

Are you ready to be awakened? This is the challenge Oprah has raised around the world. It was first an invitation to read a new addition to her Book Club, *A New Earth*,¹ by author Eckhart Tolle, and to participate in a ten-week online course, which began Monday, March 3rd. Oprah and Tolle conducted the course, teaching and discussing the meaning of the New Age doctrine espoused in Tolle's book.

The Gospel According to Oprah

Oprah claimed that, before it was over, two million plus people signed up for her Internet course, and no doubt many were convicted by what was taught. Why? For one thing, Tolle is an interesting writer holding out a promise to readers that there is something better within the grasp of every person, something higher than the reality we all know as everyday life. Further, Oprah has tremendous power of persuasion with a huge audience of followers. She is especially influential among those whose hands rock the cradles of the world, and she is pressing hard her New Age message on unsuspecting folks everywhere.

It seemed wise to spend time analyzing what would be taught, particularly since it would undoubtedly touch all of us in Christ and all of

¹ Tolle, Eckhart, *A New Earth* (2005), Penguin Group (USA), Inc., New York, NY.

Oprah's New Age Church?

those we teach. I signed up for Oprah's course, and reviewed it in light of plain Bible teaching. Looking back, based on what I now know is taught in *A New Earth* and in the interviews that I monitored, Tolle teaches serious error that needs to be exposed. However, his book also has some good points. I hope in this book to underscore both the good and the bad.

At this writing, it is June, 2008. The ten-week online course Oprah started in March is history. But the impact continues. In fact, interest is so high she has decided to rerun the series through the summer, a summer school which started Monday, June 16th. A major campaign soliciting new member has been launched, and she is especially concentrating on getting "converts" from the first series to organize groups for collective study and discussion of the book. Her appeal is strong and it reaches into the four corners of the civilized earth.

My book is more than a review of Eckhart Tolle's *A New Earth*. Throughout, I have included thoughts on the broader context of the New Age Movement for as one writer said, "*The New Age Movement represents a formidable social and spiritual challenge for Christianity.*" I hope by this study we might all be better equipped to refute Oprah's and Tolle's New Age teaching and answer those who ask a reason for the hope that we have in Jesus Christ.

Please ask others to join us in considering and exposing the error being taught. Copies of this book for family and friends are available by writing order@clarionword.com, visiting our website: www.clarionword.com, or sending your request to Clarion Word Publishing, P.O. Box 21277, Chattanooga, TN 37424. Volume purchasers and churches enjoy liberal discounts. If you are not already subscribed to the *Clarion Word eGram* newsletter, you may do so by visiting www.clarionword.com. *eGram* is a free monthly publication containing articles on a variety of spiritual topics. Your name or email address will never be used for another purpose, and you can easily unsubscribe at any time. Please respond to the confirmation email to complete your registration and download your free gift for subscribing.

The Father of Now

Oprah calls Eckhart Tolle the “father of now.” Perhaps this is one of the reasons he has had such wide appeal. His promises – peace, happiness and spiritual enlightenment – are allegedly available now. Their fulfillment is to be found in the careful appreciation of each moment, in the positive aspects of whatever the current circumstances may be. Be satisfied with now, and do not fret about what may be on the morrow.

Of course, there is good reason this is appealing. The average person in American and every other industrialized nation is under almost constant bombardment from the stress of everyday life. We become anxious about a myriad of things, many of which we have no control over. The pressure increases, worry creeps in and anxiety takes control. We feel overwhelmed, helpless to bear up under what life holds.

According to the Satellite Corporation, an organization formed in response to alarming research statistics indicating we are fast becoming a society dependent on depression medications, *“Approximately 18.8 million American adults, or about 9.5 percent of the U.S. population age 18 and older in a given year, have a depressive disorder. ... Depression affects all people regardless of age, geographic location, demographic or social position. ... Depressive disorders are appearing earlier in life with the average age of onset 50 years ago being 29 whereas recent statistics indicate it at just 14.5 years in today’s society. ... Depressive disorders often co-occur with anxiety disorders and substance abuse. ... Up to 2.5 % of children in the United States suffer from depression. ... In 1997, suicide was the leading cause of death of 10 to 24-year-olds. All too often suicide is the result of extended periods of depression. ... In 2001, 30,622 people died by suicide in the U.S. ... More than 90 percent of people who kill themselves have a diagnosable mental disorder, commonly a depressive disorder or a substance abuse disorder.”*² These statistics are shocking. Even among

² *Depression Facts and Statistics* (2007), Satellite Corporation Pty Ltd, URL <http://www.depressionperception.com>.

Oprah's New Age Church?

those who claim to trust in Jesus Christ, there are many who are anxious, even depressed.

The Bible says, *“Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things.”* (Matthew 6:34) So, when Tolle argues for appreciating the moment, not letting adverse circumstances get us down, and looking at every situation with a positive view, he is really espousing what Jesus and other New Testament instructors taught long ago. For example, after focusing his readers on things true, noble, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous, and praiseworthy, Paul said, *“Meditate on these things.”* (Philippians 4:8)

While much of what Mr. Tolle teaches in this regard is true, and while many need to appreciate and make the most of each moment, accepting and being happy with their lot in life, Tolle's underlying purpose for promoting “now” is that it is crucial to his doctrine of getting in touch with one's inner self, the divine essence in each of us. By doing so, he reasons, we can take the next logical step in the evolution of mankind – a step to a new earth.

Those who follow his lead will not find and be a part of the new heaven and new earth that the apostle John tells about seeing in Revelation 21:1. What John saw is not promised to those who put their trust in the dictates of their own inner self. What John saw is promised to only those who put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Tolle says trust in self, in one's own fallible, incomplete “truth,” and in the “divinity” inherently in humankind. By contrast, the Bible says, *“...we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.”* (1 Timothy 4:11)