

Christianity's Greatest Deception

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Christianity's Greatest Deception

Today, a third of the earth's population professes a belief in Jesus Christ of Nazareth. But strangely enough, almost no one practices the way of life lived and taught by Christ Himself and His original apostles.

Just what happened to Christianity? How did members of the early New Testament Church live? What did early Christians believe? And, we should also ask, *what changed?*



It's high time that someone "blew the lid" off what is undoubtedly the greatest religious deception in the modern world! For countless MILLIONS have been deceived *and are even now being deceived.*

How has this deception been perpetrated? And **WHY** would God allow something like this to happen?

To understand, we must first expose yet another widespread religious lie--the idea that God is trying to "save" the whole world *right now!* Shocking as it may seem, the Bible reveals that this is NOT the case.

One of God's names in Hebrew is *El Shaddai*, translated into modern English as "God Almighty." Now if God *really* has all might and all power, and if He *were* trying to save the world now, *then He surely would be succeeding!* Yet on the world scene, those who profess to be Christian have always been in the minority. Though one-third of the earth's population professes Christianity, that leaves *two-thirds* that *don't!*

So what's going on? Could it be that God *isn't* quite so powerful as He claims to be? No--for God IS all-powerful. *What* then? The *real* answer is that God has been *allowing* the world to go its own way for nearly 6,000 years under the malevolent influence of Satan the Devil. Notice what God's Word actually says: "So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who DECEIVES THE WHOLE WORLD; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him" (Rev. 12:9). The Apostle Paul adds to our

understanding, describing Satan as "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2). Again Paul was inspired to write, "But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has *blinded*, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them" (2 Cor. 4:3-4).

Satan, then, is the actual "god" of this age. He has "blinded" the eyes of humanity as a whole from understanding the true God--and His plan and PURPOSE. But finally, after Christ returns, Satan will be cast aside by a mighty angel of God: "He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should DECEIVE THE NATIONS NO MORE till the thousand years were finished" (Rev. 20:2-3). Yes, Satan has been *deceiving* all the nations of the earth!

Remarkable!

And there's no doubt that Satan's GREATEST deception has been to confuse mankind about the very religion that purports to teach about God the Father and Jesus Christ His Son. For, believe it or not, today's mainstream "Christianity"--its *forms, ceremonies* and *doctrine*--are so completely CONTRARY to the teachings and practices of Jesus and the early apostles as to be almost *unrecognizable* as the same religion! But don't believe it just because we say it. Rather, we will clearly PROVE this contention as we go along--from the Bible, from secular historical sources and even from the admissions of mainstream religious scholars. We know this material will be new--even shocking!--to many of you reading this. But it is the *truth* of REAL Christianity.

The noted philosopher Søren Kierkegaard wrote in his work titled *Attack Upon Christendom*, "The Christianity of the New Testament *simply does not exist*. Millions of people through the centuries have little by little cheated God out of Christianity, and have succeeded in making Christianity exactly the *opposite* of what it is in the New Testament." But before we examine the details of the matter, we need to ask some very basic questions.

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Prove What You Believe

Have you ever really proven *why* you believe what you do? Or did you just grow up in "your" church, taking its doctrine and practices for granted--without deeply studying the Bible? If the latter, how can you have real confidence in your beliefs? Instead, shouldn't you PROVE what you believe by the inspired Word of God?

Think for a moment. WHY is professing Christianity divided into more than 400 competing denominations and sects? WHY do churches calling themselves Christian have so many differing beliefs and practices? Could it be that God is the author of CONFUSION? Or might there be another explanation?

Consider the warning Christ Himself gave: "For many shall come in my name, saying [that] I am Christ; and shall deceive many" (Matt. 24:5 KJV). Jesus did not say here that only *some few* would come in His name, but rather that "*many* shall come"! They come as "Christian" preachers, proclaiming *Jesus* as the Christ--yet DECEIVING MANY! In other words, there was to be a *mass deception* based on the false teachings of the *many* who would claim to come "in Jesus' name."

Frankly, it is easy for religious teachers to *appropriate* the Son of God's name as a cloak for their personal doctrine, whether or not what they say has any relationship at all to the real Jesus' life or teachings! That is why the Apostle Paul tells us, "PROVE all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess. 5:21 KJV). Each one of us is responsible to "check up" on the doctrines we are taught--whatever the source. Don't make careless assumptions! **Be sure you know what the Bible really says!**

Paul further admonishes, "For if he who comes preaches *another* Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a *different* spirit which you have not received, or a *different* gospel which you have not accepted, you may well put up with it!" (2 Cor. 11:4). In other words, Paul feared that some of the Church members of his day would fall prey to "counterfeit" ministers and would come to accept a *false* gospel about a *false* Christ!

What about you? Is it possible that *you* have put up with "another Jesus"? Might *you* have been deceived into believing in a false portrayal of Christ--along with a false *message* merely *purported* to have come from the true Jesus? How can we KNOW what's true and what isn't?

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Real Christianity

Today, we have presidents and prime ministers, leading executives, actors and athletes who all go to church at least occasionally. They *profess* to be Christian. But quite often their "fruits" indicate otherwise (cf. Matt. 7:16-20). Many are *known* to be habitual adulterers, liars and hypocrites--perhaps even *deeply* involved in abusing illegal drugs and taking bribes--showing no signs of real repentance! Although in their public persona some may even try to give the impression that they serve God, their daily *way of life* makes a mockery of this profession.

And if we are to be brutally honest, this same confusion and hypocrisy is extant in the vast majority of *private* citizens who profess to be Christian! God is not "real" to most of them. They just go to church now and again because it's expected, because it's the "respectable" thing to do or because of a some vague realization that they're not living right and that, perhaps, going to church might "help out a little bit."

But when they get inside the church, what happens? Does God and His inspired Word become more REAL to them? Are they given true *understanding* of the Creator's plan and PURPOSE for their lives? Are they inspired by receiving deeper knowledge of Bible prophecy or how to better live a Christian life based on the law of God?

Probably not.

In far too many cases, modern churchgoers are treated to a series of rituals, hymns, mumbled prayers recited from memory, responsive readings and vague sermons that have very little to do with the real MESSAGE of Jesus Christ. Others are riveted to their seats, as a fiery preacher chants, sings, cries and dances--all the while fervently proclaiming religious revival and the miracles of the "Holy Ghost." Yet for all the hype, once again, there's very little of the *real* message of Christ.

And let's not forget the "Christian calendar," punctuated by the observance of Christmas, Easter, All Saints' Day and the like. Yet Christmas is simply a continuation of the pagan festivals of Saturnalia and Brumalia kept by the ancient Romans at the winter solstice. Easter is the spring celebration of the Babylonian sex goddess Ishtar. And All Saints' Day, including the previous evening--Halloween--is the ancient Celtic festival of the Lord of the Dead and his demons. Not one of these Satan-inspired holidays has ANY RELATION to biblical Christianity whatsoever!

