

## Looking a Gift Horse in the Mouth?



**Introduction:** In 1546 this expression was first published in England: *Don't look a given horse in the mouth*. It is like a proverb or wise saying of the time. We think it comes from the fact that a horse's age and sometimes health condition can be determined by looking at his teeth. So if you want to purchase a horse, it would be wise to look in his mouth before determining a price to pay.

And if someone GIVES you a horse; it would be considered an INSULT to check out his value in front of the gift-giver. If you question the motive of a gift or the value of a gift or the quality of a gift at the Christmas-Tree gift exchange, for example, your parents are likely to tell you to "don't say that!" or "that is rude" or "just be thankful you got that!". Sound familiar?

In the Old West days a commonly reported problem existed of "swapping" a purchased animal for another. For example, you might look at a horse, examine him, and purchase him and several more from the same herd. The selling agent would promise delivery of the animals [be it a horse or cow] at a certain date. But when the animals were delivered, they were not the same nor of the same quality as purchased.

### **Accept no Substitutes:**

There used to be a commercial on television many years ago that said: Accept no Substitutes. Since that time there have been songs, commercials, variations of this slogan around.

Basically accepting a substitute means you don't receive the same quality as an original. Many times a substitute is a cheap copy of an original; much like substituting an old decrepit horse for a young vibrant one. This basic problem has been around for a long time.

At Christmas time we see the same problem. But it is a much bigger more serious problem than substituting poor merchandise for good merchandise. We have all had a toy break the same day we opened the package. No, this is much more important than the gifts under the tree. Let me explain. [Place this verse on a white board/ PowerPoint/ or some visual means].

*Matthew 24:4-5 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.*

Let's do an experiment. **You tell me what the REAL deal is and what is not.**

- Named brand cola vs. Generic store brand cola [Take a blind taste test; generally the kids can tell you the difference. Have a student come up and taste from two Dixie cup sized drinks and tell you which is the Real Deal?]
- Toy Car vs. Real Car [Have a toy car available and then talk about the vehicle the students came in this morning; which is the Real Deal?]
- Fake Present [empty box wrapped] vs. Real present [small gift wrapped]; which was the Real Deal?

### **Omnipresent:**

Bible says: *Matthew 28:20 '...and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.'*

Bible says: *Proverbs 15:3 "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good."*

Omnipresent means that someone/something is EVERYWHERE ALL THE TIME. The Bible, God's Word tells us that God is omnipresent when it tells us He is always with the born-again person & His eyes are in every place.

So watch out for the SUBSTITUTE! The substitute claims to be in every parade in America at the same time as well as in every Mall at the same time.

Only ONE has omnipresence. Be careful of the substitute.

### **Everlasting Life:**

The Bible says that Jesus said: *John 3:16 for God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*"

Jesus is speaking of our soul living forever and ever as a result of salvation/being saved. Nothing is said about giving us a physical eternal life until after the second coming of Christ which has not happened yet.

So watch for the SUBSTITUTE! The substitute claims to have been around since about 300AD & not died yet.

### **Omniscient:**

The Bible, God's Word says: *1 Samuel 16:7 "...for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."*

The Bible, God's Word says: *Hebrews 4: 12-13 For the Lord is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the hearts. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight, but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."*

So watch for the SUBSTITUTE! The substitute says he knows all; that he knows if you've been naughty or nice.

### **Bringing His rewards with him:**

The Bible says to the saved/born again person: *Revelation 22:12 "And behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be."*

The Bible says to the unsaved person: *Colossians 3:24 "Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive for the wrong which he hath done, and there is no respect of persons."*

SO watch out for the substitute:

### **Summary to the Teacher/Preacher:**

This lesson is not intended to dispel the fun activity of Santa Claus, Christmas Trees, or the Giving of Gifts. Rather it is intended to place these holiday traditions and cultures in perspective. A healthy balance is possible.

I would NEVER walk into a classroom and tell the kids that Santa Claus is a fairy tale.

I would walk into a classroom and prayerfully let them draw conclusions that help them to develop a respect for truth vs. fiction.

We are on dangerous ground when we propagate fiction as fact; rather than as fictional fun only. How is a young mind to discern when we are telling them that the Bible is the Word of God and yet give such a place of prominence to a fictional for fun character? Be careful accept no Substitutes.