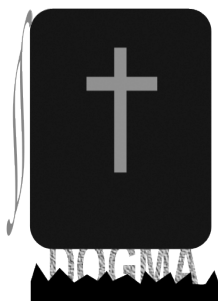


WHO *Really* GOES TO HELL?
THE GOSPEL YOU'VE NEVER HEARD

What a Protestant Bible written by Jews says about
God's work through Christ

(A book for those in the church and those offended by it)

by David I. Rudel



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The Bible is best read with
your own eyes... preferably open

www.biblicalheresy.com

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NET Bible®

An online index of the Bible verses cited (allowing for instant viewing of the biblical text) is available at Scripture.John173.net

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Version 1.3

Due to the author's zeal overrunning his good judgment, an uncorrected version of this work made it into retail channels previously. If you or someone you know purchased one of these defective versions, please apprise the publisher, who will gladly swap the uncorrected copy with a corrected one.

The NET Bible (along with a raft of useful textual and cultural notes) is available in its entirety as a free download or for online web use at www.nextbible.org

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FOREWORD

Well, their it is. You cannot see it because you are reading the text on a printed page. The annoying green wiggly line is only on my computer screen, flagging "their it is." Sometimes I see wiggly lines that are green, sometimes red, but no matter what color they are, they irritate me and I know that the only way to make them disappear is to stop what I am doing, stop what I am thinking, and deal with them.

I am required to hover the cursor over the wiggly line, right click the mouse, and read and respond to the dialogue box that appears. If the line is red, the computer tells me that my word choice deviates from the standard dictionary, and if the line is green, the problem is my grammar. Then, my computer asks me (ever so gently) if I really meant to spell the word that way or if I really meant to use the word in that peculiar fashion. I can respond with several options. I can insert a correctly spelled word from a list, I can insert a grammatically corrected sentence, I can scrap what I have written and begin again, or I can ignore the problem and settle for being incorrect.

I am sure that somewhere in my computer software there is a way for me to disable my annoying wiggly lines. I choose not to. As annoying as it is to have my thought processes interrupted, I realize that when misspelled words and poor grammar appear in a text that bears my name, I inevitably lose credibility in the eyes of discerning readers. How convincing can my argument be if I cannot choose the right word for a sentence?

I call the wiggly lines essential annoyances.

You are holding in your hands a book that may well become for you an essential annoyance. David Rudel's *Who Really Goes to Hell? — The Gospel You've Never Heard* is an important book. He will posit ideas and ask questions about the Bible's teachings and about the Church's use of those teachings that may trouble you. The questions are honest, thoroughly researched, meticulously argued, and will wash over you like incessant waves. Most annoyingly, his questions are always referenced to scripture as the standard.

I don't agree with all of Rudel's conclusions and I question some of his

Biblical-critical methods, but it isn't his conclusions that annoy me. Somehow, the questions that he asks have become embedded in my mind—in my operating system. They open in a dialogue box in my head, and they require a response. Rudel's questions have become a kind of annoying filter through which I must pass my sermons and my sermon preparation, my Bible teaching and the reading that informs it, my public prayers and the very personal contemplation that gives birth to them, and even my intimate thoughts about salvation, damnation, eternal life, death, heaven, and hell.

Well, there it is. If you love God's Word and treasure God's Church, this book will be an essential, albeit annoying, challenge.

2-15-2009

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INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS THIS?

WARNING: Cigarette Smoke Contains Carbon Monoxide.

You probably do not read the warning labels on cigarettes. You know the gist and purpose of the warning; reading the text is unlikely to provide any new insight. The warning could say almost anything, and you would read it as, “Hey, perhaps willfully inhaling fumes isn’t a good idea.”

In fact the label itself does not say smoking is hazardous, even if you assume everyone knows carbon monoxide is dangerous. Perfectly safe substances can contain chemicals that would be deadly in isolation — Chlorine makes up over half of common table salt. But we know the warning really means that the carbon monoxide in smoke, unlike the chlorine in salt, can cause us harm when we put it in our bodies.

Furthermore, we know this warning is different from, say, caution labels on curling irons suggesting you not put them in your ear. The cigarette’s warning is not meant to stop you from using the product in a dangerous manner; it discourages you from using the product at all.

We would know these things even had we never read such a label, for the media, our doctors, our parents, etc. tell us smoking is unhealthy. We don’t need to read the text; we’ve already been told what it says... and if we do read it and find something unfamiliar (e.g., *carbon monoxide*), it doesn’t stop us from determining the intent. Like watching a foreign version of a film you’ve already seen in your native tongue, you know the plot without reading the subtitles.

Had the warning read “Exposure to gelid hydroxylic acid can result in horripilation,” we might assume cigarettes contain gelid hydroxylic acid and that horripilation is some terrible medical disorder. In reality the label would simply be saying that cold water can cause goose bumps.

My point? *Our assumptions color not only how we read things but also the conclusions we draw as we make the text meet our expectations.*

Our presuppositions are unlikely to lead us astray when we read warning labels on cigarettes, but what about when we read the Bible?

Almost everyone is told what Christianity is about and what to expect from the Bible long before reading it carefully. In addition to these assumptions, we

have our own opinions on what we'd like the Bible to say. In the end, it's very hard to simply read the Bible for what it says. Instead, we read into it what we think it should say or what we have been told it says... or we don't read it at all, having decided its teachings (as described by others) make no sense.

What people think Christianity "is all about" is largely based on the views presented by active spreaders of the gospel. From these messages, a consensus has formed among non-Christians of the basic principles of biblical Christianity. For understandable reasons, non-believers tend to define Christianity in terms of its claims regarding how the Judgment works — Who goes to heaven? Who to Hell?

This book emerged as the product of a spiritual, scriptural journey that began when I realized the claims we assume to be *what the Bible says* do not appear to be motivated by scripture at all. Rather, the Bible seems to have been bent to match our assumptions. I eventually found the Bible describes a perfectly reasonable, logical, God-centered story of salvation far afield from what people in America perceive based on evangelists and evangelicals.

I was once a conservative Calvinist, so I'm hopeful this book will turn upside down the worlds of a few who are now as I once was. But I also hope it shows liberal Christians that a literal reading of the Bible makes a good deal more sense than they realize, and (perhaps most of all) I hope it speaks to non-believers who may have judged Christianity too soon based on modern dogma.

The first four chapters demonstrate the motivation for constructing a different salvation paradigm fitting naturally with scripture as a whole.

Chapters five through seven investigate the Judgment, engaging the question in the title of this book. I do not suggest skipping forward to it.

Chapters eight through eleven build up a biblical understanding of salvation. They also serve to defend the paradigm described in the first four chapters and fill a void left by the castles torn down in the middle three.

In short, this book is for anyone who thinks Jesus knew what He was talking about and wants a second opinion on what that entails. I've tried to make the book meaningful to evangelicals, liberal Christians, and non-believers. To do so has required that it not be the perfect match for any one group. This is an *interactive* book in that you can go to www.john173.net to connect with others, see discussion of reader questions, and/or submit your own.