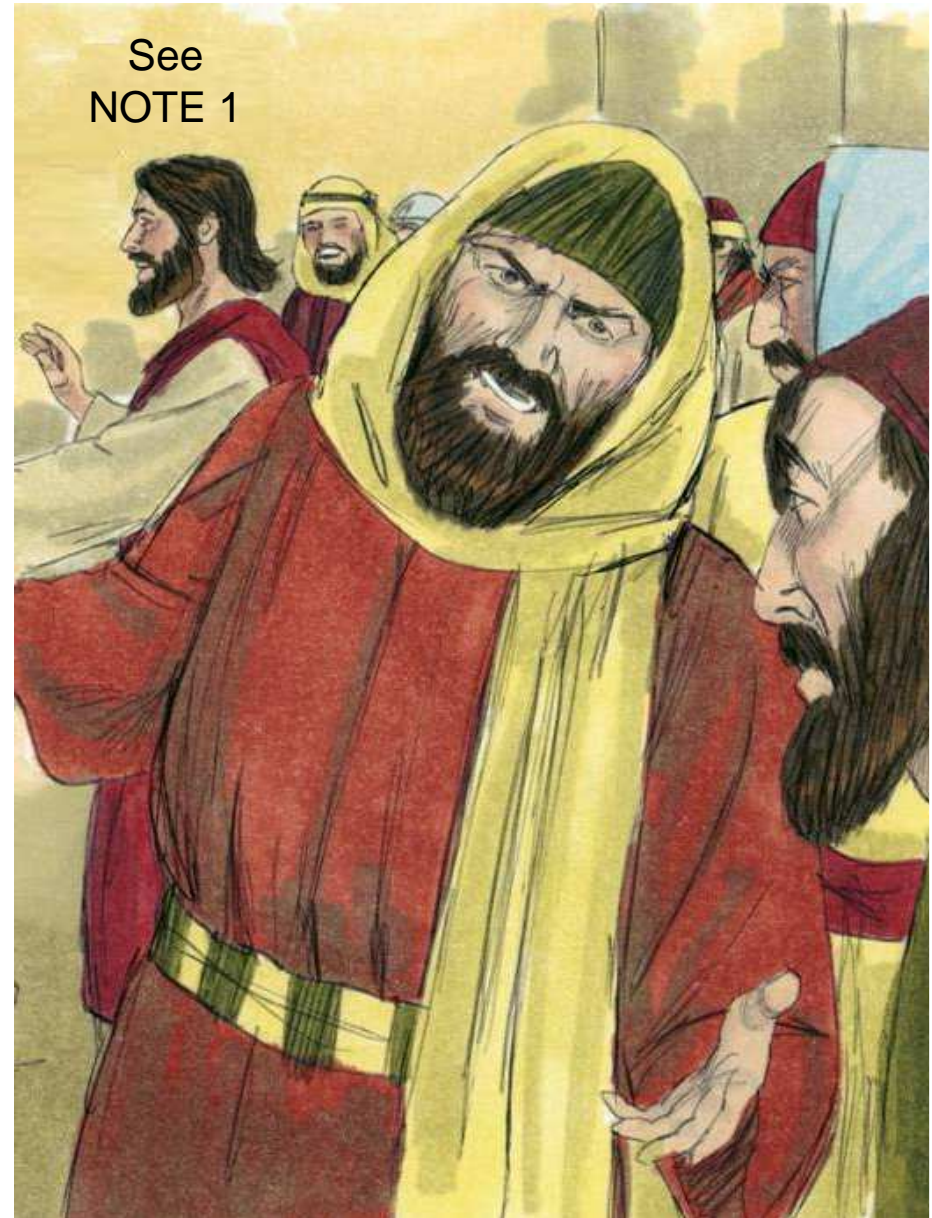


SUCCESS-BASED CHRISTIANITY

- ❑ What we call "Celebrity Christianity" is the trend whereby Christians adopt the values of the celebrity culture as ideals for the Christian life. And so wealth, leisure, fame, and power indicate God's favour and blessing on one's life. These become the goals that a Christian should strive for.
- ❑ Typical book titles by some modern pastors include "Releasing Your Potential: Exposing the Hidden You" and "Live Your Dream: Planning for Success". By 'success', they're normally not referring to overcoming sin or being a good soul-winner either, but being healthy and wealthy.
- ❑ While we may try justify this type of thinking, Jesus said:
 - "You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of others, but God knows your hearts. **What people value highly is detestable in God's sight.**" (Luke 16:15)

SUCCESS-BASED CHRISTIANITY

- ❑ And look at the 2 preceding verses to get the context of what values Jesus was referring to:
 - Luke 16:13-14 "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money." The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus.



CELEBRITY CHRISTIANITY

- ❑ There is also an emphasis today on "celebrity Christians". A fuss is made of celebrities who are professing Christians, because people like to associate themselves with success. Some churches even have special seats reserved for sports heroes and other celebrities to sit in.

- ❑ Yet James writes:

- My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favouritism. Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in.