What a *contrast* to what Jesus Christ and the original New Testament Church taught and practiced! Christ, His apostles and the whole Church at that time met regularly on the seventh-day Sabbath, which points to God as the Creator of all that is (Gen. 2:2-3; Mark 6:2; Luke 4:16, 31-32; 13:10; Acts 13:14, 44; 18:4). Jesus observed the annual Feasts or Festivals--including special Holy Days--that God gave to Israel (Lev. 23; Matt. 26:17-19; John 7:10-14, 37-38). And these same Festivals were observed by Christ's apostles for *many decades* after His death (cf. Acts 2:1; 16:13; 17:1-3; 18:21; 1 Cor. 5:7-8). As the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* attests, "**the first Christians continued to**


observe the Jewish festivals [i.e. *God's Festivals*], though in a new spirit, as commemorations of events which those festivals had foreshadowed" (11th ed., vol. 8, p. 828). Later, we will see more historical testimony to this fact.

The early Christians were taught a *way of life* based on the Ten Commandments. And through the observance of God's Holy Days, they were reminded--year by year--of the great PLAN that He is working out here on earth. The early New Testament Christians observed these Festivals because that's what Christ and the original apostles taught them to do! They were also taught that true Christianity is based neither on human imagination nor on tradition, but rather on the *absolute authority* of the Bible! "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God'" (Luke 4:4).

We must never forget that the *real* Jesus Christ was a circumcised Jew. As just cited, He met in the synagogue and observed the Sabbath day (v. 16). He kept the Ten Commandments as a *way of life* (John 15:10). The Apostle Peter tells us, "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an *example*, that you should follow His steps: 'Who committed no sin, nor was guile found in His mouth'" (1 Peter 2:21-22). Paul instructed the Christians of his day, "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). Without question, Christ is our *example*--the Light that God sent into the world to show us how we ought to live. Jesus Himself said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). In light of such powerful scriptures, *why don't* most of those who claim to be Christian try to follow His *literal* teaching and His *literal* example?

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What Christ Taught

 significant prophecy about the coming Messiah was given in Malachi 3:1: "Behold.... the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming." Note that the coming Christ was to be a "Messenger." Jesus Christ came from the Father bearing the "Gospel"--a message of Good News for mankind. That message was not primarily focused on His person. Rather, it was the "gospel of the kingdom of God" (Mark 1:14).

And the Kingdom of God is a real, literal, world-ruling Government that Jesus will establish here on earth at His return. It is also called the Kingdom of Heaven, because it will come down *from* heaven. After His return, Christ will replace Satan as the ruler of this earth. And the resurrected saints of God will rule with Him (Rev. 5:10). At that time, world peace will finally come through divine intervention. All nations will learn to obey the spiritual law of the Eternal (Is. 2:2-4). And God's followers will live forever with Him as glorified members of His great Family. (To learn more about this awe-inspiring message, please write for our free booklet, *Do You Believe the True Gospel?*)

Remember that in Malachi 3:1, Christ is referred to as the "Messenger of the covenant." That's because Christ would come to reveal a "new" covenant--a new *relationship* between God and mankind. This was certainly part of the Gospel message. But was this New Covenant to *do away* with God's spiritual law, the Ten Commandments? Read what *your Bible* says about this law: "But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also

The Sermon on the Mount--

Magnifying the Law

Jesus came as the Messiah to "magnify the law" (Is. 42:21)--that is, to enlarge it in the eyes of humanity so that we could understand its underlying intent. Yet some claim that Christ came to do away with the law altogether. However, in His famous Sermon on the Mount, recorded in Matthew, chapters 5 through 7, Jesus stated, "**Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill**" (5:17). Now many say this means that we no longer need to obey God's law since Christ has "done it all *for* us." But notice the excellent explanation of this verse given in the introduction of David H. Stern's *Jewish New Testament*:

Did [Jesus] fill or fulfill the [Law]? The common word *plerôsai* means "to fill." At [Matthew] 5:17 most translations render it "to fulfill." The theological implications often drawn are that [Jesus] fulfilled all the

Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.... For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: **I will put MY LAWS in their mind and write them on their hearts;** and I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (Heb. 8:6, 10).

Note that the New Covenant was established not on better *laws*, but on better *promises*. In fact, since the book of Hebrews was here quoting the Old Testament book of Jeremiah (31:31-34), the laws under the New Covenant must be those same laws that the *Old* Covenant was based upon--the Ten Commandments! They are definitely not ABOLISHED! Rather, through God's Spirit, they will be written in the minds and hearts of God's people. *The International Critical Commentary* explains that Jeremiah 31:31-34 "is often misunderstood as a promise of a new law to take the place of the old... or else as a promise of a religion without law at all. But the new thing promised in v. 33 is, in fact, neither a new law nor freedom from law, but a sincere inward desire and determination on the part of God's people to obey the law *already* given to them ('my law')" (C.E.B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 1, 1975, p. 384 footnote).

Thus, as for the better promises under the terms of the New Covenant, one is that converted men and women have the Holy Spirit to help them overcome their human weaknesses and obey God's laws. The other is that those who overcome will inherit eternal life as glorified members of God's Family.

prophecies of the [Old Testament] pertaining to the Jews, so that none remain for them now; and that he kept the [Law] perfectly, so that no one need obey it today. But these conclusions do not follow logically, and in fact they contradict [Jesus'] immediately preceding statement that he did *not* come to abolish (or destroy) the [Law]. More fundamental for translation, however, is the question of whether *plerôsai* in this verse should be rendered "to fulfill" at all. [This] translator's view is that [Jesus] came to *fill* the [Law] and the ethical pronouncements of the Prophets *full* with their *complete meaning*, so that everyone can know all that obedience entails. For this reason the *Jewish New Testament* says that [Jesus] came "not to abolish but to complete." In fact, this is the subject of the entire Sermon on the Mount; and [Matthew] 5:17, understood in this way, is its theme sentence [1995, pp. xxii-xxiii].

Christ, then, certainly didn't do away with God's law! Notice the next verse: "For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled." Now jots and tittles were the smallest marks of Hebrew writing. What Christ was saying, then, was that even the letter of the law was in force until heaven and earth pass away. And just as heaven and earth still exist, so is God's law--

In no uncertain terms, the real Jesus said, "**If you want to enter into life, KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS**" (Matt. 19:17). He then proceeded to *name* some of the Ten Commandments to show *which* commandments He was talking about! (vv. 18-19). Jesus continually made clear by His life and teachings that the way into God's Kingdom was not only to believe *on* Him, but also to *believe His message*, OBEY the laws of the Eternal and--through the Holy Spirit--develop godly character.

