

FAKE NEWS!

Ponder: Who can you trust?

Scripture: ***“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, NKJV).

“You can’t put anything on the internet unless it’s true. How do I know this? I read it on the internet!” Maybe you chuckled when you read that, but you may also have winced a little. Since the election this past November, “fake news” has been . . . well, it’s been all over the news! But we knew about it long before last November.

Popes, presidents, preachers, politicians, and countless others have been the subject of fictional stories passed off as news. Some are clearly satire, like the “Babylon Bee” report that Joel Osteen released a new study Bible with 30,000 notes saying “Just believe in yourself!” Would you believe some folks thought it was real?

Other “fake news” articles are published under names that are similar to well-known news sources. Oftentimes these are vicious smears designed to trash the reputations of whichever celebrities they deal with. Regrettably, even some Christians post these hit pieces on social media or forward them in emails without checking to see if they are true. Bottom line, they are engaging in slander and gossip!

We shouldn’t be surprised when worldly people publish slanderous material. The bigger problem is that we are sometimes gullible enough to believe it, and we are entirely too quick to believe bad news, especially if it is against someone we oppose anyway.

Unfortunately, social media doesn’t have a monopoly on fake news. Whereas the gospel of Christ is genuine “Good News,” the religious world is

dominated by fake news. Multitudes buy into it because it is presented authoritatively by people who are presumed to be trustworthy. “I know this is true because the (preacher, priest, pastor, pope) said so.” Even in New Testament days, unscrupulous individuals were forging letters as if from one of the apostles (see 2nd Thess. 2:1, 2 “Now brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter as if from us . . .”). Later, countless fake books were written claiming to be by various inspired writers (e.g. “Gospel of Thomas,” also Mary, Judas, Philip et. al.). Early Xns were on their guard & rejected these forgeries.

Just as we should fact-check social media stories, so we should check what we hear in the realm of religion. The noble Bereans didn’t just accept whatever Paul and Silas said; they searched the Scriptures to see if what they heard was true (Acts 17:11). Then, and only then, did they believe and obey.

Don’t let fake news fool you!