

NOW REVEALED--

**THE TRUE HISTORY OF
THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH**

A Thesis
Presented to the
Graduate School Committee
Ambassador College

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts in Theology

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May 1967

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CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS IN THE EARLY CHURCH

DATE	BIBLICAL EVENTS	EVENTS IN PALESTINE	EVENTS IN ROMAN EMPIRE
40 B.C.		Herod made king of Judah	
27 B.C.			Octavian (Augustus) becomes Emperor
3 B.C.		Death of Herod	
4 B.C.	Birth of Christ		
6 A.D.		Judah made a Roman province	
9 A.D.	Christ confounds teachers at Jerusalem		
14 A.D.			Death of Augustus—Tiberius becomes Emperor
25 A.D.		Caiaphus made Jewish High Priest	
26 A.D.		Pontius Pilate made governor of Judea	
27 A.D.	Christ baptized and begins His ministry		
31 A.D.	Christ crucified (April 25)		
31 A.D.	Church receives Holy Spirit (June 18)		
31 A.D.	Simon Magus baptized		
35 A.D.	Paul converted		
36 A.D.		Pilate sent to Rome	
37 A.D.		Herod Agrippa made king of Judea and Samaria	Gaius (Caligula) made Emperor at Rome
41 A.D.			Claudius made Emperor
42 A.D.	Matthew written		
43 A.D.	James is martyred		
44 A.D.		Agrippa dies	
47 A.D.	Paul's First Journey		
49 A.D.	Council at Jerusalem		
50 A.D.	Paul's Second Journey		
50 A.D.	Gospel goes to Europe exactly 19 years after founding of the Church		
51 A.D.	Paul writes I and II Thessalonians		
51 A.D.		Felix made Procurator	
52 A.D.	Paul writes Galatians	Herod Agrippa II made Tetrarch	Claudius banishes the Jews from Rome
53 A.D.	Paul's Third Journey		

DATE	BIBLICAL EVENTS	EVENTS IN PALESTINE	EVENTS IN ROMAN EMPIRE
53-55 A.D.	Paul's stay at Ephesus		
54 A.D.			Nero becomes Emperor
55 A.D.	Paul writes I Corinthians (spring); II Corinthians (fall)		
55-56 A.D.	Paul writes Romans		
56-58 A.D.	Paul imprisoned at Caesarea		
59 A.D.	Paul appeals to Caesar; is sent to Rome		
59-61 A.D.	Paul writes "Prison Epistles" Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon		
60-62 A.D.	James (Christ's brother) writes his epistle	Festus made Procurator (60 A.D.)	
62 A.D.	James (Christ's brother) is killed	Albinus made Procurator	
64 A.D.	Paul writes Hebrews	Florus made Procurator	Conflagration at Rome—Persecution of Christians
64 A.D.	Paul visits Asia Minor, perhaps also Spain and Britain		
65 A.D.	Paul returns to Rome		
65 A.D.	Writes I Timothy, Titus, II Timothy		
66 A.D.	Paul's death at Rome—probably beheaded		
68 A.D.			Galba becomes Emperor
69 A.D.			Otho becomes Emperor; Vitellius becomes Emperor; Vespasian becomes Emperor
70 A.D.		Destruction of Jerusalem by Titus	
75 A.D.	Peter writes I Peter		
77 A.D.	Peter writes II Peter		
79 A.D.			Titus becomes Emperor
80 A.D.	Death of Peter		
81 A.D.			Domitian becomes Emperor; Christian persecutions
85-87 A.D.	John writes I, II, and III John		
80's A.D. (?)	Jude writes his epistle		
95-96 A.D.	John writes Revelation		
96 A.D.			Nerva becomes Emperor
98 A.D.			Trajan becomes Emperor
100-101 A.D.	Death of John		

**** CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF ROMAN EMPERORS ****

From the Beginning of the Empire to
the Division into East and West in 384 A.D.

<u>EMPEROR</u>	<u>DATE</u>
Augustus	27 B.C. - 14 A.D.
Tiberius	14 - 37 A.D.
Gaius (Caligula)	37 - 41
Claudius	41 - 54
Nero	54 - 68
Galba	68 - 69
Otho	69
Vitellius	69
Vespasian	69 - 79
Titus	79 - 81
Domitian	81 - 96
Nerva	96 - 98
Trajan	98 - 117
Hadrian	117 - 138
Antoninus Pius	138 - 161
Marcus Aurelius	161 - 180
Commodus	180 - 192
Pertinax, etc.	193
Septimius Severus	193 - 211
Caracalla and Geta	211 - 212
Caracalla alone	212 - 217
Macrinus	217 - 218
Elagabalus	218 - 222
Alexander Severus	222 - 235
Maximinus Thrax	235 - 238
Gordianus I, II, etc.	238
Gordianus III	238 - 244
Philippus Arabs	244 - 249
Decius	249 - 251
Gallus and Volusianus	251 - 253
Aemilianus	253
Valerian	253 - 260
Gallien	260 - 268
Claudius II, etc.	268 - 270
Aurelianus	270 - 275
Tacitus, etc.	275 - 276
Probus, etc., etc.	276 - 284
Diocletian	284 - 305
Maximian	286 - 305
Galerius and Constantius Chlorus	293
Galerius and Constantius succeed as Augusti; Maximinus Daia and Severus become Caesars	305
Constantius dies; Constantine becomes Caesar in West; Maxentius supplants Severus in Italy	306
Licinius made Caesar, and later Augustus by Galerius	307
Constantin assumes title of Augustus	307
Maximinus Daia becomes Augustus(?) death of Galerius	309 311
Maxentius defeated by Constantin at Milvian Bridge and slain	312
Edict of Mediolanum issued by Constantin and Licinius	313 (Jan.)
Maximinus Daia, defeated by Licinius, kills himself	313
Constantin sole emperor after defeat and death of Licinius	323 - 337

INTRODUCTION

In the world today there are 961,122,000 professing Christians.¹ "Christianity" is by far the LARGEST single religion on earth. Islam, the second largest, is not half as big.

But how many in the Western world, which calls itself "Christian," understand what REAL CHRISTIANITY is? How many really KNOW the PLAIN TRUTH about the foundation of the Christian religion?

Amazingly few have ever realized the TRUE BEGINNINGS OF CHRISTIANITY!

What was the world like over 1900 year ago? Just how did Christianity get started? Why does the church in the book of Acts seem so different from the denominations today?

Was the message of Christ and the Apostles the same one that is taught in today's churches? This is the really important question.

These queries can all be answered by understanding the TRUE BEGINNING of the church founded by Jesus Christ and the entire scope of the first century of the Christian era.

Amazing though it may seem, the world which calls itself "Christian" is divided into over four hundred DIFFERENT denominations, organizations, splits, schisms, and sects—each claiming to be the original church founded by Jesus Christ.

There is a way you can know for certain how to find the true followers of Christ. The answers are all revealed and recorded in the Bible and in secular history during the FOUNDATION YEARS of God's Church.

The purpose of this thesis is to make plain and to reveal the FACTS of Jesus Christ's birth and life and to make plain how to understand early CHURCH HISTORY.

Concerning the last years of the first century, church historians admit:

The remaining thirty years of the first century are involved in mysterious darkness, illuminated only by the writings of John. This is the period of church history about which we know least and would like to know most. This period is the favorite field for ecclesiastical fables and critical conjectures.²

No longer do we need conjecture. The history of the first century can now be revealed.

You will see how the world was prepared in advance BY THE ALMIGHTY GOD WHO RULES SUPREME IN THE HEAVENS. You will understand the true Gospel preached by Christ and His apostles, and you will see the true establishment of His Church.

But, you will also see the world was prepared for a great false religious system. A false system which for more than 1,900 years has been masquerading under the title of "Christianity." Understanding the background of God's preparation and the rise of a great FALSE CONSPIRACY will provide the key to unlock the understanding of all Church history over the past 1,900 years.

You will be able to understand the teachings of true Christianity and the guidelines by which you can prove where God's true Church has been throughout history and WHERE IT IS TODAY.

Here, NOW REVEALED, is THE TRUE HISTORY OF THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

PART ONE
THE WORLD PREPARED
Chapter I

THE ROMANS BUILD AN EMPIRE

Roman banners were flying over every city from the Atlantic to the Euphrates. The clatter of horse's hooves, the rumble of war machines, the cadence of marching legions, had long since been a familiar sight to the inhabitants of Palestine. For years prior to the birth of Christ, Roman armies waged bloody wars bringing every nation in the then civilized world under the banner of Rome.

By 4 B.C., when Jesus Christ was born, Judea had already been brought under subjections. The entire empire was prosperous and AT PEACE. Roman armies of occupation now busied themselves with games, tournaments, gambling and talking over valiant battles of the past.

Some sixty years before, the huge war machines of Rome had moved through Palestine under the direction of the Roman general, Pompey.

The year 63 B.C. is of importance as the beginning of a new epoch in the history of nations lying between the Caucasus and the Mediterranean, more particularly Syria and Palestine. It was in 63 B.C. that Rome's great enemy, Mithradates (of the Parthian empire) ended his days, that Jerusalem for the first time was taken by a Roman army, and that seven centuries of Roman dominion over Syria and Judah began; and from then until his departure from the East to Rome at the beginning of 61 B.C. Pompey was busy with the organization of Asia Minor and Syria.¹

THE EMPIRE BEGINS

Swiftly and efficiently, Pompey organized government procedures—not only in Palestine, but throughout the eastern part of what was to become the ROMAN EMPIRE.

Following Pompey, Julius Caesar took charge. With vast armies he conquered what is now all of Spain, France, and Northwestern Europe. He drove the warring Germanic tribes far beyond the Rhine and Danube rivers and proceeded northward to the British Isles.

By the time of Christ and the early New Testament Church the boundaries of the Roman empire extended from Britain and the Rhine on the north all the way to the Sahara desert on the south. The Atlantic ocean was the western boundary and the empire extended beyond the Euphrates on the east to the Parthian and Indian empires.²

Around 50 A.D. there was some thirty-five provinces³ in the empire making a vast conglomerate of racial and backgrounds and customs.

It was within the confines of this sprawling empire the disciples of Jesus Christ were to take the message He gave them—the gospel of the Kingdom of God. Protected by Roman laws, aided by good roads and ideal travel conditions, benefited by peace throughout the empire, the disciples carried CHRIST'S WORD into every major city.

PREPARATION IN ADVANCE

It was not by mere accident the gospel had FREE COURSE in the empire. The stage had been set and planned by the ALMIGHTY GOD who directed and prepared the world for these events. It was God who, "hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined THE TIMES BEFORE APPOINTED, and the bounds of their habitation."⁴

It was God who had inspired His prophets of old to write of the coming Messiah—even prophesying the times and conditions which were to come.

It was God who directed affairs in the world so circumstances were JUST RIGHT at the time His Son was to be born.

In Palestine the Roman leaders had set up a local form of government.

Herod the Great and Agrippa might later be styled king; they were simply agents of Rome...All this was in line with Rome's sensible laissez faire policy for the administration of her provinces. With actual local governments she never sought to interfere. Her aim was to have strong and steady control, and she realized this would usually be best accomplished by native princes who knew and understood the peculiarities of their own peoples. Accordingly, Pompey's arrangement was a distinct blessing to the peoples of the East...The petty princes of Syria who had appeared as a consequence of the crumbling of the Seleucid empire and the ambitious sheiks like Aretas now gave way to a firm administration of the peace.⁵

Thus a world of multitudinous RACIAL and LINGUISTIC VARIETIES was brought under ONE central ruling body and law.

The reason why Pompey left so many kingdoms and principalities still standing in Asia Minor and Syria, instead of dividing the whole region between the Aegean and the Euphrates, the Euxine and Arabia Petraea, into provinces supervised and governed by proconsuls and proprietors, was that following the traditional policy of the Republic, he thought to make AS FEW CHANGES AS POSSIBLE, consistent with Roman interests, and to avoid the expenditures which would have been necessitated by a large increase in the number of provincial governors and of the Roman armies of occupation.⁶ [Emphasis will be author's throughout this work.]

The big question to ask at this point is WHY was Roman governmental policy established this way? Why was Rome to be any different from the dictatorial governments of Babylon or Greece? Was it more than mere chance that Christianity appeared in the world AT THIS TIME?

The study of Roman times CONFIRMS BEYOND A SHADOW OF a doubt that time and chance alone were not responsible for conditions in the world between 4 B.C. and 100 A.D.

PROPHESIED HUNDREDS OF YEARS BEFORE

World ruling empires had begun some 600 years before Rome when Babylon rose to power under King Nebuchadnezzar.

From the days of Ninus, who lived about three hundred years after the flood, to those of Augustus Caesar, was a period of two thousand years; in which interval, various empires, kingdoms, and states, had gradually arisen and succeeded each other. The Assyrian or Babylonian empire may be said to have taken the lead. It not only had the precedence in point of time, but it was the cradle of Asiatic elegance and arts, and exhibited the first examples of that refinement and luxury which have distinguished every subsequent age in the annuals of the east.⁷

Between 604 and 585 B.C. the Babylonians invaded Judah, finally taking the inhabitants captive to the city of Babylon.

Among the captives of Judah was Daniel, a prophet of GOD, who was to have a great bearing on the king of Babylon and through whom God would reveal to the world what would come in the hundreds of years ahead.

In the second chapter of the prophecy written by Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar dreamed of a great image whose "head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay."⁸

Daniel had been called upon to give both the dream AND the interpretation of the dream. He told Nebuchadnezzar, "There is a God in heaven that revealeth

secrets, and MAKETH KNOWN to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days."⁹

Daniel had proved the existence of an Almighty, all-powerful God who was working out a purpose on earth. He knew that God in heaven would reveal the answers, and He did!

The interpretation of the dream was revealed to Daniel and written as HISTORY IN ADVANCE. "Thou, O king," Daniel explained, "art a king of kings: for the God of heaven HATH GIVEN thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath He given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. THOU ART THIS HEAD OF GOLD."¹⁰

The head of the image, then, represented Nebuchadnezzar and the BABYLONIAN EMPIRE. The interpretation of the dream was made plain and clear.

Daniel continued, "And after you shall arise ANOTHER KINGDOM inferior to thee, and ANOTHER THIRD KINGDOM of brass which shall bear rule over all the earth."¹¹

The two kingdoms which followed Babylon were Persia (from 539 to 331 B.C.) and Greece (from 331 to 60 or 70 years before the Christian era).

But that gigantic power gave place to the empire of the Medes and Persians, which itself, in process of time, yielded to the valor of the Greeks; while the empire of Greece, so renowned for splendor in arts and arms, had sunk under the dominion of Imperial Rome, who thus became mistress of all the civilized world.¹²

Daniel then revealed, "And the FOURTH KINGDOM shall be strong as iron; forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise."¹³

The fourth and final kingdom to arise was the great ROMAN EMPIRE which began about sixty years before the Christian era, as we have seen.