Isaiah had prophesied of the coming Messiah, "The LORD is well pleased for His righteousness' sake; He will magnify the law and make it honorable" (Is. 42:21). So Jesus Christ was to MAGNIFY the existing law of God. When you look at something through a magnifying glass, that doesn't *abolish* it! Rather, you see what you're looking at in much greater detail--and in much better focus. It shouldn't be difficult for an open-minded person to see that this is *exactly* what Jesus Christ did in His teaching. He "magnified" God's law--He made it crystal clear and far more comprehensive. This is exactly what the well-known Sermon on the Mount was all about. In it, Jesus Christ never even *hinted* about doing away with God's law! In fact, He made the law *even more binding!* (See box on page 9: "The Sermon on the Mount: Magnifying the Law.")

Even at the very end of His earthly ministry--even *after* His death and resurrection, after EVERYTHING had been "nailed to the cross" that was going to be nailed there--Jesus gave His disciples what is often called the "Great Commission," which obviously

including the letter of the law--still in force!

That's why Christ says in the following verse, "Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." How clear!

As one seminary professor explains it:

The Old Testament brings gifts to the Christian tradition. One of those gifts is the Torah (the Law)... Jesus embraced the Torah of Moses; he came not to end it but to fulfill it (Matt. 5:17)--*to carry its teachings forward*. Further, to those who came to him seeking eternal life, he held it up as the *essential teaching to be observed* (Luke 10:25-28). Despite Jesus' conflict with some interpreters of his day, both Jewish and Christian scholars see him as one who honored and followed the Law. When Jesus proclaims the coming rule of God, he speaks nowhere in detail about the inner character of this rule. He does not need to because that has *already* been described in the Old Testament.... The Old Testament is not an antiquated Scripture; its life-giving teachings are needed by the church [Frederick C. Holmgren, "Preaching the Gospel Without Anti-Judaism," *Removing Anti-Judaism from the Pulpit*, ed.

extends to true Christians today. He said, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **teaching them to observe ALL THINGS that I have commanded you**; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:18-20).

Note that Jesus told His disciples to go to "all nations" --certainly including Gentile nations--and to teach "ALL things I have commanded you." Note also that the Son of God NEVER said, "Hold on, fellas! What I have just spent my entire ministry teaching you is now DONE AWAY. From now on the Church and all of you should teach a new 'Pauline Theology,' which talks about believing in My *person*, but which DOES AWAY with the necessity of teaching the Ten Commandments that I spoke on the Father's behalf from Mount Sinai and wrote with My own hand!"

RIDICULOUS!

And yet, the supposed "Pauline Theology" is *exactly* what most professing Christians are now taught and sincerely believe. But such theology did not come from the Apostle Paul. For he, like Jesus Christ, *upheld* God's law

by Howard Clark Kee and Irvin J. Borowski, 1996, pp. 72-73].

The real Jesus based His teaching squarely on the law of God, the Ten Commandments. And He revealed the *spiritual nature* of this law in a way that had never before been widely understood. For instance, in "magnifying" the seventh commandment, "You shall not commit adultery" (Ex. 20:14), Jesus further explained, "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matt. 5:27-28). So the law against adultery was made *even more binding*. For even dwelling on committing adultery *in one's mind* equates with committing the act itself!

Thus, Christ showed that the commandments were to regulate not just our actions, but even our innermost thoughts. Christians are to keep them in the "spirit" or intent--not just the letter. Again, the commandments referred to throughout the Sermon on the Mount are clearly the Ten Commandments. As we just saw, Jesus specifically magnified the *seventh* commandment, which forbids adultery. He also magnified the *sixth* commandment, which forbids murder (Ex. 20:13). Jesus' true followers are not only to refrain from murder, but must not even have a hateful or demeaning attitude toward others (Matt. 5:21-22). Again, real Christians are to "LIVE by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4)--in all that we think, say and do!

To learn more about how to keep all of God's commandments in the spirit, please write or call for our free booklet, *The Ten Commandments*.

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Paul and the Law

Remember that Jesus Himself warned, "For many will come in my name, saying [that] I am Christ; and shall DECEIVE MANY" (Matt. 24:5 KJV). Again, note that Jesus said these ministers and teachers would come in *His* name--*Jesus'* name--and would *deceive* the MANY! And that's precisely what's been happening!

Paul himself was concerned about this same problem. Remember what He wrote to Christians in Greece: "But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted--you may well put up with it!" (2 Cor. 11:3-4). Again, that is *exactly* what happened.

For instead of learning the simple, straightforward *way of life* that Jesus taught and lived--based on God's spiritual law--modern churchgoers are taught to believe solely on the "name" of Christ. They are assaulted by a complicated theology and tortured logic that somehow DESTROYS the clear teaching and example of Jesus and the early apostles. They are indeed taught "another Jesus"--NOT the young Jew who grew up in Israel faithfully keeping the biblical Sabbaths and Holy Days, keeping the Ten Commandments **and teaching His followers that SAME way of life!**

Using primarily the writings of the Apostle Paul, clever theologians have devised a scheme that effectively does away with Jesus' example and teaching about obedience to God's law. They state that since Jesus' entire human life and ministry were before the cross, His example and doctrine is not for us today. In other words, they agree that Christ upheld the law. But they claim that when the Apostle Paul came on the scene, he--with God's guidance and blessing--abolished the law and replaced it with *grace*, thereby "liberating" us.

Such an idea of "progressive revelation" is supported in the following excerpt from a modern Dispensationalist tract: "Apparently God allowed this system of Jewish ordinances to be practiced about thirty years after Christ fulfilled it because in His patience, God only *gradually* showed the Jews how it was that His program was changing.... Thus it was that after God had *slowly* led the Christians out of Jewish religion He had Paul *finally* write these glorious, liberating truths" (Maurice Johnson, *Saved by 'Dry' Baptism!*, pp. 9-10).

But is that *really* how it was? *Did* God "change His program"? If not, where does grace fit in now? Just what *was* Paul teaching, anyhow?

For a long time, Paul's writings have been seen by many groups as doing away with the law. That's because this apostle, with his rabbinical training, wrote in a lawyer-like style that was a bit difficult to read. And people have been quick to take what he wrote out of context, twisting and distorting it. No doubt anticipating this, Almighty God inspired the Apostle Peter to WARN us about *this very*

thing! Notice this passage from Peter's last epistle: "His [Paul's] letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people DISTORT, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction. Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of LAWLESS MEN and fall from your secure position" (3:16-17 NIV). Thus, it is people advocating "lawlessness" who have twisted Paul's message! Paul himself, an educated Jew trained at the feet of the renowned Rabbi Gamaliel, never remotely indicated that God's spiritual law had been "done away." Indeed, he would have been HORRIFIED to see his writings perverted in this way!

Yet many will key in on certain verses in Paul's letters, ignoring how they relate to the rest of what he wrote. One such passage is found in Romans: "A man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law" (3:28). These people then conclude from this verse that Paul was campaigning against the law. However, Paul said earlier *in the same letter*, "**For not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified**" (2:13). Likewise, people rally around Ephesians 2:8-9: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." Yet they often fail to read the next verse: "**For we are... created in Christ Jesus FOR GOOD WORKS, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life**" (NRSV).