CELEBRITY CHRISTIANITY

- If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? But you have insulted the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? Are they not the ones who are slandering the noble name of him to whom you belong? (James 2:1-7)

RESERVED

SUCCESS-BASED CHRISTIANITY

- ❑ The following excerpt from a 'Christian' website sounds more like something you'd expect from a motivational speaker. Hopefully you can see the difference between this and Biblical Christianity.
- "The SuccessChurch is based on Christ's Divine Model of Living, High Achieving, and Winning in life. God wants each of us to be a witness for Him, but a witness utilizing our Success in life from Him to bring Him Glory, and to Succeed through His Power, not ours... We have been led to spread the message that we serve a God of Divine, Unlimited Blessings, and Total, Overflowing, Ever-Enlarging, Multiplying Fullness. ¹

¹ <http://www.successchurch.com>

SUCCESS-BASED CHRISTIANITY

❑ It continues:

➤ There is NO Emptiness of Substance with God, and thusly we believe there should not be Emptiness in any aspect of our lives, including relationships, careers, family, health, and finances and Godly Success. We believe that constant struggle in life is a choice, not a destiny.¹

❑ Compare that to the real gospel which teaches contentment when in need and when hungry:

➤ I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want (Philippians 4:12).

¹ Ibid

CELEBRITY CHRISTIANITY

- ❑ This same website says we must be “a witness utilizing our Success in life from Him to bring Him Glory”. ¹ Paul tells us to “boast in the Lord” and not about our own success (which the Corinthians clearly didn’t have).
- 1 Cor 1:26-31 Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.

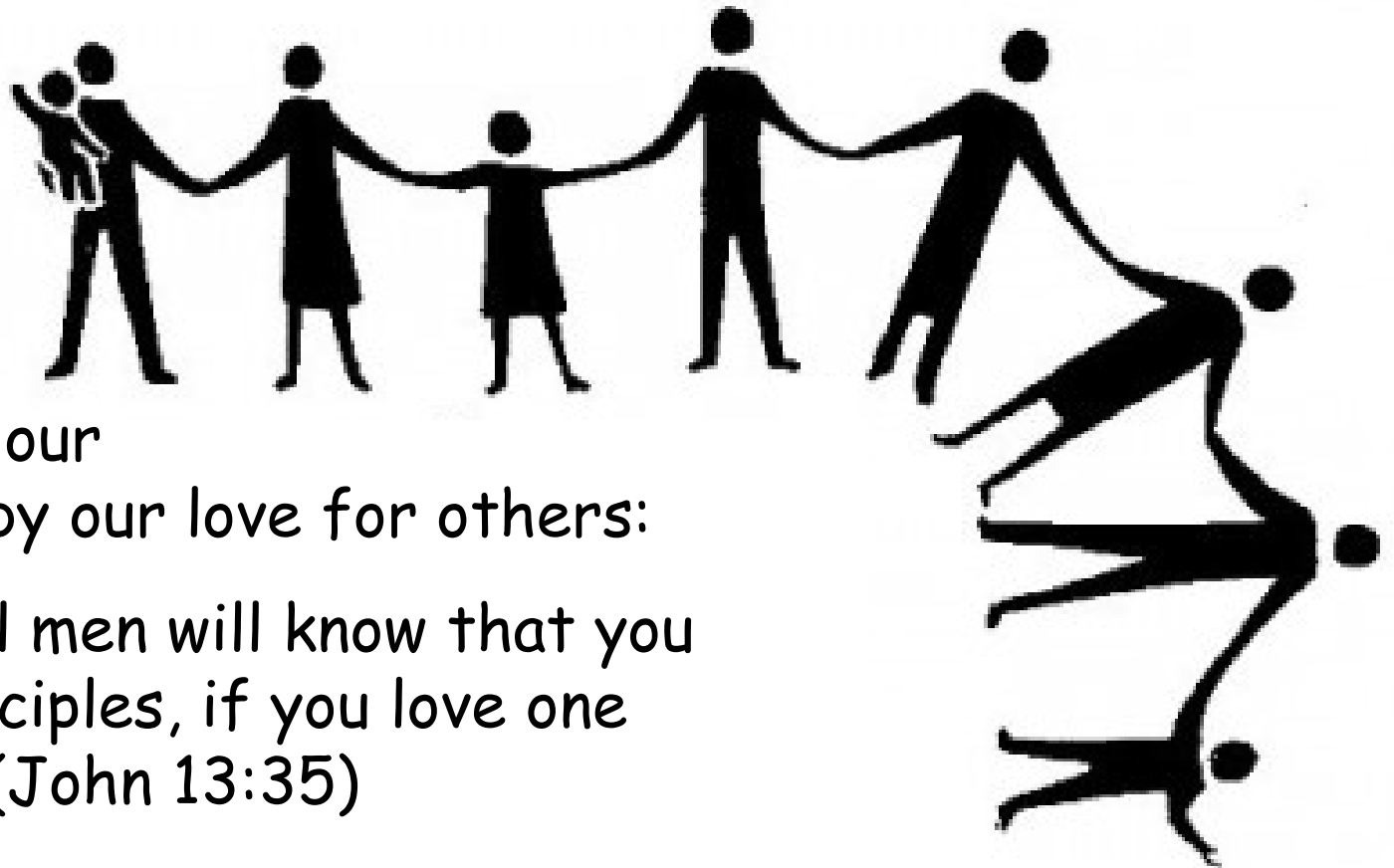
¹ www.successchurch.com

CELEBRITY CHRISTIANITY

It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: “Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.”

- ❑ Incidentally Jesus didn't say that people would know we are Christians by our success, but by our love for others:

➤ “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” (John 13:35)



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