Again, it was no accident that TIMES and CONDITION were JUST RIGHT for the birth of Jesus Christ and for the spread of the gospel to the world! God's hand was guiding entire governments AND NATIONS.

The apostle Paul who singly was responsible for the spread of the gospel throughout the Gentile world wrote, "When THE FULNESS OF THE TIME WAS COME, God sent forth His Son..."¹⁴

The time was right, as had been prophesied, in 27 A.D. when Christ began His ministry and the time was fulfilled in 31 A.D. when He was crucified.

Further, the time was right for the Church to begin fifty days after Christ's resurrection in 31 A.D. The time was right for Christianity to spread THROUGHOUT the empire, to the Gentiles as well as to the lost sheep of the House of Israel.

Without knowing it, the Romans PAVED THE WAY for the Church and the spread of Christianity!

EVEN MORE FULLY PREPARED

In addition to local governments and the laissez-faire policy of rule, many other freedoms were enjoyed in the empire, especially regarding local customs and RELIGIOUS BELIEFS.

The Romans, as has been said, never interfered with those religions of their allies and dependents which neither sanctioned practices nor stimulated policies detrimental to the well-being of the Commonwealth.¹⁵

Had this freedom not been allowed, Christianity would have been SQUELCHED before it began. Had the central law system not existed, Christianity would never have left Palestine!

But Christ had given a commission to His Church to wait in Jerusalem until Pentecost and "ye shall receive power after that the Holy Spirit is come upon

you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in Judea, AND in Samaria, AND UNTO THE UTTERMOST PART OF THE EARTH."¹⁶

By 31 A.D. the empire could not have been better prepared. The world was at peace. There were laws to benefit most of the subjects in the empire—there were even religious rights. In addition, millions of people could be reached within a few days traveling time.

Even many church historians have never seen the completeness of preparation for the introduction of Christianity into the world. But quotations from innumerable sources reveal just how complete it was.

The Romans were the practical and political nation of antiquity. Their calling was to carry out the idea of the state and of civil law, and to unite the nations of the world into a colossal empire, stretching from the Euphrates to the Atlantic, and from the Libyan desert to the banks of the Rhine. This empire embraced the most fertile and civilized countries of Asia, Africa, and Europe, and about one hundred millions of human beings, perhaps one-third of the whole race at the time of the introduction of Christianity.¹⁷

Few other nations on earth had such bearing on world affairs. Within the confines of the Roman empire, the disciples of Jesus Christ could take the gospel to nearly every nation of importance. Within thirty short years they ACCOMPLISHED just that.

THE EMPIRE SOLIDIFIED

Shortly before Christ was born, Rome was solidified into an EMPIRE from a loosely knit republic. It was in the year 12 B.C. that Augustus caused himself to be elected PONTIFEX MAXIMUS by the votes of the Roman people.¹⁸ At last Rome became an empire and there was one central authority to which everyone could look.

UNTIL this time the world had been in constant turmoil. Never had there existed a period of time where so many nations were not engaged in war. Never had one nation advanced so far with its governmental influence and scope. It was a burgeoning, prosperous nation with a great deal of traffic. Frank C. Bourne of Princeton University sums up this time in Roman history:

The maintenance of internal peace, the economical conduct of the military establishment, the equitable distribution of the tax load, the government's concern for the well-being and employment of the population, and the free and easy movement of goods throughout the Mediterranean Basin made the early principate one of the most prosperous epics contrived under the economic system of the ancient world.¹⁹

The empire had developed far beyond the imaginations of even the Romans. Because the captured governments had subjected themselves to the central authority of Rome, and because Roman citizens enjoyed even greater benefits than noncitizens, first hundreds, then thousands sought to earn or purchase CITIZENSHIP. Of course, there were many who regarded their captors as crude and undesirable, but they had to remain content and subject to the power of the government or risk imprisonment or death. This brings us to the next important factor.

ROMAN LAW AND GOVERNMENT

Although Rome chose to rule with the laissez-faire policy already mentioned, it nevertheless became necessary to have a number of legal stipulations. A central empire-wide law had to be enforced if the empire was to retain a semblance of peace.

The vastness of the empire required an efficient, but economical system of MAINTAINING law and order. We have already seen how local rulers and provincials were set in office wherever possible. For the most part this system

proved most acceptable, but there were numerous occasions when people complained of mistreatment or revolted. In order to combat rebellions and uprisings against the government and to protect the rights of citizens, COURTS OF APPEAL were set up within the empire. This was to play no small part in the spread of Christianity.

Another important factor was the universal protection of the law. Although Rome respected local systems and usages, she made her legal principles predominate, and if the provincial governors were honest, secured a large measure of common justice to all...The Emperor became the court of last resort, to whom the Roman citizen, like Paul, in danger of life might appeal; and the watchfulness of the imperial administration aimed to protect the noncitizen as well.²⁰

Thus the ministers, ordained and commissioned by Christ and His Church to preach the gospel to the world, had reasonable rights which allowed them the maximum of FREEDOM.

For over thirty years the gospel had a basically free course, protected by a legislative system which did not consider Christianity a threat or problem until it had spread all throughout the empire.

Still another important factor which was favorable to the growth of Christianity was the length of time most provincials and even the emperors remained in office. Augustus was emperor over forty years, Tiberius for twenty-three, Claudius for thirteen and Nero for fourteen.

During the entirety of Christ's life Rome changed rulers only once—that in 14 A.D. when Tiberius began to rule.

The Church was established in the final years of Tiberius' reign and spread throughout the empire during the reigns of only three other Caesars.

In connection with the long reigns of the ruling Caesar at Rome:

Tiberius was especially given to prolonging the tenure of governors in his provinces. Thus Poppaeus Sabinus was governor of Moesia for some twenty-four years in all. Valerius Gratus was procurator of Judaea for eleven years; Pontius Pilate for ten.²¹

It was Pontius Pilate who finally yielded to the pressures from the Jews and ordered Jesus Christ crucified.

Thus on a national and local scale the principal rulers of the Roman empire served in public office for years, busied themselves with their duties, and maintained peace throughout the empire.

The empire's generally lenient policy allowed a great deal of personal and national freedom for its conquered subjects. As long as no separate political unions, factions, or parties were formed, organizations were permitted to assemble freely.

The policy of the Romans was opposed to the existence of separate political unions in countries dependent on them. On the other hand, they seldom interfered with the religions of their subjects or allies if these religions neither disturbed the peace nor encouraged barbarities...since it was part of their political tradition to win the good-will of other nations by respecting their gods.²²

The Romans looked on Christianity as merely another sect or branch of Judaism—there were numerous groups of Jewish religions, as we shall see in a later section. It was of no concern to the Romans what internal problems the Jews might have with their own kind, as long as the problems posed no threat to the welfare of the state.

Thus the attitude of the officials throughout the empire was purely one of passing notice. They were much too concerned with their own lives and pleasures to worry about a new religion.

PART ONE
THE WORLD PREPARED
Chapter II

TRADE, TRAVEL, AND COMMUNICATIONS

The establishment of peace and civil laws throughout the Roman empire brought many changes in the way of life of the times.

The citizens of Rome took an active interest in the culture and affairs of other provinces within the empire.

The roads which formerly had been used strictly for the movement of troops now became a means of visiting FAR AWAY AREAS.

The first wave of tourism caused an empire-wide interest in the products and wares of peoples previously all but unknown to the average citizen. Trade and business began to flourish. A new vista was opened to the world.

EMPIRE-WIDE TRAVEL

Perhaps the most important preparation of all for the gospel to be spread throughout the world was the means of TRAVEL AND COMMUNICATION developed by and through the Romans. As the armies of Rome subdued nation after nation, the vassal nations were tied to the mother city by a MAGNIFICENT SYSTEM OF ROADS. Trade flourished over sea routes. Business and commerce became a major part of Roman life.

With the pacification of its shores, the Mediterranean served not to separate but to join the lands around it. Improvement in navigational aids increased the safety of sea transport;... Freightage by water was inexpensive and customs barriers between the various sections of the empire were sufficiently low that they offered no real restraint of trade. A stable and uniform currency, and the construction of good roads, a laissez-faire policy on the part of the government, and the revival of great trading cities such as Corinth and Carthage were added stimulants for a healthy expansion in commercial activity.¹

The Romans were unequalled as road builders. The moving of huge war machines was no easy matter. In fact, much of Rome's military success was due to her engineering ingenuity.

But with the world at peace, tradesmen, politicians, tourists—anyone—could move freely within the empire.

Later emperors developed and perfected the system of roads; and on the whole the peace and security which Augustus established continued with few interruptions for two hundred years. From one end of the Empire to the other, merchants and traders, tourists, philosophers, rhetoricians, and missionaries moved freely. The Christians knew well the service which the Empire had rendered their faith, as the words of Irenaeus show: "The Romans have given the world peace, and we travel without fear along the roads and across the sea wherever we will."²

Succeeding emperors took care to maintain quality in road construction to assure good governmental communications with provisionaries throughout the empire. Stones were placed at intervals of one thousand paces along the roads, showing under whose rule these fine highways were built. These markers were called milestones—hence the derivation of our English and American term "mile" for the measuring of distances on the highways.

SAFETY AND SPEED OF TRAVEL

In addition to the availability of travel, this period of time in history is also important because by the time Peter and Paul began to travel,

transportation was as SWIFT and SAFE as it had ever been in four thousand years of human history.

What is more, there were no major changes in the methods of transportation until well into the 1800's A.D.—really no major breakthroughs until into the twentieth century—in the lifetime of many still living today.

No less important than the means of travel was the SAFETY OF TRAVEL. Because Roman armies were stationed throughout the empire, piracy, robbery, and violence were kept at a minimum.

Here are quotations from two well-known sources on church history to show the importance of travel and safety to the Church:

No small factor in the development of commerce and in the unification of the early Empire was the security and speed with which one might travel. The great Roman roads, which still excite our admiration, were, in the first instance, built for military purposes, but they became great highways for all. Starting from the golden milestone in the Forum at Rome, one could travel to the borders of the Empire with a rapidity and safety which has since been unknown even in Western Europe until within a hundred years.³

And from yet another source:

The rights of persons and property were well protected. The conquered nations, though often and justly complaining of the rapacity of provincial governors, yet, on the whole, enjoyed greater security against domestic feuds and foreign invasion, a larger share of social comfort, and rose to a higher degree of secular civilization. The ends of the empire were brought into military, commercial, and literary communication by CAREFULLY CONSTRUCTED ROADS, the traces of which still exist in Syria, on the Alps, on the banks of the Rhine. The facility and security of travel were greater in the reign of the Caesars than in any subsequent period before the nineteenth century.⁴

Most people in today's modern jet age have discounted Roman times as ancient and primitive not realizing any area of importance in the world at that time was only a few days, at most a few weeks, away by ship or caravan.

As all authorities on ancient Rome point out, these times approached what we now call "modern" in the speed and means of travel.

The apostles, by sea or land, could travel rapidly from city to city within the empire—at times all the way back to Jerusalem to observe a festival or to attend a conference—then back to the area from which they departed.

It was not at all unusual for citizens of Rome to visit far away places such as India to the east or Britain to the north. Peaceful times brought certain restlessness to the people and the humdrum of daily life led them to travel.

Not all traveled as rapidly as it was possible, but good time could be made without too much effort.

The rate of travel was from thirty to fifty miles a day, although on occasion much higher speeds could be maintained. Julius Caesar covered one hundred miles a day in a hired carriage, and once the Emperor Tiberius traveled two hundred miles in twenty-four hours...

The routes by sea had been determined by the Phoenicians and Greeks centuries before the Romans began a transmarine commerce. From Ostia at the mouth of the Tiber and from Puteoli on the bay of Naples, ships reached Alexandria, occasionally in seven or eight days;... The average run of a sailing-ship was reckoned at four to six knots an hour. With a fair wind and good weather one could sail from Ostia to Africa in two days, to Tarraco in Spain in four, and to Gades beyond the Pillars of Hercules [Gibraltar] in seven. The adventurous merchant or traveller could embark for India from Myos Hormos or from Berenice on the Arabian Gulf, sailing with the western winds in midsummer and returning with the favoring blasts of mid-winter. In the reign of Augustus, one hundred and twenty ships from Myos Hormos were dispatched annually on these long voyages.⁵

Even though travel had its dangers (the apostle Paul was shipwrecked three times on his journeyings),⁶ on the whole travel was both swift and safe in order to allow the gospel to be taken throughout the world within the lifetimes of the first apostles.

Again, WHY? Why did travel methods and safety reach a PEAK right at the time needed by the Church?

The answer very obviously is GOD INTENDED IT THAT WAY. He led and directed affairs to prepare even the methods of transportation.

Today it is no different. For the gospel to go to the ENTIRE WORLD—not just an empire—even more rapid means of travel are required.

And, in this age in history—the 1960's A.D., if there is not a God in heaven to intervene, mankind will soon destroy all life from this planet.

But there is a God who will intervene. However, prior to His intervention He has given a GREAT COMMISSION to His Church, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in ALL THE WORLD for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come."⁷

Just as surely as God prepared the Roman empire for the beginning of His Church, so He has prepared this modern twentieth century jet age for the final years before Jesus Christ returns to this earth to establish the Kingdom of God on earth.

The same message which Christ brought His disciples was taken throughout the entire Roman empire. But it has not been until modern times when the gospel—the very same gospel preached by Christ and the disciples—has been going to the ENTIRE WORLD as a final witness to warn the world that God is about to intervene in man's affairs.

COMMUNICATIONS AN ADDED TOOL

Safe and efficient methods of travel in the Roman empire led to the establishment of an efficient means of COMMUNICATION with Rome and the establishment of a practical MAIL SYSTEM.

The construction and repair of roads, harbors, and other aids to commercial enterprise were a special concern of Augustus. Italy now consisted of more than 450 separate communities, and the prince was anxious to improve the communications between them...he initiated a good many road-building projects himself, though he repeatedly catered to senatorial sensitivities by associating the Senate with himself in the inscriptions that appeared on Italian milestones...Canals and harbor projects were completed...All of these projects not only expedited commercial and military movements throughout the empire, but also made possible the efficient dispatch of the empire's civil servants and thus were the necessary preliminaries to the establishment of an imperial postal service.⁸

Nearly every book in the New Testament is a letter or report sent by an apostle to a church congregation, to a personal friend, or to another minister. These writings have been preserved for us as an inspired part of God's Word, the Bible.

Without the travel and the establishment of the mails, God would have had to use an entirely different means to preserve the writings of the apostles about Jesus Christ and the history of His true Church. But messengers carrying letters of the apostles moved from church to church until the most important letters became standard material and finally were incorporated into the inspired writings.