Again, Paul supported the whole *way of life* taught by Jesus Christ and the other apostles based on the Ten Commandments! For while Paul, like the other apostles (Acts 15), said that it was not necessary for Gentiles to be physically circumcised, observe what he *did* say in his first letter to the Corinthians: "Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but **keeping the commandments of God is what matters**!" (7:19). This should make Paul's position clear. Notice what one modern scholar has written about Pauline theology:

First Corinthians has a number of remarkable features.... Attention has also been drawn to the expression [properly translated "within the law toward Christ"] (1 Cor. 9:21) which somehow suggests a positive attitude towards the Law.... The saying that "circumcision nor foreskin are anything, but keeping God's commandments" (1 Cor. 7:19), has been signalled [by many] as "most remarkable" or even contradictory with regard to the rest of Paul's teachings.... [Yet] First Corinthians is not only remarkable among Paul's letters for its "legal" and "Jewish" character, but it appears very much to reflect Paul's own thinking and was recognized as such in the early church.... In First Corinthians, a letter replete with practical instruction,... the Law is affirmed as an authoritative source of practical teaching.... Paul is not Law-less, not a non-Jew... he is Law-respecting "under the aspect of Christ." This makes Pauline sense.... He does not observe the Law as an aim in itself and standing alone but as one among various members of Christ's body [Peter J. Thompson, *Paul and the Jewish Law: Halakha in the Letters of the Apostle to the Gentiles*, 1990, pp. 69, 73, 280].

Exactly! Paul followed Christ's teachings himself and taught others to do the same. Yet even in his own day, he was slandered by some who said he was teaching that since we are under grace, we don't have to keep God's law (cf. Rom. 3:8). The Apostle James told him, "You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law; but they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the

customs" (Acts 21:20-21). So James encouraged him to prove them wrong by taking a Nazirite vow and presenting offerings at the Temple so "that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but that **you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law**" (v. 24). *And Paul did all that James said!* (v. 26).

Faced with such verses, and many others that could be brought to bear, a number of modern Protestant teachers say Paul was a hypocrite. In a footnote to verse 24 just mentioned, the *Ryrie Study Bible* says that the actions he took in going along with James indicated that Paul "was, after all, a 'middle-of-the-road' Jewish-Christian." Another work characterizes these acts by its title, *Five Blunders of Paul*. How amazing it is that some of those who proclaim Paul to be the champion of their lawless doctrine turn around and attack him for not following or teaching it!

Of course, Paul was not a hypocrite. The grace he spoke of was to be *within* the framework of God's law. But obeying the Almighty did not negate the need for His mercy and forgiveness, since no one obeys perfectly. After all, we've *all* earned the death penalty for breaking God's law (Rom. 6:23). And no amount of *lawkeeping* will earn us salvation. We must accept Christ's sacrifice as payment for our sins in order to be forgiven and freed from the death penalty. Nevertheless, if we refuse to repent (Acts 2:38)--that is, refuse to make a "covenant with our Creator" to stop breaking His law and to start keeping it--God will not forgive us, and we will not be saved. Even then, it takes Christ living in us through the power of the Holy Spirit to continue in obedience (cf. 1 John 5:3; Rom. 5:5; 8:7; Gal. 2:20 KJV). And this also comes by grace through faith. Now we do not suddenly become perfect (1 John 1:8-9). But with Christ's help, over time, we will GROW to become more like Him (cf. 2 Peter 3:18). (To learn more about this process, please write for our free booklet, *What Is a True Christian?*)

Jesus Christ and all of His apostles--including Paul--taught that we must obey God's law. Historian Will Durant, in his monumental work, *The Story of Civilization*, said of Paul, "The man who [many believe] detached Christianity from Judaism was still so essentially Jewish in intensity of character and sternness of morality that the Middle Ages, adopting paganism into a colorful Catholicism, saw no kindred spirit in him; built few churches to him, seldom sculptured his figure or used his name" (vol. 3, p. 592). In light of the facts that will be presented throughout the rest of this booklet, that should not be at all surprising.

Christianity's Greatest Deception

Christianity Hijacked!

Today, it is only the *few* who follow the example of Jesus and His apostles. What happened? How did the biblical Holy Days come to be ignored? In fact, why do so many claim that *all* of the Ten Commandments are "obsolete" for modern-day Christians?

Could there be a connection between this refusal to obey God's laws and the skyrocketing rates of broken homes and acceptance of immorality in the nations that claim to be Christian? Could this be why some of the greatest wars in human history have been waged between the "Christian" nations of Europe?

Writing near the end of the Apostolic Age, the Apostle Jude warned, "Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to **contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints**. For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness [license to sin] and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 3-4).

Slowly but surely, clever men--inspired by Satan--began to focus the minds of Christians increasingly on the *person* of Christ. While doing this, they subtly modified and eventually did away with the real *message* Jesus Christ brought from the Father.

Some accuse the Apostle Paul of preaching a message of grace without obedience to God's law. But as we've shown elsewhere in this booklet, that is simply not the case. In fact, the *answer* as to why men turned away from what was taught by Christ and His apostles is given by Paul himself! Read his inspired warning to the Christians of his day: "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves" (Acts 20:28-30).

Indeed, "savage wolves"--such as Simon Magus, mentioned in Acts 8--*did* sneak in and gradually take over the *name* of "Christianity." They almost *totally changed* its basic doctrines, practices and concepts. Yet they still branded the name "Christianity" on the outside of their "package" of what were actually pagan ideas and rituals.

Such massive change is attested to by many prominent church historians. In his respected handbook on church history, *The Story of the Christian Church*, Jesse Lyman Hurlbut states:

We name the last generation of the first century, from 68 to 100 A.D., "The Age of Shadows," partly because the gloom of persecution was over the church; but more especially because of all periods in the history, it is the one about which we know the

least. We have no longer the clear light of the Book of Acts to guide us; and no author of that age has filled the blank in the history. We would like to read of the later work by such helpers of St. Paul as Timothy, Apollos and Titus, but all these and St. Paul's other friends drop out of the record at his death. For fifty years after St. Paul's life a curtain hangs over the church, through which we strive vainly to look; and when at last it rises, about 120 A.D. with the writings of the earliest church fathers, **we find a church in many aspects very different from that in the days of St. Peter and St. Paul** [1933, p. 41].

And, as another historian explains, in less than 200 years after that, the visible church looked like another church altogether: "Contemplate the Christian Church at the beginning of the fourth century, therefore, and some difficulty will be experienced in recognizing in her the community of Apostolic times, or **rather, we shall not be able to recognize it at all**" (Charles Guignebert, *The Early History of Christianity*, 1927).

WHY was the Church VERY DIFFERENT than when Peter and Paul were alive? WHO gave its human leaders the *authority* to change its basic doctrines and practices, thereby making it *totally unrecognizable*?

