

Rob Bell: A Brother to Embrace, or a Wolf to Avoid?

Scripture: 1 Timothy 6:3–4; Titus 1:9–11

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If Christopher Hitchens or Deepak Chopra penned a book that scoffed at the biblical teaching on hell, we would not be surprised. So why would anyone be shocked or confused when Rob Bell writes *Love Wins*? Has Bell shown any more commitment to gospel truth, or any more devotion to the principle of biblical authority than Hitchens or Chopra?

Is Rob Bell truly a Christian, or is he one of those dangerous deceivers Scripture warns us about repeatedly (Acts 20:29; 2 Corinthians 11:13-15; Colossians 2:8; 2 Peter 2:1; etc.)?

It's a fair—and necessary—question. Christ's famous warning about wolves in sheep's clothing is given to us as an imperative: "*Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits*" (Matthew 7:15-16). Our Lord clearly expects His true disciples to be able to spot spiritual imposters and wolves in sheep's clothing—*especially* those who are purveyors of deadly false doctrines.

Rob Bell certainly fits that category. He relentlessly casts doubt on the authority and reliability of Scripture. He denies the Bible's perspicuity, disavows its hard truths, and ridicules some of the most important features of the gospel.



Granted, Bell (who was raised in the evangelical movement and is an alumnus of Wheaton College) still insists on *calling* himself "evangelical." He reiterated that claim recently in [a March 14 interview](#) with Lisa Miller, where he stated, "Do I think that I'm evangelical and orthodox to the bone? Yes."

A careful examination of Bell's teaching suggests, however, that [his profession of faith](#) is not credible. His claim that he is "evangelical and orthodox to the bone" is, to put it bluntly, a lie. Bell's teaching gives no evidence of any real evangelical conviction. If "each tree is known by its own fruit" (Luke 6:44), we cannot blithely embrace Rob Bell as a "brother" just because he says he wants to be accepted as an evangelical.

If, as Jesus said, His sheep hear His voice and follow Him (John 10:27), then we ought to look with the utmost suspicion on anyone who doubts and denies as much of Jesus' teaching as Rob Bell

does, and yet claims to be a follower of Christ.

Scripture is crystal-clear about this: “If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, he is conceited and understands nothing” (1 Timothy 6:3-4).

Historic evangelicalism has always affirmed the authority, inerrancy, and sufficiency of Scripture, while declaring (as Jesus and the apostles did) that the only way of salvation for fallen humanity is through the atoning work of Christ, and the only instrument of justification is faith in Jesus Christ as He is revealed in the gospel.

Rob Bell believes none of those things. His skepticism about so many key biblical truths, his penchant for sowing doubt in his hearers, and his obvious contempt for the principles of divine justice as taught in Scripture all give evidence that he is precisely the kind of unbelieving false teacher Scripture warns us about.

Bell is an inveterate syncretist who loves to blend “progressive” and politically correct dogmas with eastern mysticism, humanistic jargon, and Christian terminology. His teaching is full of barren ideas borrowed directly from old liberalism, sometimes rephrased in postmodern jargon but still reeking of stale Socinianism.

What Bell is peddling is nothing like New Testament Christianity. It is a man-centered religion totally devoid of both clarity and biblical authority.

Given those facts, you might think any true evangelical would reject Bell and his teaching outright. But evidently many in the American evangelical movement think they are obliged simply to accept at face value Bell’s claim of orthodoxy. No less than Mart DeHaan, voice of Radio Bible Class, [decried Bell’s critics](#), portraying *them* as the divisive ones for pointing out the unsoundness of Bell’s teaching. DeHaan wrote,

I’m left wondering... are we allowing love (and truth) to win now... by using threats of group pressure and blackballing of *brothers* like Rob, and those who openly or secretly stand with him? *Is that really the best way to maintain a strong and healthy orthodoxy?* [emphasis added]

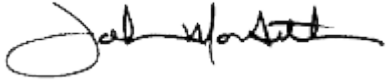
The biblical answer to DeHaan’s question is clear and fairly simple: The best way to maintain a strong and healthy orthodoxy is to “[hold] fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching . . . to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict. For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers . . . who must be silenced” (Titus 1:9-11).

We have a duty not only to expose, refute, and silence Rob Bell’s errors, but also to urge people under his influence to run as fast and as far as they can from him, lest they be gathered into the eternal hell he denies. It won’t do to sit by idly while someone who denies the danger of hell mass-produces sons of hell (cf. Matthew 23:15).

In a series of posts this week, we will demonstrate from Rob Bell’s own published works that he has long been hostile to virtually every vital gospel truth; we will consider some of the questions he has raised about what the Bible has to say about hell; and we will compare and contrast what Bell is

saying about hell with what Jesus said about it.

Buckle in and get ready to be challenged. These are admittedly some of the hardest truths in the New Testament, but there's no reason anyone holding authentic evangelical convictions should find the subject confusing or controversial.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John MacArthur', with a stylized, cursive script.

John MacArthur
Pastor-Teacher

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