Messengers carrying the mails did not usually try to make the time some military men did:

Private correspondence was dispatched chiefly by hired messengers, who might cover twenty-five miles a day on foot. For official business Augustus established an imperial post modeled on that earlier maintained by the Persians.⁹

Letter and business correspondence became a common part of life for the Roman world—consequently one of the most important PREPARATIONS God had made for the Church.

THE PREPARATION COMPLETE

In every possible manner the way had been prepared for Christianity. The Babylonians, Persians, and Greeks each made contributions to the world, contributions which aided the Church. But the fullness of times had not arrived until the world was solidified into an empire under the Romans.

It was not until a few short years prior to Christ's birth that conditions were JUST RIGHT. When the time was at hand God did send forth His Son.

Volumes upon volumes have been written about Roman times. Few historians have ever grasped the reasons WHY existing conditions were extant—they only recorded WHAT happened.

Understanding God had a hand in the course of nations changes the entire thought and concept of the study of history.

The beginning of Christianity is certainly one of the most inspiring times of all to observe and understand God's intervention in world affairs.

This time is perhaps best summarized in Fisher's Church History:

The system of Roman law, administered wherever there were Roman citizens, was an educating influence of a like tendency.

The mutual influence of the Greeks and Latins, and the united effect of the Greek and Latin languages and culture, not only enlarged and enriched the minds of men, but also served to form a groundwork of intellectual and moral sympathy. Among all the peoples that have appeared on the stage of history the Greeks are the most eminent for literary and artistic genius. Their wonderful creations in literature, science, philosophy, and art were fast becoming the common property of the nations. It was the reasonable boast of Plato, that while other races, as the Phoenicians, had been devoted to money-making, the Greeks in intellectual power and achievement, excelled them all...Greek at length grew to be the language of commerce, and the vehicle of polite intercourse, a common medium of communication through all the eastern portion of the empire. The Latin tongue, the language of Roman officials and of the Roman legions, was carried wherever Roman conquests and colonies went.

Under the reign of Augustus an increased stimulus was given to travel and intercourse between different parts of the Roman world. There were journeys of civil and military officers, and the marching of legions from one place to another. Piracy had been suppressed, and now that peace was established there was a vast increase of trade and commerce, in which the Jews everywhere took an active part. There was much traveling for health and for pleasure. Roman youth studied Egypt and of the East. Provincials were eager to see Rome. From curiosity, to get employment or largesses, to buy and to sell, to find or to furnish amusement, they flocked to the capital.¹⁰

A FINAL SUMMARY OF THE POSITIVE EXTERNAL PREPARATIONS

Adolf Harnack, in his Mission and Expansion of Christianity, states several major conditions which greatly facilitated the expansion of Christianity in the world.

These are generally recognized by all church historians as the heart and core of God's preparation. Seven of these are: (1) The Greek influence which had gone on since the time of Alexander the Great—or the comparative unity of language. (2) The world-empire of Rome and the political unity. (3) The security of international traffic. (4) The essential unity of mankind through Roman law. (5) Ancient societies now built up into a

democracy-like government and the equalization of the citizens. (6) The religious policies of the Romans, allowing freedom to practice local customs. (7) The spread of religions of other types throughout the empire.¹¹

Once again we see from every possible angle that GOD'S PREPARATION of the world for Christianity was complete and through. From roads on which to travel, to laws to make the travel possible, the stage was set.

The disciples of Christ could and did take advantage of every preparation. They had been commissioned to PERFORM A JOB. With inspired effort they accomplished the task of taking Christ's way of life to the entire Roman empire with forty years.

PART ONE
THE WORLD PREPARED
Chapter III

MORAL DEGENERACY IN THE EMPIRE

Not all the world had been prepared in a positive manner. There was also the NEGATIVE SIDE. Christ had told His disciples there would be trouble in the world¹ and PERSECUTIONS.² In this way, as well as the other, conditions had been set in motion which would result in the martyrdom of hundreds and would force converted Christians to be strong in the new way of life brought to them.

THE DECLINE OF ROMAN MORALITY

Riding the crest of the wave, the peoples of Rome soon grew bored with nothing to do. The world was conquered. It was time to ENJOY LIFE.

The upper classes soon began to satiate themselves with the fine things of life—banquetings, travels, slaves to serve them in their villas.

Ironically, as Rome reached the top, simultaneously she began to develop the very characteristics which would later lead to her FALL.

From the conquered nations Romans began to select slaves by the millions. "It is reckoned that in the empire there cannot have been fewer than 60,000,000 slaves."³ These slaves were so numerous, recorded Tacitus, that they had to be numbered and divided according to their nationalities.⁴

With slavery came an almost total disregard for human life—an influence which was to contribute greatly to the COLLAPSE and FALL of the great empire.

Rome did not finally fall until 476 A.D., but this moral degeneracy set in early.

Even in the days of Pompey Romans had adopted the disgusting practice of preparing for a dinner by taking an emetic. Vitellius set on the table at one banquet 2,000 fishes and 7,000 birds, and in less than eight months spent in feasts a sum that would amount to several millions.⁵

It soon became the accepted "thing to do" to see who could put on the most lavish spectacle—who could eat the most—who could drink the most.

The Roman writers, Tactius, Seneca, Juvenal, Livy, and others all record a witness against the baseness of the higher classes and the decadence of the times.

Fortunes were squandered on a single banquet. Wine was served only in goblets of gold bedecked with jewels, each worth hundreds of dollars. They feasted on the "delicacies" of the day—brains of peacocks and tongues of nightingales.⁶

Thus two extremes of life existed in the empire—the abject slaves, regarded as little more than brute beasts, and the cream of Roman society. What middle class there might have been had little, if any, influence on affairs of state and conditions of the world.

As Christianity spread throughout the empire, it affected both extremes of life. Of course, the lower classes accepted the new religion far more readily. It gave them the ANSWERS to the WHYS and WHEREFORES of life and hope in more than a mere temporal existence on earth.

But there were some few members of the higher classes who were called of God who became Christians, even some who later entered the ministry. The apostle Paul records that some from the household of Caesar were members of the true Church of God,⁷ while Luke records in the book of Acts that King Herod's own foster brother was in the ministry.⁸ However, the Roman historian, Seutonius, records:

The Christians had filled no large space in the eye of the world. Until the days of Domitian we do not hear of a single noble or distinguished person who had joined their ranks.⁹

The slaves who did not believe had no power or authority to fight Christianity. The nobles paid no attention, since no one of importance, to speak of, joined the new sect. Once again, we see just how well prepared the empire was.

FAMILY LIFE

Accompanying the wild craze to satiate lusts and desires was a tremendous DECLINE IN FAMILY LIFE.

At one time in the ancient Roman world, THE FAMILY was a very sacred institution. The basis for every society is the home—and the collapse of home life inevitably leads to the collapse of the entire society. Such was the case in Rome.

For scores of years divorce was unknown among the Romans. However, the decay set in even before Rome became a great empire. Some two hundred years before Christ the pattern began.

Dionicius even records and names the first known public divorce because it was such a new and different thing. The man's name was Stp. Carvillus Ruga—the divorce occurred in the year 234 B.C.¹⁰

By the Christian era MARRIAGE had come to be regarded with disfavor and distain and the Roman writer, Seneca, states:

Women married in order to be divorced, and were divorced in order to marry; and noble Roman matrons counted the years not by the Consuls, but by their discarded or discarding husbands.¹¹

Certainly this attitude was also one of the PAVING STONES for Christianity. Thousands wanted to get off the "marriage-go-round" and Christianity with the teachings of a strong and STABLE FAMILY LIFE had great appeal to those who sought the answers.

Understanding this background makes clear the many verses in the New Testament on family life. Such chapters as Romans 1, I Corinthians 11, Ephesians 5, I Timothy 5, Titus 2, I Peter 3, and many others show the complete moral degeneracy of the times and THE SOLUTION of family problems through Jesus Christ.

THE END RESULT

Unless immediately curtailed, degeneracy breeds only more degeneracy. It didn't take long for Roman society to plunge to the VERY BOTTOM of debauchery and filth. The apostle Paul describes the base depravity and turpitude of Rome:

Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were they thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves; Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder,

debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful:¹²

What an indictment against a nation!

Rome was an empire gone INSANE on the pleasures of carnal lust, vanity, and greed. Yet, to this people the ministers of Jesus Christ carried His message.

And, although we have seen the way was fully prepared, the degeneracy of Rome was to later take its toll on the followers of Christ.

THE ROMAN GAMES

Unable to fulfill their inordinate desires in a normal manner, Rome began to use THE GAMES as a means of ESCAPE.

The games started out innocently enough—acrobatic acts, wild animal performances, wrestling and tournaments of athletic skill.

In time, however, they degenerated into a bloodbath of HUMAN CARNAGE nearly unparalleled in human history.

At first, when the sponsors of the games began to introduce the more gory events, the people winced; but, after the first sights of blood, it became the expected—the demanded MAIN EVENT.

Huge stadiums and arenas were constructed. The Colosseum at Rome still stands today, a half shell to remind visitors of the age that was Rome at her greatest. Erected late in the first century A.D. the Colosseum could seat over 50,000, perhaps even 75,000 properly arranged. It was the site for spectacles the average person today could not bear to watch.

Not far from the Colosseum stood the famed CIRCUS MAXIMUS, the remains of which are also still standing. The circus could seat up to 375,000 cheering, crazed spectators as they watched charioteers and gladiators DIE by the scores and hundreds.

The chariot race in the Hollywood spectacular movie, Ben Hur, can only begin to show what it must have been like.

At the Colosseum or at any number of other arenas throughout the empire, men were armed and forced to fight each other to the death. Other men, prisoners or slaves, were made to fight lions, leopards, elephants, and myriads of other half-starved and crazed animals.

Games were sponsored by politicians to gain votes. Emperors arranged extravaganzas to impress visiting dignitaries. The more time went on, the more degenerate were the games.

It was not long until they stretched out into affairs lasting several days where thousands of men and animals were displayed. The whole society began to fall apart.

And while the shamelessness of the theatre corrupted the purity of all classes from the earliest age, the hearts of the multitude were made hard as the nether millstone with brutal insensibility, by the fury of the circus, the atrocities of the amphitheatre, and the cruel orgies of the games. Augustus, in the document annexed to his will, mentioned that he had exhibited 8,000 gladiators and 3,510 wild beasts.¹³

And that was only the beginning. By the time of Nero, the games were the MAIN FEATURE of life. Entire fortunes were made or lost in a single day at the games as a result of gambling. The populace was obsessed.

This part of life was also to have great bearing on the Church. Christians were sometimes arrested due to local persecutions, and later they were blamed for the great fire of Rome. The games served as a place where scores, perhaps hundreds, suffered martyrdom.

When writing to the church at Corinth, the apostle Paul tells of a time when he had apparently been thrown into a fight at the games, "For we would

not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that WE DESPAIRED OF LIFE: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves..."¹⁴ In all likelihood Paul thought he and the others accompanying him were as good as dead.

He had written earlier, "If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus..."¹⁵ And then wrote to Timothy, "Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me: that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I WAS DELIVERED OUT OF THE MOUTH OF THE LION."¹⁶

At least once, perhaps more than once, Paul almost despaired of life, even having to FIGHT BEASTS and lions in the arena.

It was not often that the sadistic crowds allowed a man to leave the games with his life. Even those who fought valiantly were held for another day—the best only lasted a few years.

But by some miracle of God, which Paul does not elaborate on, he was allowed to go free after a narrow escape from death.

The games grew WORSE and WORSE:

Yet in the days of Claudius the number of those thus butchered was so great that the statue of Augustus had to be moved that it might not constantly be covered with a veil (Dion Cass. lx. 13, who in the same chapter mentions a lion that had been trained to devour men). In Claudius' sham sea-fight we are told that the incredible number of 19,000 men fought each other (Tac. Ann. xii. 56). Titus, the "darling of the human race," in one day brought into the theatre 5,000 wild beasts (Suet. Tit. 7), and butchered thousands of Jews in the games at Berytus. In Trajan's games (Dion Cass. lxxviii. 15) 11,000 animals and 10,000 men had to fight.¹⁷

The moral depravity of this age is nearly BEYOND COMPREHENSION. This was a time when the human mind sank to the very depths of degradation.

Yet, in the plan and purpose of God, the persecution which came upon Christianity did not arise until, as has been stated before, Christ's message had nearly saturated the empire.

And when persecution did set in, although many Christians suffered at the hands of the Romans, the Church continued to grow, and the influence of Christianity continued to spread.

RELIGION IN THE EMPIRE

As far as the Gentile world was concerned, the final preparation was the presence of innumerable religions which existed in the Roman empire.

Pagan gods by the score were worshipped in as many different forms as there were gods. Any really thinking person could realize they could not all be right.

The apostle Paul capitalized on this aspect of Roman life especially. When first entering the city of Athens in Greece, nearly overwhelmed by its temples, statues, fountains, and monuments, he was moved to preach on Mar's Hill, "Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, HIM DECLARE I UNTO YOU."¹⁸ Paul went on to preach the truth about the ONE, TRUE LIVING GOD in heaven they had never heard about.

As this seventeenth chapter of Acts shows, the empire was ready for Christianity. Hundreds of pagan religions and philosophies had not given the answer to the problems of mankind. But Christ brought the answer—and the apostles carried it to the world.

The people had been prepared in religion:

In the last century and a half of the Republic, a time of political struggle and disaster, of growing skepticism toward the traditional forms of religion, of rapidly increasing wealth and

complexity of life, many Romans found refuge in the quietistic teachings of the Epicureans. Some turned to skepticism or to mysticism, though other philosophies had also their adherents. The significant point is that all intellectual Romans had adopted some form of Greek philosophic thought as well as Greek habits of expression.¹⁹

Paul encountered these philosophers at Athens as well, "Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him. Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoics, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbling say? Other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection."²⁰

Further, concerning the people and the times, "For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing."²¹

The infinite number of religions and philosophies made the appearance of Christianity somewhat a point of curiosity and something to be discussed further rather than something to be cast aside, which would have been the case if only one religion would have prevailed in the empire.

While the religions often capitalized on the base things in life and ran the gamut of degeneracies, nevertheless, they were also a part of the universal preparation that assisted Christianity in its expansion around the world.

PART ONE
THE WORLD PREPARED
Chapter IV

JUDEA, THE SPRINGBOARD

The Roman world was fully prepared for Christ and for Christianity. But Christ came to the eastern extremity of the world—Judea in Palestine. And Christ never got more than a few score miles away from Judea—only into His home area, Galilee, through Samaria, and to the sea coasts.

Thus, for the preparation to be complete, the land of Palestine and its people, the Jews, also had to be prepared.

Just as the Gentile world was set and ready, so were the Jews.

FOUR HUNDRED YEARS OF DEVELOPMENT

Earlier we read from the book of Daniel how the entire Jewish nation was taken into a national captivity between 604 and 585 B.C. After approximately seventy years in captivity, they were finally allowed to return to their native Judea and reestablish their nation.