Hurlbut continues, "As long as the church was mainly Jewish, the Hebrew sabbath was kept; but as it became increasingly Gentile **the first day gradually took the place of the seventh day**" (p. 45). And he further explains:

The services of worship increased in splendor, but were less spiritual and hearty than those of former times. **The forms and ceremonies of paganism gradually crept into the worship.** Some of the old heathen feasts became church festivals with change of name and of worship. About 405 A.D. images of saints and martyrs began to appear in the churches, at first as memorials, then in succession revered, adored, and worshiped. The adoration of the Virgin Mary was substituted for the worship of Venus and Diana; the Lord's supper became a sacrifice in place of a memorial; and the elder evolved from a preacher into a priest [p. 79].

Observe also this revealing and even shocking quote from highly respected historian Will Durant, previously cited:


Christianity did not destroy paganism; it adopted it. The Greek mind, dying, came to a transmigrated life in the theology and liturgy of the Church; the Greek language, having reigned for centuries over philosophy, became the vehicle of Christian literature and ritual; the Greek mysteries passed down into the impressive mystery of the Mass. Other pagan cultures contributed to the syncretist result. From Egypt came the ideas of a divine trinity... and a personal immortality of reward and punishment; from Egypt the adoration of the Mother and Child, and the mystic theosophy that made Neoplatonism and Gnosticism, and obscured the Christian creed; there, too, Christian monasticism would find its exemplars and its source. From Phrygia came the worship of the Great Mother; from Syria the resurrection drama of Adonis; from Thrace, perhaps, the cult of Dionysus, the dying and saving god.... The Mithraic ritual so closely resembled the eucharistic sacrifice of the Mass

that Christian fathers charged the Devil with inventing these similarities to mislead frail minds. **Christianity was the last great creation of the ancient pagan world....** [The Eucharist] was a conception long sanctified by time; the pagan mind needed no schooling to receive it; **by embodying the "mystery of the Mass," Christianity became the last and greatest of the mystery religions** [pp. 595, 599].

Indeed, much that masquerades as Christianity is nothing but a continuation of the ancient Babylonian Mystery religion! There are many sources in local libraries and bookstores that prove this very fact. One that you might look for is titled *The Two Babylons* by Alexander Hislop (Neptune, New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers, 1916). Though we do not advocate all the views expressed in this particular work, it is extremely thorough, well-documented and quite helpful in showing where so many modern Christian practices and ideas truly originated.

Christianity's Greatest Deception

Gradually Changed

 e just saw that, according to Hurlbut, "the first day GRADUALLY took the place of the seventh day." But did *God* substitute this pagan "Day of the Sun"--Sunday--for His holy Sabbath? NO WAY! It is just that *deceived men* "gradually" changed the days of worship, the *way of life* based on God's spiritual LAW and, finally, the *whole concept* of what it means to be a Christian!

How *very clever* these early false ministers were! The first Christians, in accordance with God's second commandment (Ex. 20:4-6), would have nothing to do with worshipping images. So when images were initially introduced, they were palmed off as mere "memorials." Then, after people adjusted to that "little modification," the images were, over time, "revered," then "adored" and, finally, "worshiped"!

Slowly, subtly, people were deceived by the word games of clever apostate strategists. The false teachers would tell the people, "We're not really *changing* anything. This is just a little upgrade, a clarification, just a different way of explaining the same things we have always believed."

But why were pagan holidays and practices absorbed by professing Christianity? A publication by the Reader's Digest Association answers, "Although Christianity has swept the world in a relatively short time, as the histories of great religions go, the early missionaries faced an uphill task. The pagans were reluctant to give up their false gods and ancient practices. So the missionaries, unable to convert them easily to an entirely new code of

Pagan Infiltration of Christianity

What is now known to the world as Christianity is actually filled with practices, concepts and stories that originated *not* in Christian tradition, but in paganism--directly violating God's Word! (cf. Deut. 12:30-32).

Historian John Romer, in his 1988 book, *Testament: The Bible and History*, writes about the early Catholic Church:

Subtly, so subtly that the bishops themselves had not seen them, the old gods had entered their churches like the air of the Mediterranean.

And they live still in Christian ritual, in the iconography and the festivals of Christianity.

When Julian arrived in Antioch in 362... the great Christian city was in mourning, bewailing in the Levantine manner the annual death of Adonis, Venus's beautiful lover. At Ephesus, though the sanctuary of Diana, goddess of the city, was taken down... her statues

worship, did the next best thing. **They took the pagan festivals as they were and GRADUALLY grafted the observances of the new faith onto these festivals and the rites and customs surrounding them"** (*Strange Stories, Amazing Facts*, p. 283).

Yet God's Word had expressly forbidden the use of pagan practices to worship Him: "Take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow [pagan nations]... and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, 'How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.' **You shall NOT worship the LORD your God in that way;** for every abomination to the LORD which He hates they have done to their gods.... Whatever I command you, be careful to observe IT; you shall not *add* to it nor *take away* from it" (Deut. 12:30-32).

Even a number of Catholicism's early church fathers were against adopting pagan customs. Tertullian, considered to be the father of Roman Catholic theology, wrote around A.D. 230 against Christian participation in the Roman midwinter feasts that were then being transformed into Christmas: "By us [Catholics], who are strangers to Sabbaths and new moons and festivals once acceptable to God [in fact, they are *still* acceptable], the Saturnalia, the feasts of January, the Brumalia and Matronalia are now frequented; gifts are carried to and fro, new year's day presents are made with din, and sports and banquets are celebrated with uproar; **oh, how much more faithful are the heathen to THEIR religion, who take special care to adopt no solemnity from the Christians"** (Tertullian, *On Idolatry*,

were carefully buried in dry sand. And when the Third Council of the church assembly at Ephesus solemnly voted that henceforth the Virgin Mary should be honoured with the title of *Theotokos*, the God-bearer, Ephesus, itself for centuries the city of the virgin hunter Diana, became the city of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God. In Egypt, too, the ancient sign of life, the *ankh*, which the gods had carried in their sculptures for thousands of years, was easily transformed into the Christian cross; the figure of Isis nursing her child Horus, Isis Lactans, became the figure of the Virgin with Jesus at her breast....

At Rome, Romulus and Remus were swapped for the biblical saints Peter and Paul. And still in the fifth century, the Pope had to stop the early morning congregation of St Peter's from walking up the church steps backwards so as not to offend Sol, the rising sun god. Similarly, 25 December, now Christ's birthday, was also the day of Sol Invictus' festival and Constantine's birthday. This festival was celebrated by cutting green branches and hanging little lights on them, and presents were given out in the god's name. Sol's weekly festival Sol-day--Sunday--became the Christian Sabbath. Just as

chap. 14, quoted by Hislop, p. 93).

But such warnings were in vain. For slowly but surely, the Christian label was pasted on every facet of pagan worship imaginable--from observing certain days, seasons and ceremonies, to temples, sacrificial altars and even idols themselves! Thus, the hapless sheep were led astray gradually--ever so slowly--as *paganism* virtually hijacked the name of Christianity! (See box on page 22: "Pagan Infiltration of Christianity.")