The Biblical history of this return is primarily found in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

The people knew they had gone into captivity because OF THEIR SINS just as their prophets had warned them.

The return from captivity was accompanied by a firm and zealous desire to remain more faithful to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Their zeal, however, was somewhat MISGUIDED.

Rather than really beginning to keep the laws of Moses and of their forefathers concretely, the Jews began to add rules, and traditions—many of them more binding than Moses ever wrote.

Throughout the next four hundred or more years these traditions became more and more a part of JEWISH LAW.

And because of these laws made by man for man the Jews began to divide up into religious and political groups and parties just as the Gentiles around them had done.

These traditions and the resultant factions of the Jews were also to have a great bearing on the Church.

At the time of Christ there were three primary religious organizations with Judaism. Each had vastly different beliefs and customs, yet each maintained it was more holy and more "chosen" than the others. Two of these groups had numerous dealings with Christ and the later established Church—the third lived monastically, away from society.

While nearly every church historian has written on these sects of Judea, and information concerning them is readily available, we must still look back to the Jewish historian of the times, Josephus, to really understand each more fully.

The Jews had for a great while had three sects of philosophy peculiar to themselves; the sect of the Essens, and the sect of the Sadducees, and the third sort of opinions was that of those called Pharisee...¹

FIRST THE PHARISEES

By far the most predominant group of the three was that of the Pharisees, who, as Josephus says, "...live meanly, and despise delicacies in diet; and they follow the conduct of reason...they determine that all things are done by fate,...and also believe that souls have an immortal vigour in them..."²

He also describes them as having, "...so great a power over the multitude, that when they say anything against the king, or against the high priest, they are presently believed."³

The Pharisees derive their name from the Hebrew, perushim which means literally, "separated." And because they shunned those who did not live up to their principles, they became known as separatists.⁴ They separated themselves from both nations and peoples, especially the illiterate mass of those who "sit at the corners."⁵ And they were distinguished from the bulk of the people because of their pureness and godliness.⁶

The Jewish Encyclopedia summarizes this group as the party which represented the religious views, practices, and hopes of the majority of the Jews. They were in opposition to the priestly Sadducees and were scrupulous observers of the law AS INTERPRETED by the scribes in accordance with tradition. They called their members "Haberim," or brothers and had a second group called "Perushim" (one who separates himself). This second group admitted only those who in the presence of three members pledged themselves to the strict observance of the Levitical parity, to the avoidance of close association with the ignorant and careless people, and to the scrupulous payment of tithes and other imposts due to the priests, Levites, and poor.⁷

In the temple they gained control at an early date and declared that the priests were only deputies of the people. They introduced rites in the temple which originated in popular custom and were without foundation in the law. The Pharisees claimed to be in possession of the traditions of the fathers.⁸

The Encyclopedia Britannica further states that the Pharisees believed since Israel was the first to recognize God as the Father, it was Israel's duty to help other peoples to do the same. With this in mind, the Pharisees "transversed sea and land to make a single proselyte."⁹

The Pharisees, then, represented the leading "denomination" of the day, held to the traditions more than the written law, and wielded a great influence among all the peoples of Judea.

NEXT THE SADDUCEES

Josephus succinctly sums up the doctrines of the Sadducees:

That souls die with the bodies; nor do they regard the observation of any thing besides what the law enjoins them; for they think it an instance of virtue to dispute with those teachers of philosophy whom they frequent: but this doctrine is received but by a few, yet they addict themselves to the notions of the Pharisees, because the multitude would not otherwise bear them.¹⁰

They probably derived their name from Zadok, a priest in the time of David. The name was chosen about two hundred years before Christ to denote the party of the priests. This does not mean all priests were Sadducees; in Christ's time many of the priests were Pharisees, but the Sadducees were usually the higher priestly families.¹¹

The Sadducees usually performed all the legal duties for the priests and exercised power over the temple worship and political affairs.¹² They also controlled the Sanhedrin, even though they were rationalistic, worldly minded, and small in number.¹³

Although a minority group, and one which could not gain many new followers because of their doctrines, they nevertheless held a great deal of sway and influence in higher circles.

It is the Sadducees who generally raised the greatest persecution on the Church in later years.¹⁴ However, it was the Pharisees who harassed Christ the most during His lifetime.¹⁵

FINALLY THE ESSENS

Although they are not even mentioned by name in the New Testament, the Essens did play an influential part in the affairs in Palestine during the early part of the first century A.D.

The Essens were known as the "Pious Ones," the meaning of the Hebrew world from which "Essene" came.¹⁶ Josephus devotes a great deal of space to this group, but it will not be necessary here to quote the entirety of the material. The following is a general summarization of Josephus' account:

...These seem to have a greater affection one for the other than the other sects...These Essens reject pleasures as an evil, but esteem continence, and the conquest over our passions, to be virtue. They neglect wedlock, but choose out other persons' children, while they are pliable, and fit for learning...it is a law among them, that those who come to them must let what they have be common to the whole order,... They have no one certain city, but many of them dwell in every city;

Those who are caught in any heinous sins, they cast out of their society; and he who is thus separated from them does often die after a miserable manner; for as he is bound by the oath he has taken...he is not allowed to partake of that food that he meets with elsewhere, but is forced to eat grass, and to famish his body with hunger, till he perish.¹⁷

Thus were the divisions and philosophies in the land of Palestine throughout the first century of the Christian era. Times do not really change so much. In our modern twentieth century, there are essentially the same divisions of liberals and conservatives—pleasure seekers and stoics. Even religious is divided into denominations, just as were the sects of Judaism and the tenants of the pagans.

THE DISPERSION

Even more important to the Christian Church than the difference of thought among the Jews, was the TREMENDOUS DISPERSION OF JEWS THROUGHOUT THE ROMAN EMPIRE.

Josephus records:

For as the Jewish nation is widely dispersed over all the inhabitable earth among its inhabitants, so it is very much intermingled with Syria by reason of its neighbourhood, and had the greatest multitudes in Antioch by reason of the largeness of the city,...¹⁸

The Dispersion is really the CAPSTONE of God's preparation. Everywhere the Jewish people went they established SYNAGOGUES where weekly Sabbath observances were held.

These synagogues were to be stepping-stones for the spread of Christianity, even throughout the Gentile world.

Not only had the Jews provided a place for Christianity to begin, they had prepared the way for Gentiles to believe in the one true God.

Actually, the Dispersion started hundreds of years before Christ's time. While thousands upon thousands of Jews returned to Palestine after the Babylonian captivity, other thousands spread throughout the empire establishing themselves in the cities of trade and commerce.

Under the influence of the Greeks, some three hundred years before Christ, the Jews of the Dispersion came to be known as HELLINISTS since they embraced many mannerisms and customs of the Greeks and spoke the Greek language. Yet, these Jews always remained faithful to the writings of the Old Testament and looked to the temple in Jerusalem as holy and the place where God dwelt.

Jews were found in large numbers in almost all parts of the empire. A multitude of exiles had planted themselves permanently in Babylonia, instead of returning to Jerusalem with the caravans that followed Ezra (457 B.C.) and Nehemiah (444 B.C.). In Alexandria and its neighborhood they numbered not less than a million. Under the Ptolemies the Old Testament had been rendered into Greek (c. 250 B.C.), and this version, called the Septuagint, was in general use among the

Hellenists, or Jews of the Dispersion, beyond the limits of Palestine. In Antioch and in other places in Syria, in the numerous cities of Asia Minor, in Cyprus, Crete, and other islands of the Mediterranean, in the cities of Greece, in Illyricum, in Rome and in other towns of Italy, Jews had settled in large numbers. They followed the example of the Phoenicians: wherever there was a prospect of gain through trade and commerce, Jewish merchants swarmed.¹⁹

These same Jews were also very instrumental in preparing the Gentile world for the coming of Christianity.

THE PROSELYTES

We have already read how the Pharisees desired to make converts worldwide. Josephus says, "They also made proselytes of a great many of the Greeks perpetually, and thereby after a short time brought them to be a portion of their own body."²⁰

In nearly every example with the pages of the New Testament where the gospel went to the Gentiles, it was in the synagogues of the Jews and to these Greek proselytes.

Paul seldom contacted the Gentiles directly. It would have been unheard of for a Jew to preach his doctrines to the pagan Gentiles. God had prepared a bridge by which the Gentiles could be reached—that bridge was the proselyte.

There were two different classes of Gentiles in the synagogues: first, the full proselyte, who was circumcised in the flesh and actually accepted as a Jew by race (such must have been the Ethiopian eunuch who was baptized by Philip, because Cornelius was the first real Gentile convert). Second, the proselytes of the gate. These were Gentiles who had accepted many of the teachings of the Jews, but were not circumcised and did not necessarily want to be called Jews, even though they had come to believe in the God of the Jewish people.

And here was the key.

These Gentile converts already believed in the true God of Israel. They were already keeping the laws of God. They already had access to the scriptures and writings of the Old Testament which Peter, Paul, and all the ministers used.

Christianity was not some totally new concept to the Gentiles God was calling.

In fact, the Gentiles accepted Paul and the gospel of Christ far more readily than the Jews of the Dispersion.

Notice Luke's account of Paul's first preaching in Antioch of Pisidia: "And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, THE GENTILES (notice the Gentiles were in the synagogue) besought that these words might be preached to them THE NEXT SABBATH. Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews AND RELIGIOUS PROSELYTES followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God."²¹

This was typical of nearly every area into which the apostle Paul went. He first went to the synagogues, preached to both Jews and Gentiles, and nearly every time it was the Gentile proselytes who continued faithful.

These Gentiles then spread the news around the area and hundreds—perhaps thousands—more came to hear Paul.

TIME WAS THEN COMPLETE

Without a doubt, we have now seen a complete and thorough preparation had been made WELL IN ADVANCE of the birth of the Messiah.

In reviewing the high spots we can readily see and understand how the world was prepared to the last degree:

1. There was peace throughout the entire Roman world.

2. There were laws to assure the maximum security and freedom for the first thirty years of early church history.
3. Basic freedoms lasted throughout the entire first century of the Christian era.
4. Highways and shipping lanes were swift and safe.
5. Language was no barrier—Greek was spoken everywhere, knowledge of Aramaic, Latin, Hebrew benefited the Church greatly.
6. The Jews were divided into divergent groups and thoughts, so Christ did not suffer a totally organized persecution from them until His ministry was completed.
7. Because knowledge of God and His laws had spread throughout the Gentile world, the Gentiles did not find the gospel difficult to understand.

The fullness of times had come—it was time for the Messiah to appear.

PART TWO
THE LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF JESUS CHRIST
Chapter V

CHRIST, THE PROPHESIED MESSIAH

It seems almost incredible the Jews rejected Jesus Christ when He came. They had been looking for the Messiah for hundreds of years. It had been four hundred years since the completion of the Old Testament writings, and TIMES WERE RIGHT for His appearance. More than ever, the Roman suppression caused the Jews to look for their prophesied Savior.

By the time Christ was born, the Jewish people had served the Romans sixty years. They, more than all the other nations in the empire, desired to be free—not only free—but to be THEMSELVES rulers of the world.

The prophets had written of a KING who would deliver them from bondage and set them on the pinnacle of world government.

Yet, when the prophesied Messiah began His ministry, the Jews completely and totally REJECTED HIM—not only rejected Him, but became so insanely enraged they caused Him to be put to death by Roman crucifixion.

They refused to believe the Messiah, the King of the Jews, could come as a humble carpenter from Nazareth.

They were not willing to accept HIS MESSAGE, and they were not willing to change from their own preconceived ideas, customs, and traditions. In rejecting Jesus Christ of Nazareth, the Jews had to turn their backs on the very prophecies of their own Sacred Writings.

PROPHESIED FIVE HUNDRED YEARS IN ADVANCE

Many of the Jews knew early in the first century A.D. (as we now count time) the Messiah should appear. It had been recorded centuries in advance in the book of Daniel.

The archangel, Gabriel, appeared to Daniel:

And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to shew thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision. Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and three-score and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.¹

This prophecy, commonly known as the SEVENTY WEEKS PROPHECY, pinpoints EXACTLY the year for the BEGINNING OF Christ's ministry and the exact year of His death.

Let's understand it.

Obviously, Daniel is speaking in prophetic symbolism. In two separate places GOD REVEALS how to INTERPRET prophetic times. These scriptures prove that one day in a prophecy is equal to a year in fulfillment:

After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise.²

And when thou hast accomplished them, lie again on thy right side, and thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days: I have appointed thee each day for a year.³

Daniel was inspired to write it would be exactly sixty-nine prophetic weeks from the commandment to build Jerusalem until the Messiah would appear.

In order to understand this prophecy, then, we need to know exactly how many days there are in sixty-nine weeks. Since there are seven days in a week, multiplying seven times the sixty-nine weeks equals 483 days. A day is equal to a year in prophecy—the prophesied time lapse is a total of 483 years.

Now, all we need to know is when the decree was made to restore and build Jerusalem. There were three separate decrees issued by the Persian leaders to aid the Jews in their return to Jerusalem. These decrees were in 536 B.C., 457 B.C., and in 444 B.C. The principle decree, however, the one upon which the Seventy Weeks Prophecy is based, is understood by almost all historians to be 457 B.C.

The date from which the 70 weeks was to be counted was the decree to re-build Jerusalem. There were three decrees issued by Persian kings for this purpose.. The principal one of these was 457 B.C.⁴

A matter of simple arithmetic projecting forward 483 years from 457 B.C. will show the date of Christ's appearance. That date is 27 A.D. This was the year THE MESSIAH WAS TO APPEAR. It is of special notice here that this is not the birth of Jesus Christ—but His appearance as the Messiah.

Daniel's prophecy clearly reveals this date. There is no other possibility. In addition to establishing the date the Messiah would begin His ministry, Daniel's Seventy Weeks Prophecy also reveals the ministry would last for one full week—that is seven years. But, he also reveals the Messiah, the Prince, would be CUT OFF in the midst of the week, causing the sacrifice and the oblation to cease. He was to have an earthly ministry, then, that would last one-half week or exactly three and one-half years. Since His ministry began in the year 27 A.D., His death must have occurred in the year 31 A.D.—exactly three and a half years after He began to preach.

Now notice the account in Luke's gospel of the beginning of Christ's ministry, "And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph,..."⁵

Since Jesus, then, was just about thirty years of age, as Luke shows, we can easily determine the year of Christ's birth by simple going back thirty years from the date His ministry began—27 A.D. Again, simple mathematics brings us to the conclusion Christ was born in the year 4 B.C.

Thus, evidence WITHIN THE BIBLE plainly shows Christ was born, as we now count time, in the year 4 B.C. He began His ministry in 27 A.D. He was crucified in 31 A.D.

FROM SECULAR WRITINGS

But the Bible is not the only proof.

In addition to the accounts written in the gospels by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, there are many proofs from SECULAR HISTORY.

It is very common knowledge that Christ was born in the period of time in Roman history when Augustus was Caesar at Rome, Herod was governor in Judea, Cyrenius was governor in Syria. There are numerous other references to figures in Roman history which certainly corroborate and demonstrate the authenticity of these times.

Let's examine just a few.

Augustus was Caesar from 27 B.C. to 14 A.D. This was a broad span of time, but we know from the gospel accounts of Christ's life that His birth must have taken place within these years. The reign of Augustus can by no means pinpoint the exact time.

However, there are two very important dates which can be determined through the life of Herod the Great and Cyrenius (alternate spelling Quirinius), the governor of Syria.

FIRST, HEROD THE GREAT

The Jewish historian, Josephus, whom we have already frequently quoted, gives a single, but most important KEY TO DETERMINE the date of Herod's death. It is important to confirm this date since Jesus Christ was born some time PRIOR TO THE DEATH OF HEROD. The key was a decree issued by Herod which causes scores of infant children in and around the area of Bethlehem to be killed after Herod was told by the wise men from the East they were looking for the Christ, the King of the Jews.⁶

Let's read Josephus' account of Herod:

When he had done these things, he died, the fifth day after he had caused Antipater to be slain; having reigned, since he had procured Antigonus to be slain, thirty-four years; but since he had been declared king by the Romans, thirty-seven.⁷

These two dates are readily recognized by all historians to be 37 B.C. and 40 B.C. respectively.

Since Josephus generally reckoned reigns from the spring to the spring of the year, this places the last year of Herod's life from the spring of 4 B.C. to the spring of 3 B.C.

To really clinch the date of Herod's death, Josephus records an earlier event, sometime before Herod's death, "AND THAT VERY NIGHT THERE WAS AN ECLIPSE OF THE MOON."⁸ The footnote in the works of Josephus clearly dates this eclipse of the moon, which can be determined by astronomical computation to have occurred on March 13, 4 B.C.

Some confusion has resulted in this account because Josephus further adds that Herod died prior to a Passover. The Passover in 4 B.C. fell in the second week in April.

Josephus further adds to the account of Herod's death, that after the eclipse of the moon he was put under the care of physicians for a severe case of distemper which caused him a great deal of pain. He also took a trip beyond the Jordan to find a cure for his illness in the warm baths which were at Collirrhore. After that, he ordered the execution of numerous political leaders and had his own son put to death only five days before he died himself.⁹

It would be impossible for all this to have occurred between March 13, and early April of 4 B.C., less than one month.

The Passover Josephus mentions in connection with the death of Herod, then, MUST BE the Passover of 3 B.C.—thirteen full months after the eclipse. This would certainly allow time for his trip and for the atrocities he ordered to be carried out.

The date given by Daniel and the secular accounts are in complete agreement, for those who are willing to accept the TRUE FACTS of history.

Christ was born in 4 B.C., some six months prior to the death of Herod. There is no doubt about it. He lived thirty-three and one-half years on earth, at age thirty He began His ministry, carried it out for three and a half years, and died in the spring of 31 A.D.

THE TAXATION OF CYRENIUS

Only the gospel account by Luke records the taxation and census taken by the governor of Syria.¹⁰ Historians in many cases have not been willing to admit this taxation ever existed, therefore many have doubted the reliability of the Biblical accounts and dates.

However, archaeological evidences and historical discoveries have PROVED there really was a governor at this time named Cyrenius and that there was a taxing and census taken by him.

Roman records which have been found dating back to the time of the Emperor Julian (about 360 A.D.) certainly verify what Luke wrote. Julian is often called "the Apostate" because he turned back to paganism from Christianity.¹¹ In attempting to destroy the Christianity which had developed in Rome, he said:

Jesus, whom you celebrate, was one of Caesar's subjects. If you dispute it, I will prove it by and by; but it may as well be done now. For you yourselves allow that he was enrolled with his father and mother in the time of Cyrenius.¹²

To be certain, Julian was not trying to prove the authenticity of Christ and Quirinius—he was trying to stamp out Christianity. Yet, this very record in itself proves there really was a governor in Syria named Cyrenius who did record the birth of Jesus Christ—it was in the Roman civil records—and it was common knowledge.

In addition, archaeologists in Rome, in the year 1764, discovered Roman records in stone which mentioned the name of Cyrenius, governor of Syria and stated that he not only served as governor of Syria at one time, but twice.¹³ This solves a very great enigma some historians have had in understanding the Biblical account. Part of the problem lies in the proper translation of Luke 2:2. It should read, "This was THE FIRST ENROLLMENT, when Quirinius was governor of Syria" (RSV). It seems apparent there was yet another enrollment made at a later date, probably in 6 A.D. This must be the enrollment referred to by Luke in the book of Acts, "After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing..."¹⁴

This taxing mentioned in the book of Acts must be the later taxing—but we can clearly see there was a taxation made in the time of Augustus, specifically when Quirinius was governor of Syria.

For this reason, as the Biblical account then shows, Joseph and Mary were in Bethlehem, since the Roman requirement was for all women over twelve years of age (and slaves also) to be subject to a head tax, as well as men over fourteen, until the age of sixty-five.¹⁵ Each individual had to return to the land of his forefathers' heritage for the taking of the census. Joseph and Mary had traveled to Bethlehem, the city of David, and were there when Jesus Christ was born.

Once again, we see both the Biblical and secular accounts fit hand-in-glove and irrefutably prove the EXACT TIMES for the events mentioned in the Bible. And from the quote we just read regarding the Emperor Julian, this taxation and the birth of Jesus Christ were a part of Roman records at least up until the fourth century A.D.—after which the records must have become lost.

In the writings of the early Church Fathers after the first century A.D., Justin Martyr wrote concerning this same taxation in about the year A.D. 105:

Now there is a village in the land of the Jews thirty-five stadia from Jerusalem, in which Jesus Christ was born, as you can also ascertain from the registers of the taxing under Cyrenius your first procurator in Judea.¹⁶

The authenticity of these times and also the dates are, then, corroborated first and foremost by God's Word, the Bible, secondarily from the writings of the early Church Fathers, and thirdly by official Roman records.

FULFILLED PROPHECY OF THE MESSIAH

BIRTH OF THE MESSIAH

	PROPHECY	FULFILLMENT
Isaiah prophesied that a virgin would bear a son and call him Emmanuel	Isaiah 4:7 Isaiah 7:14 Isaiah 9:6-7	Matthew 1:20-23
While He was yet in the womb He would be called by His name	Isaiah 49:1	Luke 1:31
The Messiah would be the begotten Son of God	Psalms 2:7	Matthew 1:16-20 Luke 2:46-48, 52
Gifts of gold and incense would be brought before the Christ after his birth	Isaiah 60:6 Psalms 72:10	Matthew 2:11
It was prophesied that Christ would be born in Bethlehem	Micah 5:2	Matthew 2:11
Christ would come from the line of David	2 Sam. 7:12-16 Jer. 23:5	Matthew 1:1
Christ would be of the seed of Jesse	Isaiah 11:1	Matthew 1:6

LIFE OF CHRIST

God's Son would be called out of Egypt	Hosea 11:1	Matthew 2:14-15
Christ would have a spirit of wisdom and understanding	Isaiah 11:2-3	Luke 2:46
Herod would kill all male children in an attempt to destroy Christ	Jeremiah 31:15	Matthew 2:16-18

THE MESSENGER OF CHRIST

A messenger would be sent to prepare the way for the Messiah	Malachi 3:1	Matthew 3:1-2
The messenger would cry in the wilderness to prepare the people	Isaiah 40:3	Luke 3:3-4 Matthew 3:3 Mark 1:3-4
The messenger would have the power and spirit of Elijah	Malachi 4:5-6	Luke 1:15-17 Matthew 11:7-14

THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST

	PROPHECY	FULFILLMENT
God would send a prophet to minister to His people.	Deut. 18:5	John 12:49
The year Christ's ministry would begin was prophesied.	Daniel 9:25-26	Luke 3:23
A light would come to Judah and the world.	Isaiah 60:1-2 Isaiah 9:2	John 1:9,14 Luke 1:7-9
Christ overthrew Satan and proved Himself the ruler of the world.	Genesis 3:15	Matthew 4:10 Mark 1:12-13
The Messiah would heal the sick, restore the sight of the blind, and open the ears of the deaf.	Isaiah 42:7 Isaiah 61:1 Isaiah 35:5-6	Matthew 11:5-6 Luke 7:22
The Messiah would be a leader and commander of men.	Isaiah 55:4	Matthew 7:29
The Messiah would be as a shepherd to His flock.	Isaiah 40:11	John 10:11-16 John 21:15-17
The Messiah would not come as a conquering warrior, but merely to be a witness to the people at that time.	Isaiah 42:2-3	Matthew 12:20
Christ would speak in parables so the world would not understand.	Psalms 78:2	Matthew 13:34-35

THE DEATH OF CHRIST

The Messiah would enter Jerusalem lowly, riding on the colt of an ass.	Zechariah 9:9	Matthew 21:5 John 12:15
The Messiah would be a man of great sorrow and suffering.	Isaiah 53:3	Mark 9:12
Christ bore our sins and was wounded that we might be healed.	Isaiah 53:4	I Peter 2:24
One of the Messiah's friends would be the one to betray Him.	Psalms 41:9 Psalms 55:12-14	John 13:18-27 Luke 22:47-48
Christ would be betrayed for thirty pieces of silver.	Zechariah 11:12	Matthew 26:15
His own disciples would deny Christ.	Zechariah 13:4	Matthew 26:31,72
The Messiah would be delivered up to the council and given false witnesses.	Psalms 35:11	Matthew 26:59
Though they speak lies against Him, Christ would not open His mouth.	Isaiah 53:7	Matthew 27:12

	PROPHECY	FULFILLMENT
Christ would be condemned to death.	Isaiah 53:8	Mark 15:1
Christ would be scourged before He was taken to be crucified.	Isaiah 50:6	Mark 15:15 Matthew 27:26
The Messiah would be mocked and laughed to scorn.	Psalms 22:7	Matthew 27:39
Christ would be given vinegar and gall to drink.	Psalms 22:18 Psalms 69:21	Matthew 27:34 John 19:33
The soldiers would cast lots for His garments.	Psalms 22:18	Matthew 27:35
The Messiah would be put to death with sinners.	Isaiah 53:12	Matthew 27:38
While on the stake Christ would cry out, "My God my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"	Psalms 22:1	Matthew 27:46 Mark 15:34
Christ would be cut off in the midst of the week.	Daniel 9:27	John 19:30-31 Matthew 28:1,6 Matthew 12:40
None of the Messiah's bones would be broken.	Psalms 34:20	John 19:33
Christ's hands and side would be pierced.	Zechariah 12:10 Psalms 22:16	John 19:34 John 20:20,25
It was prophesied that the Corner Stone would be rejected by the builders.	Psalms 118:22	Ephesians 2:20 Matthew 21:42 Mark 12:10 Luke 20:17
The Messiah would be buried in a rich man's sepulcher.	Isaiah 53:9	Mark 15:43-46 John 19:38-40

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

The Messiah would be in the grave three days and three nights, as Jonah was in the belly of the fish.	Jonah 1:17	Matthew 12:40 Mark 8:31 Matthew 28:6
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PART TWO
THE LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF JESUS CHRIST
Chapter VI

CHRIST, THE DESIRE OF NATIONS

The Old Testament is literally filled with prophecies of the Messiah. One of the least understood of these prophecies is found in the book of Haggai:

And I will shake all nations, and THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS SHALL COME: and I will fill this house with glory saith the Lord of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be GREATER THAN the former, saith the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts.¹

The Jews have never understood this scripture. Very few Christians have really grasped the full significance that JESUS CHRIST is the FULFILLMENT—THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS.

Let's understand this prophecy.

Haggai's prediction was fulfilled, right on schedule, in the days of Herod and Christ. God said, through the prophet Haggai, "I will shake all nations," and that is just what He did. We have seen how the armies of Rome literally "shook" all the nations of the civilized world. The armies of Pompey, Julius Caesar, and then Augustus, forced the nations of the world to their knees and subjected them to the imperial power of Rome. Hundreds of years before, armies from Babylon, Persia, and Greece wreaked havoc throughout the entirety of the world, and the world was shaken!

THE TEMPLE GLORIFIED

The prophecy continued, "The glory of this latter house SHALL BE GREATER THAN OF THE FORMER." The house being referred to is the temple of God at Jerusalem. The temple which had previously been built by Solomon was one of the greatest buildings ever constructed by human beings. Its plated walls of gold bedecked with jewels made it one of the OUTSTANDING SHOWPLACES of the world. That temple was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar between the years of 604 and 585 B.C.

The latter house is the temple which had been constructed by Zerubbabel after the return from captivity, about which we read a little in the book of Daniel. The prophecy through Haggai was that the glory of this latter house would be greater than the former. In a physical way the NEVER occurred.

Herod the Great remodeled Zerubbabel's temple after over three hundred years of use and made it a truly magnificent structure. Herod's chief glory was:

...the new temple in Jerusalem. The actual labour on the shrine itself lasted but eighteen months, although eight years were required on the surroundings. The last detail, however, of this gem of all Palestine was not completed until the days of Albinus (62-64 A.D.). And then, less than a decade later, it was fired by the conqueror's torch! Its magnificence—white marble with its overlay of gold and precious stones—gleaming high on the summit of Zion, and bursting into sudden view as pilgrims came over the top of Olivet on the Jericho road, gave rise to the rabbinical saying: "Whoever has not seen the temple of Herod has seen nothing beautiful."²

The temple refurbished by Herod was a magnificent structure. Yet, all the Jews readily knew it did not even begin to measure up to the magnificence and glory of the temple which was built by Solomon.

Then how could Haggai's prophecy be fulfilled? How could this latter house have more glory than the former?

The obvious answer is the God sent Jesus Christ, His Son, into that second temple and GLORIFIED IT beyond any building in all history.³

One of the first acts Jesus did in His ministry was to enter the temple in Jerusalem and cast out the money changers and the animals which were desecrating the temple of God.⁴

Jesus Christ did enter into that second temple, He did cleanse and purge it, HIS VERY PRESENCE made it a more glorified building than the temple built by Solomon.

THE WORLD SOUGHT A SAVIOR

But was Jesus Christ "the desire of all nations," as Haggai's prophecy states? Ironically, the Jews were not the only ones looking for a Messiah at this time. The two best known Roman historians of this period of history, Seutonius and Tacitus, both record Roman anticipation of a deliverer.