Before long, people came to accept the idea that all you really had to do was believe on the "name" of Jesus. Their false religious leaders did not teach real repentance. There was no counting the cost or dedication to obeying God's laws--to letting Christ live in us the *same obedient life* He lived in the flesh! Christians gradually accepted the teaching that the Ten Commandments had been "nailed to the cross" or in some other manner done away.

The true message that God sent from heaven about His coming Kingdom, *obeying* His laws, overcoming the self and preparing to rule with Christ--all this was slowly watered down and finally eradicated. Instead, a message was preached about the *person* of Jesus Christ--His "Christmas story" birth, His loving nature, His death on the cross--though cleverly OMITTING the fact that Jesus personally *lived* the Ten Commandments and taught them as a way of life! These false preachers--because of antipathy at that time in history toward any custom deemed by them to be Jewish -- especially omitted teaching the scripturally verifiable doctrine about

Apollo of Delphi had made a beautiful transformation to become the Roman Sol Invictus, so later he became a Christ of the sun. All three of them are sometimes pictured in their fiery chariots... with... radiant haloes [pp. 230-231].

Charles Guignebert, in his 1927 book, *The Early History of Christianity*, gave the following explanation:

Now at the beginning of the fifth century, the ignorant and the semi-Christians thronged into the Church in numbers.... They had forgotten none of their pagan customs.... The bishops of that period had to content themselves with redressing, as best they could, and in experimental fashion, the shocking malformations of the Christian faith which they perceived around them.... [To properly teach new converts] was out of the question; they had to be content with teaching them no more than the symbol of baptism and then baptizing them *en masse*, postponing until a later date the task of eradicating their superstitions, which they preserved intact.... This "later date" never arrived, and the Church adapted to herself, as well as she could, them and their customs and beliefs. On their side, **[converts] were content to dress their paganism in a Christian cloak....** The

the annual Holy Days of God and His weekly Sabbath.

From where had such anti-Semitism arisen? When the Jews revolted against Roman rule in the first and second centuries, the heavy imperial fist came down hard on them. Jerusalem was burned to the ground and a new Roman city was built in its place. The name of the country was changed from Judea to Syria-Palaestina and Jews were banned from it on pain of death. Throughout the Empire, persecution raged against both Jews and Christians--who were viewed as a Jewish sect. Therefore, **many who were called Christian tried to distance themselves from Judaism.** Blaming the Jews for Christ's death facilitated this all the more.

ancient [pagan] festivals [are now] kept as [Christian] holidays and celebrated in the country parts, and the Church can only neutralize their effect by turning them to account for her own profit [pp. 208-210, 214].

Guignebert stated earlier in the same work, "It is sometimes very difficult to tell exactly from which pagan rite a particular Christian rite is derived, but it remains certain that **the spirit of pagan ritualism became by degrees impressed upon Christianity, to such an extent that at last the whole of it might be found distributed through its ceremonies**" (p. 121).

Eventually, we see the sentiment expressed by the well-known Roman Catholic Church historian Eusebius, writing in the fourth century about decisions made in 325 at the famous Council of Nicea:

It appeared an unworthy thing that in the celebration of this most holy feast we should follow the practice of the Jews [of keeping Passover on the 14th of Nisan], who have impiously defiled their hands with enormous sin, and are, therefore, deservedly afflicted with blindness of soul.... Let us then have nothing in common with the detestable Jewish crowd; for we have received from our Savior a different way.... Beloved brethren, let us with one consent adopt this course, and withdraw ourselves from all participation in their baseness.... For how should they be capable of forming a sound judgment, who, since their... guilt in slaying their Lord, have been subject to the direction, not of reason, but of... every impulse of the mad spirit that is in them?... Strive and pray continually that the purity of your soul may not seem in anything to be sullied by fellowship with the custom of these most wicked men.... All should unite in desiring that which sound reason appears to demand, avoiding all participation in the perjured conduct of the Jews [Eusebius, *The Life of Constantine*, bk. 3, chaps. 18-19, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 1979, vol. 1, pp. 524-525].

Those who followed Jewish practice were marked anathema (that is, cut off or accursed) from Christ--which eventually evolved into a crime against the state, punishable by death. One modern Jewish rabbi has commented, "What was started at the Council of Nicea was duly completed in the concentration camps and crematoria" of Nazi Germany (Eliezer Berkovits, quoted by Wallace M. Alston Jr., "The Root That Supports Us," *Removing Anti-Judaism from the Pulpit*, p. 105). Though

this statement is inflammatory and perhaps a bit extreme, it is true that early Catholic persecution of the Jews has been one of the main contributing factors to anti-Semitic attitudes in the modern world.

In any case, with such widespread condemnation by the early universal church of all things considered abhorrently "Jewish," many biblical laws and practices were tossed out the window. The vast majority of professing Christians went along with this "housecleaning" and were thus left without any definite standard of behavior. They were told things like "Accept Christ," "Love the Lord," "Love your neighbor" and other such generalities. But the specific way of life based on the Ten Commandments had been cast aside.

Therefore, gradually, people lost sight of the sinfulness of lying, cheating, stealing, committing adultery and even waging WAR upon fellow "Christians" in enemy nations--as occurred in Europe and elsewhere. **They simply didn't know what sin was!**

But they should have! For the Bible plainly says, "Sin is the transgression of the LAW" (1 John 3:4 KJV). Yet the attention of professing Christians following the great apostasy became increasingly focused on the *worship* of the Virgin Mary, the *veneration* of idols and pleasing the local priest or bishop--whose word was often "law." Historian Joel Carmichael explains the spirit of those times in his book, *Unriddling of Christian Origins: A Secular Account*:

From the merely organizational point of view the Christian Church has the aspect of an established institution. Originally organized in private assemblies modeled on the Jewish synagogue or on pagan associations, by the beginning of the third century it has assigned both its administration and its spiritual functions... to a body of clergy in a hierarchical order.... The clerical authorities preside over rites that have been borrowed more or less directly either from Judaism or from the pagan Mysteries. These all have been integrated with Christian aims. The principal rites have been recharged with magical power familiar to adepts of the secret cults of Greece and of the Middle East. By the beginning of the third century, then, Christianity has become a full religion, plausibly presented as the most complete of all religions, since it has taken what it can regard as the best from them all.... To achieve salvation an ignoramus need only believe without understanding and obey the authorities, while the philosophically minded can speculate endlessly on the dogmas [1995, p. 351].

Thus, over the centuries, an entirely different approach to Christianity was foisted off on the common man. "Another Jesus"--as Paul had so passionately warned about--was proclaimed to, and established among, the unsuspecting public.