There had spread over all the Orient and old and established belief, that it was fated at that time for men coming from Judaea to rule the world.⁵

...there was a firm persuasion, that in the ancient records of their priests was contained a prediction of how at this very time the East was to grow powerful, and RULERS, COMING FROM JUDEA, WERE TO ACQUIRE UNIVERSAL EMPIRE.⁶

Certainly, the Romans did not accept Jesus Christ as the Redeemer or Savior. Rather, they became the instruments who put Him to death to fulfill the scriptures about Him. But it is, nevertheless, interesting to note the world was looking for a savior and that Jesus Christ was the "desire of all nations" even though the nations did not accept Him.

BUT WHAT ABOUT OTHER NATIONS?

We have already seen how the Greeks had the greatest educational and cultural influence in the world up to this time. Probably their most famous philosopher was Plato. His writings also show a desire for a redeemer or savior. Speaking of the subject of religion, Plato says, "It is therefore necessary, to wait till One teach us how we ought to behave toward the gods and men. When shall that time arrive and who shall that teacher be? For most glad would I be to see such a man."⁷ Although written three hundred years before Christ, the Greeks were looking for a man to lead and teach them. Their traditions looked for "the desire of all nations."

We have already recorded Seutonius and Tacitus as far as the Romans were concerned, but let's read from Vergil, the Latin poet of forty years before Christ's time: "A GOD-LIKE CHILD SHALL BE BORN...COME QUICKLY TO RECEIVE YOUR POWER FOR ALL THE WORLD AWAITS YOU. O that I may live to see so noble a subject for my verse."⁸ Yes, the Romans were looking for a deliverer and were looking for someone divine.

The Romans and Greeks represented the western portion of the empire. But what about the eastern portion of the world? Were they also looking for a redeemer?

There is even greater evidence in the East! Who was it who came in the early days of Christ's life to worship and give Him honor? Was it not the Wise men FROM THE EAST?

"The East" at this time in history referred to the nations east of the Euphrates. These nations consisted primarily of India, Persia, and THE PARTHIAN EMPIRE. If you do not understand who these Wise Men were, write for our free article which appeared in the December, 1966, issue of the PLAIN TRUTH magazine entitled "The Greatest Story Never Told." You will see clearly proved just exactly who the Parthians were—they were portions of the LOST TEN TRIBES OF ISRAEL who had settled in the area of Parthia after the Assyrian captivity of 721-718 B.C.

They had known for centuries that a deliverer would come. God directly led and inspired them by a miraculous star (which was an angel, Revelation 1:20) to acknowledge the newborn Messiah in Bethlehem shortly after His birth. But there were other Eastern countries who also looked for a Messiah.

The Wise Men from the East, who followed the star to Bethlehem, represented the universal Eastern expectation of a Redeemer. The Persians were at this time looking for the appearance of their Sosiosh, who would conquer Ahriman and his kingdom of darkness.⁹

Although the Persians in no way understood the true plan of God, their traditions looked for a Messiah who would suppress the works of evil—Satan the Devil and his demons. These traditions, although warped and twisted by time and pagan ideas, certainly show all nations did know of a coming Messiah and were looking for Him—and looking for Him at this SPECIFIC TIME IN HISTORY.

It is very likely the people of India had heard of the Savior born in Palestine from the Parthian magi, either as they began their travels to see Christ, or upon their return. An amazing tradition of ancient Indian history tells of the ruler of India who sent emissaries to Palestine in about the year 1 A.D. to inquire whether the PREDICTED royal child had actually made his appearance.¹⁰ It is amazing that the world in general had never heard of these traditions and never realized the entire world was waiting for Jesus Christ.

But even more amazing than the Indian history is the ancient Chinese tradition looking for the Messiah:

Confucius, who wrote about 550 years before the Christian era, was accustomed to say: that The Holy One must be sought in the West.

His declaration was carefully handed down to posterity: and, in the year 64 after the Christian era, the Emperor Mimti, we are told, under the influence of this ancient expectation, sent messengers westward into India, that there they might inquire for the long predicted Holy One of Confucius.

Such, in the remote East, was the expectation, which existed 550 years before the Christian era, and which from that time downward continued to prevail.¹¹

Traditions from around the world constantly focus upon a HOLY ONE, a DELIVERER to come.

Just as Haggai prophesied, Jesus Christ was "THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS."

JESUS CHRIST REALLY DID EXIST

Whether or not an individual accepts Jesus Christ to be the Savior, there is abundant historical evidence to PROVE that Jesus Christ was a literal historical figure born in Bethlehem, who lived in Palestine between the years 4 B.C. and 31 A.D.

Roman annuals recorded His birth and His death. The historians and writers of the day, besides Biblical records, mentioned His life. The Jews preserved testimony of Christ and the Christian Church He founded, in the writings of both Josephus and Philo.

Traditions of the day from around the world showed the world knew a deliverer should come. That Deliverer was Jesus Christ, as the Biblical record claims.

Many atheists ridicule the existence of a person such as Jesus Christ. Perhaps it is appropriate at this point to insert a short section proving Jesus Christ literally was an historical figure.

Certainly, we have already seen evidence in secular history of Jesus Christ. We have seen His birth was recorded in Roman chronicles and preserved—even though those records are not extant at this time. The sceptic could still doubt and ridicule.

But there is still another witness!

When being tried for his life before the Roman governor, Festus, the apostle Paul said, "For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I

speaking freely; for I am persuaded THAT NONE OF THESE THINGS ARE HIDDEN FROM HIM; FOR THIS THING WAS NOT DONE IN A CORNER."¹² If these things were not done in a corner, certainly there must have been some notice in Rome and there would be some record of Jesus Christ at this time.

There is that record! Here is proof Jesus Christ did exist:

Nero fastened the guilt [for the burning of Rome] and inflicted the more exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called CHRISTIANS by the populace. CHRISTUS, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our own procurators, Pontius Pilate, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judea, the first source of evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their center and become popular.¹³

Now that we have proved that Jesus Christ did live, and have determined the dates of His life, we need to understand His teachings and how he founded His one true Church.

PART TWO
THE LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF JESUS CHRIST
Chapter VII

THE MESSAGE CHRIST BROUGHT

The modern, twentieth century world you live in has accepted the NAME of Jesus Christ. Christianity is THE accepted religion of the entire western world. Yet, how many professing "Christians" today really know and UNDERSTAND the way of life and the MESSAGE brought by the Son of God?

You have already seen proved beyond any doubt that God sent HIS OWN SON into the world over 1,900 years ago.

But what was the message He brought?

Why have so few understood His preaching? And why have so few understand the message carried to the world by Christ's true apostles and ministers?

In this chapter we will review the life and teachings of Christ as revealed in the four gospel accounts—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

CHRIST BROUGHT THE GOSPEL

It is not startling and new to state Christ preached the gospel—everyone has heard that.

BUT WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

The word, "gospel" comes into English from an old Anglo-Saxon word, "godspel" which simple means GOOD NEWS. That is what Christ brought—GOOD NEWS.

But what Good News?

The way for Christ's ministry had been prepared by John the Baptist. After some months of preparation, John was imprisoned by Herod.

At that time the preparation for Christ's ministry was complete. "Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, PREACHING THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD."¹

The GOOD NEWS was a message of a coming KINGDOM—not a kingdom of men, ruled by men and for men, but a KINGDOM OF GOD.

CHRIST'S MESSAGE WAS WORLD GOVERNMENT!

The Jews had known for centuries the coming Messiah would set up a government. But they rejected Christ because He didn't set up the Messianic Kingdom at His first coming.

Christian denominations today largely accept the person of Christ, but they do not look for a government of kingdom.

The Jews rejected both Christ and His message. Today's churches, although they accept His name, have rejected His MESSAGE!

At the conclusion of Christ's ministry before He ascended into the heavens He commissioned His disciples, "Go ye unto ALL THE WORLD, and PREACH THE GOSPEL to every creature."²

Christ expected His true ministers to carry the very same GOSPEL He had preached into the entire world.

But somewhere along the line the message became twisted and perverted. We will see how the perversion of Christ's message started in chapter nine. What millions have accepted without knowing it is the twisting and wresting of the TRUE gospel and message brought by Christ—not the real message He brought.

You need to understand the TRUTH.

FEW TO UNDERSTAND

Amazing as it sounds to the churchgoers in our modern world of religion, JESUS CHRIST NEVER INTENDED FOR THE VAST MAJORITY TO UNDERSTAND at this time.

Shocking as it may seem—THIS IS NOT THE ONLY DAY OF SALVATION (write for our free article on this subject).

If it is, then God and Christ have miserably failed in their desperate attempt to save mankind. However, God is not in a "desperate" attempt to save everyone now. And, of course, GOD WILL NOT FAIL.

EVERY TIME Christ spoke to the multitudes about the Kingdom of God, He spoke to them in analogies or similes called PARABLES. Notice it, and notice WHY:

All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in PARABLES; and without a parable spake he not unto them: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.³

And when asked why He spoke in parables, Christ answered:

Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand...For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be CONVERTED, and I should heal them.⁴

Plainly, then, Christ did not reveal the truth about His kingdom and government to the entire world, but ONLY to His called and chosen disciples—to those who would repent and change.

It was not time at Christ's first coming to set up the government of God. The parables reveal when that shall be.

A COMING GOVERNMENT

In the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, Christ uses a parable to demonstrate a lesson about the Kingdom of God. In the story, He likens Himself unto a man traveling into a far country. He distributed talents, abilities, and responsibilities to His servants and told them to increase.

The story is familiar!

Yet, how many have realized Christ was showing He actually would RETURN to this earth and set up His kingdom?

Notice it, "After A LONG TIME the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them..."⁵

After seeing some HAD INCREASED their given amounts (which means they had grown in God's Spirit and in their capabilities), Christ said, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee RULER over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."⁶

Christ promised positions of rulership when He returned to earth. He has now gone to heaven to prepare those responsibilities.

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I WILL COME AGAIN, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.⁷

This is not talking about "mansions in the sky." It is talking about positions of responsibility Christ is right now preparing. The word "mansions" should more properly be translated "abodes" or "offices" or "positions of authority."

Christ promised HE WOULD COME AGAIN and give those positions of responsibility to His servants. When the disciples asked what their positions would be in the Kingdom of God, Christ replied, "And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and SIT ON THRONES JUDGING THE TWELVE TRIBES OF ISRAEL."⁸

Everywhere in the New Testament, the message is one of rulership. Jesus Christ is to be KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS and will return to this earth.⁹

The reward promised Christians who overcome and qualify for Christ's kingdom is not floating around heaven all day like that lazy old sun. Rather it is one of rulership with Christ.

Notice two passages from Christ's Revelation:

And he that overcometh and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall RULE THEM with a rod of iron:..."¹⁰

To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."¹¹

And where will these positions of rulership be? In heaven? No. Your Bible says, "And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and WE SHALL REIGN ON THE EARTH."¹²

Nothing could be plainer in the Bible than the gospel Christ brought. Yet, millions of professing Christians have rejected it in favor of the ancient PAGAN idea of the immortality of the soul and going to heaven to spend eternity doing nothing.

Christ's message is LIVING and DYNAMIC. It has to do with solving this world's problems by the establishment of a world government with Christ and the saints ruling, and bringing peace, health and prosperity to the world.

BUT WHAT ABOUT GOD'S LAWS?

It's amazing, but the world has little understood the REAL life and teachings of Christ.

Scores of churches today believe and teach that Jesus Christ came to DO AWAY WITH GOD'S LAW—that Christ nailed it to the cross, taking it out of the way.

But did He?

Let's look to Christ and His own teachings to see.

The very focal point of all Christian doctrine is the Sermon on the Mount recorded in Matthew 5, 6, and 7.

Concerning the law of God, Christ said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am NOT come to destroy, BUT TO FULFIL."¹³

That doesn't sound like Christ intended to do away with God's law at all. In fact this and the entire Sermon on the Mount are a fulfillment of the prophecy about Christ's message from the prophet Isaiah, "The LORD is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; HE WILL MAGNIFY THE LAW, and make it honourable."¹⁴

To magnify the law means to focus on it, to make it more applicable and binding—it does not do away with it. Magnifying the law makes it clearer and easier to see.

That is just what Christ did.

When the rich young nobleman came to Christ and asked Him, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have ETERNAL LIFE?" Christ answered, "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God: but IF thou wilt enter into life, KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS."

The question then followed, "Which commandments?"

The answer, "Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love they neighbor as thyself."¹⁵

Which commandments, then?

Why, the TEN COMMANDMENTS—the Ten Commandments as expounded and amplified through the entire NEW TESTAMENT. They were not done away at all.

EVEN THE SABBATH?

Many are willing to accept Christ taught some of the Ten Commandments. But did He also teach His disciples to observe the "Jewish" Sabbath—Saturday today—the seventh day of the week?

Let's again look into the BIBLE to see.

As Jesus began His preaching ministry, "he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, AS HIS CUSTOM was, he went into the synagogue ON THE SABBATH DAY, and stood up for to read."¹⁶

He then preached to them from the book of Isaiah to show He was the prophesied Messiah and that they were hearing and seeing the very fulfillment of the prophecy THAT VERY DAY.

We see, then, Christ's custom was to observe and preach on the Sabbath weekly.

In Capernaum He entered into the synagogue and taught.¹⁷

When He came into His own country, "when the Sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue..."¹⁸

And Christ "taught them on the SABBATH DAYS."¹⁹

The same is true throughout the entire ministry of Christ. He faithfully observed every Sabbath day and taught the disciples to do so as well.

When asked about the observance of the Sabbath and how it should be kept, Christ replied, "THE SABBATH WAS MADE FOR MAN, and not man for the Sabbath: Therefore the Son of man is LORD ALSO OF THE SABBATH."²⁰

That doesn't sound like it's a harsh law of bondage which Christ would have to nail to His cross, does it?

Certainly not.

The Sabbath was MADE for man. But when was the Sabbath made?

And on the SEVENTH DAY God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he made. AND GOD BLESSED THE SEVENTH DAY, and SANCTIFIED IT: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.²¹

The Sabbath was made when man was made—AT CREATION. It was a part of the creation of GOD.

And it was just as vital and integral a part of the life of Jesus Christ as it could possibly have been.

Christ, remember, came to magnify and make God's law even more honorable—not to nail it to the cross.

The Sabbath is the very center of Christ's teaching and the day on which He preached throughout His ministry.

THE SELECTING AND TRAINING OF A MINISTRY

As Christ carried out His three and one-half year ministry, He also carefully selected and trained His twelve disciples who were to become the apostles of the New Testament Church.

Although Christ's message was clearly a message of world-ruling government, it very obviously was not a government which was to immediately be set up.

It was the intention of Christ to establish His Church and for IT to be the instrumentality by which the gospel would go to the world.

Go ye therefore, and teach ALL NATIONS, baptizing them in [into] the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Ghost [Spirit]: TEACHING them to OBSERVE ALL THINGS whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.²²

It has been over 1900 years since the foundation of Christ's Church. His government is not yet established upon the earth, but His gospel is going around the world as a witness to all nations before the end.²³

If Christ meant what He said, and HE DID, then somewhere on earth TODAY is a work proclaiming the very SAME MESSAGE which Christ brought—fulfilling the very same commission given to the first twelve apostles.

This chapter has discussed the very heart and core of Christianity—not only the person and name of Christ, but also THE MESSAGE HE BROUGHT, the way of life He lived, and the training of His disciples.

When that message and training was complete Jesus Christ reached the hour of His greatest trial—when He was to be offered as a sacrifice for the sins of the world.

CHRIST'S DEATH AND RESURRECTION

Three and one-half years after Christ began to preach saw the fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy, "And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself...and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease..."²⁴ In prophetic times, as we have seen, His ministry lasted three and one-half years.

On April 25, 31 A.D., the date of the Passover that year, Jesus Christ died a death of crucifixion on the stake.

For exactly three days and three nights He lay dead in a sealed tomb.²⁵ But early on Sunday morning, when the woman came to anoint His body, HE WAS ALREADY GONE.²⁶

The Passover in the year 31 A.D. fell on a WEDNESDAY. That is an absolute fact, and the Jewish calendar proves it. Christ was not crucified on a Friday as so many assume.

Three days and three nights later means Christ was raised from the dead precisely at sundown SATURDAY night. For a complete explanation of the death and resurrection of Christ, write for our free articles on the subjects of Easter and the Resurrection.

The death of Christ is a recorded FACT of history. We have seen how Roman records bear witness of His life and of His death and of the establishment of Christianity as a way of life.

But there is only one source which goes further.

That is God's Holy Word, THE BIBLE.

In it is undeniable proof Jesus Christ was RAISED FROM THE DEAD. In this FACT lies the whole hope of Christianity. Just as surely as Jesus lived and walked in Palestine over 1900 years ago, three days after He was crucified He was once again alive—not just made alive, but raised to immortal life—spirit life.

He became the firstborn from the dead. The summarization of his ministry is, once again, rulership of the world—not by human government, but by born-again spirit beings changed from mortal to immortal to rule with Christ on the earth.

That is the message of Christ and the hope of a Christian.

This has been a thumbnail sketch of Christ's life, teachings, and death. Understanding this background is necessary for a study of Church history—after all Christ was the Founder of the Church.

Next we will see how that Church was started, what it believed, and how the gospel spread throughout the Roman empire, and beyond, within thirty years after Christ's death.

PART THREE
THE RISE AND DECLINE OF CHRISTIANITY
Chapter VIII

THE BEGINNING OF CHURCH HISTORY

Before His ascension into heaven, Jesus Christ told His disciples, "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: BUT TARRY [wait] ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be ENDUED WITH POWER FROM ON HIGH."¹

That power was GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT, which was sent to establish the Church on the day of Pentecost.

The twelve apostles and about 108 others assembled as Christ had commanded. This was the beginning of the NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH.²

Out of the thousands upon thousands who had heard Christ preach, who had been healed by Him, who had even been miraculously fed by Him, only 120 really deeply grasped what He had said, and were there waiting as He had instructed.

GOD SENDS HIS SPIRIT

But through those 120 God began to His Work and established HIS CHURCH.

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues [that is, divided among those in the room, not forked like a snake's tongue] like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost [Spirit], and began up speak with other tongues [languages, not unintelligible gibberish], as the Spirit gave them utterance.³

With this miraculous and UNIQUE event, the Church was founded.

Few churches today realize the significance of this day—few even realize what day it was.

It was THE DAY OF PENTECOST.

The DAY OF PENTECOST is one of God's annual HOLY DAYS listed in the twenty-third chapter of Leviticus, and throughout the Old Testament. Christ kept every one of these holy days during His lifetime—and so did the disciples.

In fact, if they hadn't been keeping the holy days, no one would have been there to receive God's Spirit in 31 A.D.

But they were there just as Christ had instructed. "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come," Luke writes in Acts 2:1—they were there keeping it.

But which day of the week was it?

{Publisher's Note: This manuscript was prepared in 1967 when Mr. Armstrong was still declaring Pentecost on Monday. In 1974 Mr. Armstrong modified the method of declaring Pentecost. Prior to 1974, Pentecost was counted from the weekly Sabbath that occurred during the Days of Unleavened Bread, excluding the first Sunday from the counting. In 1974 Mr. Armstrong learned that Pentecost should be counted including the first Sunday in the count, but otherwise he maintained counting from the weekly Sabbath occurring during the Days of Unleavened Bread. The full details of this modification cannot be presented here, so please consult the June 1974 issue of the Good News magazine for more information about this modification.

The original version of the next portion of this manuscript therefore showed Monday as Pentecost according to the understanding of the Church in 1967. However, the copy used in preparing this version had Monday crossed out and Sunday written in by hand. Presumably the author's intent was to correct the manuscript with the new information, so the following paragraphs have been prepared using the handwritten modifications.}

HOW TO COUNT PENTECOST?

Believe it or not, it was on a SUNDAY.
That's right—Pentecost every year MUST fall on a Sunday.
Here is how to count this feast:

And ye shall count unto you FROM the morrow AFTER the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths [that is, seven full weeks] shall be complete: Even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath [week] shall ye NUMBER FIFTY DAYS; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the Lord.⁴

Anyone who can count to fifty can easily determine the correct day for Pentecost. In fact, that is exactly what the word "Pentecost" means—"count fifty." In the Old Testament it was called the Feast of Firstfruits.

God instructed them to count from "the morrow after the Sabbath." The Sabbath from which they were to count was the weekly Sabbath which fell between the two annual holy days during the Days of Unleavened Bread.

They were to count fifty days "from the morrow after {includes the Sunday} the Sabbath." That is, count fifty days starting with SUNDAY. Fifty days starting with Sunday HAS TO BE a Sunday. Therefore, Pentecost falls on Sunday every year. It is the only holy day which is counted. All the others fall on a set day of the month, which, of course, means each year they would fall on different days of the week.

Every year Jews from all over the entire Roman empire came to Jerusalem to keep the feast of Pentecost—31 A.D. was no different.⁵

On this day, the Christian Church had its official beginning.

UPON WHOM WAS THE CHURCH BUILT?

Once again we come to another great opposite. Millions who profess Christianity believe Jesus Christ commissioned the Church to be founded upon the apostle Peter.

Let's once more look into Christ's own statements to see if that is what He really said.

When Christ revealed to the disciples there would be a Church founded after His death and ascension to heaven, He told them:

And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and UPON THIS ROCK I will BUILD MY CHURCH; and the gates of hell [hades, the grave] shall not prevail against it.⁶

Most churches today assume that Christ said He would build His Church on Peter because the name "Peter" comes from the Greek word, "petros," which means rock.

But a closer examination of the verse in the original Greek reveals the word "petros" means a little rock, a stone, or a pebble.

After addressing Peter, Christ said, "Upon this rock, Greek, "petra" I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH." This is a Greek word of the same root meaning, "rock" but the different ending intensifies it. It means a huge mass of rock, a giant boulder—not a tiny piece of rock or a pebble as the word "petros" means.

Christ was not saying He was building His Church on the little rock, the apostle Peter. Rather, He was building it on a huge Rock. Who is that Rock?

Notice it plainly in Paul's letter to the Ephesians:

Now therefore ye [the Church] are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; AND ARE BUILT UPON the foundation of the APOSTLES AND PROPHETS, JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF BEING THE CHIEF CORNER STONE.⁷

The CHURCH OF GOD is not founded on a human being, but upon JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF. And not just the apostle Peter, but ALL the apostles form the foundation stones. And further, not just the apostles of the early New

Testament Church, but also THE PROPHETS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT are the foundation stones upon which the Church of God is built.

Christ today is the Chief Corner Stone of the Church—He is the living Head of it. Notice Paul's letter to the Colossians, "And he [Christ] is before all things, and by him all things consist. And HE IS THE HEAD OF THE BODY, THE CHURCH."⁸

The Church was not founded on a man—it is not headed by a man. But the living, resurrected Christ is the very foundation of and the Head of His Church—a Church He said He would never leave or forsake, and one against which even the gates of hades—the grave—would not prevail. It would never die out.

THE MINISTRY OF PETER

With the day of Pentecost, then, on Sunday, June 17, 31 A.D., the New Testament Church began.

Peter preached the first inspired sermon on that very day. Within the space of that one day of Pentecost, 3,000 people had been converted, and were baptized.⁹

The twelve apostles (Matthias had been added to replace Judas who betrayed Christ) began their active ministry right in Jerusalem.

It was here the Church developed for several years. The Church grew by leaps and bounds within weeks. In addition to the first 3,000 who were baptized on the day of Pentecost, there were 5,000 men who believed.¹⁰ With women also being added, the Church in Jerusalem must have grown rapidly to over 10,000.

Through the apostles Christ performed miraculous healings, gave His ministers gifts to speak in foreign languages, and empowered them with gifts of prophecy. "And the word of God increased; AND THE NUMBER OF THE DISCIPLES MULTIPLIED IN JERUSALEM GREATLY; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith."¹¹

Within the first year or two the Church must have been well over thirty or forty thousand in Jerusalem alone.

Christ had told the disciples, "But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost [Spirit] is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in SAMARIA, and UNTO THE UTTERMOST PART OF THE EARTH."¹²

Soon a great persecution arose in Jerusalem as a result of the new way of life brought by Christ's ministers. Stephen was stoned to death. So Luke records for us, "And at that time there was a great persecution against the Church which was at Jerusalem; and THEY WERE SCATTERED ABROAD THROUGHOUT THE REGIONS OF JUDAEA AND SAMARIA..."¹³

And as Christ had directed, the gospel began to spread. Philip was sent to Samaria where many were baptized. The apostles Peter and John went up and laid hands on them for the reception of the Holy Spirit.

And the word of God continued to grow and multiply.

Through a miracle recorded in the tenth chapter of Acts, God revealed to Peter that He was making an opportunity for GENTILES to understand His way, as well as the Jews.

About that same time God called Saul, a young Jewish persecutor who had caused the Church a great deal of trouble. It would later be his responsibility to take the gospel to the entire Gentile part of the Roman empire.

THE OTHER APOSTLES

But what about the other eleven apostles?

The book of Acts primarily discusses the ministries of Peter and Paul. It says very little about the other apostles of Jesus Christ.

We do know Christ told the apostles, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: BUT go rather TO THE LOST SHEEP OF THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL."¹⁴

It was God's purpose to use Paul to take the gospel to the Gentile Roman empire. The other apostles were to go to Israel. THEY KNEW, then, where the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel were. They undoubtedly went to them.

Israel had settled in Northwestern Europe, Britain, and to the east in Parthia. To these areas the other disciples carried Christ's message. Write for our free articles on where Israel is today, and "Where Did the Twelve Apostles Go?"

But since God did not choose to preserve their ministries for us, we have to understand early Church history from the book of Acts.

Peter was the apostle to the Jews; the others went to the Lost Ten Tribes. Paul preached to the dispersed Jews and to the Gentiles.

THE MINISTRY OF PAUL

We now come to the active ministry of the apostle Paul. Obviously, in a work such as this, there is not time or space to fully discuss the entire lives and works of the men God used to found His Church and to carry the gospel to the world. But to make the story complete, we need to at least briefly review the story as revealed in the book of Acts.

After Paul was converted in the year 35 A.D., he immediately departed to Arabia where he was personally instructed by Jesus Christ.¹⁵ Paul was being prepared for a work just as big as any of the apostles, and Christ gave him over three years of direct training just as the original twelve had.¹⁶

With the conversion of Cornelius, the first Gentile in the Church, the way was open to take the gospel to the world.

Paul and Barnabas were sent to northern Syria and finally to Antioch. For over a year the churches grew, and it was here the world began to first call Christ's followers by the name "Christian."¹⁷

Paul, after being ordained to apostleship in the Church, began his well-known journeys throughout the Roman empire.

Everywhere he went churches were established—ministers were ordained.¹⁸

In the year 50 A.D., and on the day of Pentecost—exactly nineteen years after the foundation of the Church—God led the apostle Paul to carry the gospel into Europe for the first time.¹⁹

Prior to this, the ministers had been limited to Asia. But in that year, Paul crossed the Aegean Sea to Greece, and the gospel spread from there.

After returning to Jerusalem in the year 57 A.D., Paul was imprisoned in Caesarea for nearly two years.²⁰ His appeal for trial at Rome was granted,²¹ so he boarded ship for Rome in 59 A.D.

Here we see just how important the preparation of the Roman world was. Paul, a Roman citizen, had the right of appeal to Rome. When on trial, he used that right, and thereby was able to preach at Rome, remaining there in his own hired house for two year.²²

With the year 61 A.D., the book of Acts comes to a close.

Thirty years of dedicated and zealous work by the apostles is all God preserves in Biblical writings. But within thirty years, the gospel had spread from Jerusalem, to Samaria, to all Asia, and throughout the empire. Scores and scores of thousands must have been converted by this time. Christianity then became noticed in the empire.

PERSECUTIONS SET IN

Up to the mid-sixty's A.D., Christianity enjoyed a relatively free course in the empire. It grew miraculously.

Of course, there were trials.

The Jews had Stephen stoned in about 34 or 35 A.D.

The apostle James was killed by Herod about 43 A.D., again as a result of pressure from the Jews.

The apostle Paul was sometimes let out of town by night, or protected in an unknown home as a result of Jewish persecution.

But the Romans paid little attention to Christianity until well after Paul's Roman imprisonment.

By this time a madman had become Caesar at Rome—NERO.

Everyone had read of the great fire at Rome in 64 A.D. The fire, without doubt, was started by Nero in his insanity. When in danger of being discovered, he use the first scapegoats he could think of.

"These Christians," Nero raved, "caused the fire. They want to burn down our gods." Christians by the scores, perhaps by the hundreds, were taken—many martyred.

Here is how Tacitus describes the terrifying times:

...But all human efforts, all the lavish gifts of the emperor, and the propitiations of the gods, did not banish the sinister belief that the conflagration was the result of an order. Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome...an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind. Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired.

Nero offered his gardens for the spectacle, and was exhibiting a show in the circus, while he mingled with the people in the dress of a charioteer or stood aloft on a car. Hence, even for criminals who deserved extreme and exemplary punishment, there arose a feeling of compassion; for it was not, as it seemed, for the public good, but to glut one man's cruelty, that they were being destroyed.²³

Paul, having been recognized as the leader, was once again taken prisoner and carried back to Rome. Here, in about the year 65 or 66, he was beheaded—the common death for Roman citizens. But this did not happen until God, through Paul, had firmly established Christ's message throughout the empire.

WHAT DID THE APOSTLES TEACH?

It is very plain in the book of Acts and the epistles of Paul that the gospel went to the world.

But was it the very same gospel Christ preached?

Did Peter and Paul have different messages?

Did Paul found a new theology?

Let's look into the BIBLE and see.