Christianity's Greatest Deception

The Imperial Church

For 250 years following the destruction of Jerusalem, all who were called Christian faced persecution by the Roman state--because they were associated with the Jews and because they refused to pay homage to the Roman emperor as a god on earth. But things changed drastically in the fourth century. Constantine the Great became the first emperor to profess Christianity. He recognized the bishop of Rome--now known as the pope--as leader of the church, gave him a palace and had him clad as an earthly prince. The emperor convened the previously mentioned Council of Nicea to settle a number of doctrinal controversies that were dividing the church at large. And he himself--not even baptized and still apparently involved in sun-worship--decided what "orthodox" doctrine would be!

Notice this long quote from respected British historian Paul Johnson regarding Constantine and his involvement in the church:

There is some doubt about the magnitude of Constantine's change of ideas.... He himself appears to have been a sun-worshipper, one of a number of late-pagan cults which had observances in common with the Christians. Thus the followers of Isis adored a madonna nursing her holy child; the cult of Attis and Cybele celebrated a day of blood and fasting, followed by the Hilaria resurrection-feast, a day of joy, on 25 March; the elitist Mithraics, many of whom were senior army officers, ate a sacred meal. Constantine was almost certainly a Mithraic, and his triumphal arch, built after his "conversion," testifies to the Sun-god, or "unconquered sun." **Many Christians did not make a clear distinction between this sun-cult and their own.** They referred to Christ "driving his chariot across the sky"; they held their services on Sunday, knelt towards the East and had their nativity-feast on 25 December, the birthday of the sun at the winter solstice. During the later pagan revival under the Emperor Julian many Christians found it easy to apostacize because of this confusion; the Bishop of Troy told Julian he had always prayed secretly to the sun. **Constantine never abandoned sun-worship and kept the sun on his coins.** He made Sunday into a day of rest.... In his new city of Constantinople, he set up a statue of the sun-god, bearing his own features, in the Forum....

Constantine's motives were probably confused. He was an exceptionally superstitious man, and he no doubt shared the view, popular among professional soldiers, that all religious cults should be respected, to appease their respective gods.... Vain and superstitious, Constantine may have embraced Christianity because it suited his personal interests, and his growing megalomania.... **Many of his ecclesiastical arrangements indicate that he wanted a state Church, with the clergy as civil servants.** His own role was not wholly removed from that of the pagan God-emperor--as witness the colossal heads and statues of himself with which he littered his empire--though he preferred the idea of a priest king.... seeing himself as the chief

divine instrument....

According to this analysis, Constantine, as emperor, was an important agent of the salvation process, at least as vital to it as the apostles. So, evidently, the emperor himself thought. Thus he had a tomb prepared for himself within the new Church of the Apostles he built and gloriously endowed in Constantinople, "anticipating," says Eusebius, "that his body would share the title with the apostles themselves, and that he should after his death become the subject, with them, of the devotions performed in their honour in this church." His coffin and tomb, in fact, were placed in the centre, with monuments to six apostles on each side, *making him the thirteenth and chief...*

How could the Christian Church, apparently quite willingly, accommodate this weird megalomaniac in its theocratic system? Was there a conscious bargain? Which side benefited most from this *unseemly marriage* between Church and State? Or, to put it another way, **did the empire surrender to Christianity, or did Christianity prostitute itself to the empire?** [*A History of Christianity*, 1976, pp. 67-69].

In Revelation 17, the Apostle John had a vision of a fallen woman, which can be proven to represent a great false church, sitting on a "Beast" whose seven heads symbolized, in part, the "City of Seven Hills"--Rome! This universal church is seen "prostituting itself" to the Roman Empire and other worldly powers: "with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication" (v. 2). (For a more detailed explanation of this subject, please write or call for a free copy of our eye-opening booklet, *The Beast of Revelation*.)

John writes of the imperial church, "And on her forehead a name was written: mystery, babylon the great, the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth. And I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus" (vv. 5-6). Indeed, this false "Holy Mother Church" persists as the foremost keeper of the Babylonian Mysteries. Worse still, it is a sad commentary on the Church of Rome that, following its receiving imperial favor and freedom from persecution, it became the persecutor itself--of any and all who disagreed with its "orthodox" position or governmental authority. Many true Christians were sentenced to torture and death by the Roman Church in its brutal "Inquisition."

With the help of other sources, Winthrop S. Hudson, in his book by the same title as Hurlbut's, *The Story of the Christian Church*, comments:

There were other consequences flowing from imperial patronage which suggest that the new position which Christianity had acquired was something less than a full triumph. "The extraordinary change by which Christianity, instead of being the religion of a persecuted minority, became the religion of the Imperial Court," says Edwyn Bevan, "made a greater difference to the character of Christianity than it did to the character of the world.... The disappointing thing is that when the change came about, the world went on very much as before--the institutions of the state were the same, the behavior of men in business and pleasure, slavery, wars." But the church did not go on as before. The church was not the same. **"The church," as Kenneth E. Kirk, former bishop of Oxford, observed, was "all but completely assimilated**

to the model of the world" [1958, p. 17].

Hurlbut agrees: "**As a result of the church sitting in power, we do not see Christianity transforming the world to its own ideal, but the world dominating the church**" (p. 79). He further states:

If Christianity could have been allowed to develop normally without state-control, and the state could have continued free from the dictation of the church, both state and church would have been the better by dwelling apart. But the church and the state became one when Christianity was adopted as the religion of the empire, and out of the unnatural union arose two evils, one in the eastern, the other in the western provinces. In the east the state dominated the church until it lost all energy and uplifting life. In the west, as we shall see, the church gradually usurped power over the state, and the result was not *Christianity* but a more or less *corrupt hierarchy* controlling the nations of Europe, **making the church mainly a political machine** [p. 80].

Indeed the political corruption of the Roman Empire itself was transferred to the Church of Rome because the government of the latter is but a mere continuation of that of the former. Will Durant explains this transfer of authority:

Christianity... grew by the absorption of pagan faith and ritual; it became a triumphant Church by inheriting the organizing patterns and genius of Rome.... As Judea had given Christianity ethics, and Greece had given it theology, so now Rome gave it organization; all these, with a dozen absorbed and rival faiths, entered into the Christian synthesis. It was not merely that the Church took over some religious customs and forms common in pre-Christian Rome--the stole and other vestments of pagan priests, the use of incense and holy water in purifications, the burning of candles and an everlasting light before the altar, the worship of the saints, the architecture of the basilica, the law of Rome as a basis for canon law, the title of *Pontifex Maximus* for the Supreme Pontiff, and, in the fourth century, the Latin language as the noble and enduring vehicle of Catholic ritual. The Roman gift was above all a vast framework of government, which, as secular authority failed, became the structure of ecclesiastical rule. Soon the bishops, rather than the Roman prefects, would be the source of order and the seat of power in the cities; the metropolitans, or archbishops, would support, if not supplant, the provincial governors; and the synod of bishops would succeed the provincial assembly. The Roman Church followed in the footsteps of the Roman state; it conquered the provinces, beautified the capital, and established discipline and unity from frontier to frontier. Rome died in giving birth to the Church; the Church matured by inheriting and accepting the responsibilities of Rome [pp. 575, 618-619].

These rather extensive quotes should make it exceedingly clear that--*after the death of the original apostles*--Christianity became a DIFFERENT RELIGION. It adopted pagan titles and practices in its priesthood and brought pagan concepts and doctrine into its worship. It patterned its church government after pagan Rome and, as Hurlbut writes, became "mainly a political machine."

This church government is, in fact, the "image of the beast" foretold in Revelation 13:14-15! For it is patterned *directly* after the government of the pagan Roman Empire--which many biblical scholars have clearly identified as the prophetic "Beast," mentioned earlier. The renowned 17th-century English political philosopher Thomas Hobbes said of the Roman Catholic Church, "If a man consider the original of this great ecclesiastical dominion, he will easily perceive that the papacy is no other than the ghost of the deceased Roman Empire, sitting crowned upon the grave thereof. For so did the papacy start up on a sudden out of the ruins of that heathen power" (quoted by Hudson, p. 34).

(Again, for more scriptural and historical proof of all of this, please write or call for our free booklet, *The Beast of Revelation*.)

Of course, it bears repeating that the Church of Rome is a false "Mother Church." It would follow, then, that "daughter churches" have come out of her. And as much as the Protestant world may try to argue that during and following the Protestant Reformation, it threw off the paganism of Catholicism and reembraced Apostolic Christianity, we can say on the authority of God's Word that it did NO SUCH THING! While rejecting a few religious practices grounded in false religion, the Protestant churches have continued in *many* of the pagan ideas and practices of the Catholic Church. Because of this, they are daughters of Rome--and thereby daughters of ancient Babylon just the same!

Hopefully, we can see in all of this HOW FAR so-called "Christianity" has drifted away from the simple teachings of Christ and the original apostles!

Christianity's Greatest Deception

Something Vastly Different



In his enlightening book, *The Church's Debt to Heretics*, Professor Rufus M. Jones tells us:

If by any chance Christ Himself had been taken by His later followers as the model and pattern of the new way, and a serious attempt had been made to set up His life and teaching as the standard and norm for the Church, Christianity would have been something VASTLY DIFFERENT from what it became. Then "heresy" would have been as it is not now, deviation from His way, His teaching, His spirit, His kingdom.... What we may properly call "Galilean Christianity" had a short life, though there have been notable attempts to revive it and make it live again, and here and there spiritual prophets have insisted that anything else other than this simple Galilean religion is "heresy"; but the main line of historic development has taken a different course and has marked the emphasis very differently [1924, pp. 15-16].

Isn't that a remarkable admission from a respected scholar of church history? If Christianity had really followed Christ's life and teachings, then it would have developed in a *vastly different* manner!

As Jesus prophesied, *many* false teachers came using His name. They talked about "love." But they set forth a *false* Christ and a *false* message about His *person*--rather than faithfully preaching the message of the coming Kingdom of God that the Father had sent by Him. The result?

People today are confused about the true religion of Jesus Christ. Those who profess Christianity are divided into hundreds of competing sects and denominations. But very few of them understand the original form of Christianity that Christ and His apostles taught and lived!

The "Christian" world, then, has been built on shifting sand. Its moral system is *impotent* without the sure foundation of God's law. Secular forces are increasingly dictating its standards of conduct, whereas that used to be the prerogative of religious leaders.

We behold the spectacle of sexual perverts taking over more and more key posts in government, in education and even in some of the mainline churches! We behold the horrifying statistics of *millions* of unborn babies having their skulls crushed and being vacuumed out of their mothers' wombs! We behold a civilization that is truly coming apart at the seams. We are a society that will soon be directly *punished* by the Great God who gives life and breath to all.

Why? In no small measure because our peoples have been deceived into believing in "another Jesus." Because our peoples have truly lost contact with the true GOD and His revealed way of life.

Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he

who DOES THE WILL of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, '**I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice LAWLESSNESS!**'" (Matt. 7:21-23).

Lawlessness?

Yes! For as we've seen throughout this booklet, the religion that assumed the name of Christianity adopted the pagan concepts and practices of the Babylonian Mystery religion in direct violation of the law of God! In fact, the Apostle Paul referred to it as the "mystery of lawlessness" (2 Thess. 2:7). (To learn more about this "mystery of lawlessness," please write for our free reprint article, "The Truth About Antichrist.") This false worship system was instituted *in place of* the simple way of life that Jesus and the apostles had taught. Again, that *way of life* was based on obedience to the Ten Commandments. Yet it was all but stamped out in favor of rituals, ceremonies and an empty faith in the *person* of Christ--while at the same time rejecting His inspired MESSAGE from God!

Now we come to an important "key" that will help us identify *true* Christianity, what it *taught* and *what happened to it*.

Christianity's Greatest Deception

What Should You Do?

As mentioned at the beginning of this booklet, the plain TRUTH is that a very real Satan the Devil has men and women so confused that they don't know which end is up (Rev. 12:9; 2 Cor. 4:3-4). God has been allowing this world--under that evil influence--to go its *own* way for the almost 6,000 years of recorded human history. He is allowing people to "do their own thing." And humanity is writing the lessons of human experience in suffering of every kind.

But now, what about *you*? If God has opened your mind thus far to what you've been reading, then we urge you to begin a genuine STUDY of the Holy Bible. You may wish to start by carefully and thoughtfully reading through *every word* of the New Testament.

Study the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John--then the book of Acts. What did Jesus say one should do to inherit eternal life? (Matt. 19:17). Did Christ say the Ten Commandments were done away or were no longer important? (Matt. 5:17-20). Didn't God inspire the Apostle John to say at the very *end* of the Bible that the true saints will *keep the commandments of God*? (Rev. 12:17; 14:12). Study with an open mind and find out what Jesus Christ said about true Christianity! Then pray fervently and ask God for genuine understanding.

Some may ask, "Where *is* the remnant of that commandment-keeping Church today?" The answer is staring you right in the face! For the Global Church of God, which publishes the *World Ahead* magazine, is continuing to teach that *same way of life* revealed in the New Testament. We are certainly a "little flock." But through these pages and by way of the *World Ahead* television program, God is using us to proclaim to a potential audience numbering in the millions the true Gospel that Christ and His apostles preached. He is also using us to proclaim the end-time prophetic *warnings* that God wants His people to receive.

We have ministers and Churches or small video groups throughout the United States and in many other nations around the world. If you would like more information about this Work or about meeting with one of our ministers or representatives, please call or write us and let us know. Our phone numbers and mailing addresses are listed at the end of this booklet. And if you are interested in a thorough historical account of where God's true Church has been throughout the centuries, write for your *free* copy of our interesting and well-documented booklet, *God's Church Through the Ages*.

Jesus said, "I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18 KJV). Though scattered and persecuted through the centuries, *that Church still exists!* True Apostolic Christianity is still being taught and practiced--and *you* have now come in contact with it.

Will you ACT on the Truth that God is now revealing to you?