First notice Paul's own statement regarding the gospel, and the seriousness of preaching it correctly. "But though WE [all of God's ministers] or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."²⁴ This is so important it is repeated again in the next verse.

It certainly doesn't sound like Paul taught any other message than the one taught to him by Christ, and the same message every other minister of Jesus Christ preached.

As the book of Acts begins, Christ confirms even again to the apostles, "To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD..."²⁵

The message of the entire book of Acts is the message of the RESURRECTED CHRIST, the King of the Kingdom of God which is to be established on this earth. Paul and Peter and all the apostles taught it—and they taught it just

alike. In fact, Paul wrote the church at Corinth, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, THAT YE ALL SPEAK THE SAME THING, and that there be no divisions among you."²⁶

When James and John first traveled to Samaria, "when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and PREACHED THE GOSPEL in many villages of the Samaritans."²⁷

And the apostle Paul, on his first journey through Asia Minor, "PREACHED THE GOSPEL." "And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned to Lystra, and to Iconium, and to Antioch..."²⁸

Just as Jesus Christ preached the GOOD NEWS, the gospel, to His disciples, so the disciples preached the same gospel, the same GOOD NEWS to the world.

DID THEY DO AWAY WITH THE LAWS AND THE SABBATH?

Many professing Christian denominations readily admit that Jesus Christ kept God's Laws—even the Sabbath.

But it is the common assumption of almost everyone in the churches today that the apostles did away with the laws, and especially the Sabbath. They teach the early New Testament Church met on Sunday, the first day of the week.

Let's again LOOK INTO THE BIBLE to see if this is so.

We have already seen, contrary to many theories, the Church was established on the day of Pentecost—a Sunday. That was not at all the regular day of worship, but an annual holy day or high day.

Then, on which day of the week did the apostles preach?

Since Paul is commonly thought of as the one who taught the Gentiles not to observe the "Jewish" laws, let's see what he did in the Gentile cities. "But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue ON THE SABBATH DAY, and sat down."²⁹

Here is the apostle Paul in a Gentile city, nineteen years after the foundation of the Church, entering into the synagogues to teach.

"But," some say, "that was to reach the Jews who met on the Sabbaths." Was it?

Notice this carefully. Later that same day, "...when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, THE GENTILES besought that these words might be preached to them THE NEXT SABBATH."³⁰

Here, surely, was Paul's golden opportunity to show the Gentiles they did not need to keep the Sabbath, if it were nailed to the cross. But what happened in Antioch in Pisidia?

"AND THE NEXT SABBATH DAY came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God."³¹

No, Paul did not do away with the Sabbath at all. He taught Jews and Gentiles to keep it—he always kept it, week in and week out.

Notice again, "Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: and Paul, AS HIS MANNER WAS, went in unto them, AND THREE SABBATH DAYS reasoned with them out of the scriptures..."³²

And again in Greece, "And he reasoned in the synagogue EVERY SABBATH, and persuaded the Jews and the GREEKS."³³

The Church founded by Jesus Christ was, and still is, a Sabbath-keeping Church. Peter, Paul, James, John, and every other disciple of Christ kept it. And this information is included here because so few have understood how to even find the accurate history of the true Christian Church.

Two vital keys we have discussed in chapters seven and eight are those of the MESSAGE Christ preached, and which was carried to the world; and the LAWS OF GOD, including the SABBATH DAY on which the Church worshipped. These keys lead to the understanding of where God's true Church is and how to read about it in history.

THE FOUNDATION COMPLETE

At the conclusion of exactly thirty-eight years, the Church had completed its FOUNDATION WORK. God allotted two nineteen-year cycles for the gospel to go to the world. It began at Jerusalem, spread throughout Judea, then to Samaria and to all Asia. That took exactly nineteen years.

And, as we have seen, nineteen year to the day after the Church began—on the day of Pentecost in 50 A.D.—the gospel went to Europe. For nineteen more years the gospel spread to cities and villages.

Then Roman persecution set in. Paul was killed.

The Church began to be scattered.

In the late sixties A.D., the Jews rebelled against the Romans. Armies marched into Jerusalem.

But Christ had warned His Church of this time,³⁴ and when they saw Jerusalem encompassed with armies they fled.

This took place in 69 A.D., just shortly before Jerusalem was brutally destroyed by Titus, the Roman general, in 70 A.D.

At this point in history, the story of the Church is very difficult to pick up. Eusebius records that members of the true Church at the time were called Nazarenes. The Encyclopaedia Britannica, the eleventh edition, records:

Nazarenes, an obscure Jewish Christian sect [they were Christians who kept the Sabbath, so the same Church as recorded in the book of Acts]... According to that authority [Panarion, xxix. 7] they dated their settlement in PELLA from the time of that flight of the Jewish Christians from Jerusalem, immediately before the siege in A.D. 70.³⁵

The church in Jerusalem fled from the persecution of the Romans in 70 A.D. They fled to the small town of Pella to the northeast of Jerusalem.

This concluded the spread of Christianity in any organized way as far as we know from recorded history.

After Christianity began, it spread and grew miraculously and gigantically for thirty-eight years.

We now come to the period in Church history which Jesse Hurlbut calls, "THE AGE OF SHADOWS."³⁶ It is the period which has nearly been lost to all understanding.

In the next and final chapter, we will see the reasons that this period in history is ALMOST, but not quite, lost, and what really did happen in the closing years of the first century A.D.

PART THREE
THE RISE AND DECLINE OF CHRISTIANITY
Chapter IX

THE GREAT CONSPIRACY

With the death of the apostle Paul and with the Roman persecution on both Christians and Jews, the whole tenure of Church history took a change.

From a rapidly growing organization reaching into the scores and scores of thousands throughout the empire, the Church all of a sudden becomes nearly unheard of.

The next one hundred years becomes THE LOST CENTURY. The life of Christ, the acts of the apostles are all spelled out in clear, easy-to-define terms.

But, from the destruction of Jerusalem until the middle of the second century, there is a great historical vacuum.

But God did not leave the world without witness.

It can now be made plain what happened and WHY true knowledge has been hidden.

The Bible actually does reveal what happened, and follows a step-by-step exposé of A GREAT CONSPIRACY to stamp out true Christianity in favor of a pagan substitute—a substitute claiming the name and authority of Christ, but rejecting the message. In this chapter you will see how that great falling away started, grew, and OVERTOOK the true way of God.

This is why this period in history is void of evidence. True history would have recorded a WITNESS against the conspiracy. But when the conspiracy gained the upper hand, it stamped out as much recorded evidence against it as possible, and went on to become what millions have accepted as "Christianity."

You will find the PLAIN TRUTH ABOUT THE "AGE OF SHADOWS" most revealing.

SIMON MAGUS, THE FATHER OF HERESY

There is at least one record which could not be stamped out. And that record is the WORD OF GOD. The Almighty Creator inspired His servants to write the whole story of the plan to destroy true Christianity.

The New Testament, corroborated by a great deal of material from later religious and secular history, reveals an individual commonly known as Simon Magus, and the father and FOUNDER of the falling away.

His first contact with God's true ministers is recorded in the book of Acts, chapter eight. Let's read about him. As the context shows, Philip had been sent to Samaria as the gospel began to spread from Judea:

But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, THIS MAN IS THE GREAT POWER OF GOD.¹

Here we come into contact with one of the most influential men in the entire eastern portion of the Roman empire. This man, Luke reveals, was even worshipped as the very power of God.

When he saw true miracles performed by Philip, he knew this was a true minister of God. Luke plainly says Simon himself believed and was baptized.²

The problem is that Simon didn't REALLY REPENT—he did not receive the Spirit of God.

And when he saw that through the laying on of hands of God's ministers the Holy Spirit was given, he tried to bribe Peter and buy the office of an apostle. Notice it:

And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost [Spirit] was given, he offered them money, Saying, GIVE ME ALSO THIS POWER, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost [Spirit].³

Here was a man who by trickery and sorcery had deceived a whole nation. He was not about to relinquish that power and authority. He was a great pagan HIGH PRIEST of the oldest religious system on earth.

And when he saw that God's true Church had been set up, he tried to join it and BUY the office of the ministry.

SIMON NOT CONVERTED

However, God inspired Peter to see through this man's FALSE CONVERSION. When Simon offered money to Peter to make him an apostle also, Peter rebuked Simon severely:

Thy money perish with thee, because thou has thought that the gift of God [the ministry, as well as God's Spirit] may be purchased with money. Thou hast NEITHER PART NOR LOT in this matter: for THY HEART IS NOT RIGHT in the sight of God.⁴

Simon never repented at the correction of Peter. Instead, he grew bitter.

Yet, Simon could see the truth. He could see Jesus was the Christ. And he could see the power of Christ's ministers. He could see huge crowds being converted to this new religion, Christianity.

He, then, since he couldn't join, and he wouldn't repent, decided to start HIS OWN RELIGION. Before we get to that, though, let's go back in history and see what Simon Magus believed—what the teachings of the Samaritan-Babylonian type of religion really were.

Just as God had completely and thoroughly prepared the world for Christianity, so SATAN also had been PREPARING for the great COUNTERFEIT RELIGION.

BABYLONIAN MYSTERY SYSTEM

The Samaritans were an interesting people. They were largely Babylonian by race. The Bible tells us in II Kings 17:26-31, that most of the Samaritans had been taken to Samaria from Babylon and adjacent areas. After the Babylonian captivity of Judah, Ezra writes there were others of Babylonian stock who came to Samaria.

Then wrote Rehum the chancellor, and Shimshai the scribe, and the rest of their companions; the Dinaites, the Apharsathchites, the Tarpelites, the Apharsites, the Archevites, the Babylonians, the Susanchites, the Dehavites, and the Elamites, and the rest of the nations whom the great and noble Asnapper brought over, and set in the cities of Samaria, and the rest that are on this side the river, and at such a time.⁵

This mixture of peoples—largely influenced by the Babylonians—never left their pagan Babylonian and Chaldean philosophies. However, they did accept a great many of the teachings of Judaism. The Samaritans were a great admixture of racial and religious backgrounds bound together by a partial belief in the law of Moses and the pagan rituals of Babylon. The well known Church historian, Adolf Harnack writes of them:

Long before the appearance of Christianity, combinations of religion had take place in Syria and Palestine, ESPECIALLY IN SAMARIA, in so far as the ASSYRIAN and BABYLONIAN religious philosophy...with its manifold interpretation, had penetrated as far as the eastern shore of the Mediterranean.⁶

It is with this background that Simon Magus developed his religious system and had for many years been deceiving the Samaritan populace. Harnack further states that Simon Magus:

...proclaimed a doctrine in which the Jewish faith was strangely and grotesquely mixed with BABYLONIAN MYTHS, together with some Greek

additions. The mysterious worship...in consequence of the widened horizon and the deepening of religious feeling, finally, the wild syncretism [that is, blending together of religious beliefs], whose aim, however, was a UNIVERSAL RELIGION, all contributed to gain adherents for Simon.⁷

Peter readily knew and understood the background and doctrines of this pagan high priest who had only recently "accepted" Christianity. Also, Peter recognized that he was "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity."⁸ And although Simon began to CALL himself a "Christian," Peter never recognized him as a true and converted member of the Church and gave him a stinging rebuke. But even this did not prevent Simon from carrying out his own plans.

THE ORIGIN OF THE BABYLONIAN RELIGION

To understand the complex system of pagan myths and superstitions, one must go back to some years after the Flood. There can be no question that all forms of vile superstitions existed before the Flood. Things were so evil on the earth that God was forced by the degeneracy of the human world He had created to destroy them.

And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.⁹

However, it only took a few hundred years after the flood for Satan the Devil to once again bring about a complete and total SYSTEM OF RELIGION to lead men astray.

The founder of the great Babylonian mystery system is well recognized by all students of history. It first began with a woman named Semiramis. Semiramis was the wife of Cush, the grandson of Noah. Cush was not born until after the Flood, but within a few score years after the flood the earth was beginning to be populated with many people. Cush and Semiramis completely turned their backs on the laws of God and allowed themselves to be used as instruments of Satan the Devil. There can be no doubt they had heard of the plan of God and knew of the coming Messiah—Noah was a preacher of righteousness.¹⁰

But Semiramis was not about to accept God and God's way of life. She began to teach her own son, Nimrod, how to establish power over other men. Here is the beginning key to understand the complete religious system of nearly every nation on the face of the earth today. It all began with Nimrod.

And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD.¹¹

The Hebrew word which was translated "mighty" means "tyrant." And that is not all. The Hebrew word "paniyim," which was translated "before" should more properly be translated "against." The correct translation of the verse should read that Nimrod was a tyrant against the Eternal God. That is what his mother, Semiramis, taught him to be.

The Jewish historian, Josephus, says of this Nimrod:

Now it was Nimrod who excited them to such an affront and contempt of God. He was the grandson of Ham, the son of Noah, a bold man, and of great strength of hand. He persuaded them not to ascribe it to God, as if it was through his means they were happy, but to believe that it was their own courage which procured that happiness. He also gradually changed the government into tyranny, seeing no other way of turning men from the fear of God, but to bring them into a constant dependence on his power. He also said he would be revenged on God, if he should have a mind to drown the world again; for that he would build a tower too high for the waters to be able to reach! and that he would avenge himself on God for destroying their forefathers!¹²

How plain!

Nimrod persuaded the people to follow him and build a tower to reach up into the heavens as a symbol of unity and protection. He led the people to believe it was their own courage and strength which brought about happiness. He persuaded the people that he—Nimrod—was the great provider. People, except for a few faithful individuals of the line of Shem, began to WORSHIP Nimrod and the "Great Mother Goddess," Semiramis.

Semiramis' Babylonian name was Ishtar, pronounced as we now pronounce Easter. Nimrod was called Tammuz or Baal.

THE PEOPLE FOLLOWED NIMROD

And as if this tyrannical government and worship of Nimrod and Semiramis were not enough, Semiramis finally persuaded her own son to marry her. Shocking—but true. Semiramis wanted to be the POWER behind the scenes. Nimrod was the instrumentality she used and the one who was able to persuade the people.

The Jerusalem Targum says:

...he [Nimrod] was a hunter of the children of men in their languages; and he said of them, 'depart from the religion of Shem [God's truth], and cleave to the institutes of Nimrod.'¹³

Those who were obedient to God's law, Nimrod tried to hunt down and kill. Since only a few were faithful to the laws of God, Nimrod used the fear of death to persuade men to worship him.

The historian, Salverts, says of Nimrod:

...There can be little doubt that Nimrod, in erecting his power, availed himself of...scientific secrets, which he and his associates alone possessed.¹⁴

With Nimrod and Semiramis, began a MYSTERY SYSTEM of religion. The workings of Satan and his demons along with the complete deception promulgated by these two wicked individuals began a complete and through SYSTEM which has lasted through thousands of years of time.

After the death of Nimrod (he was killed by Shem), Semiramis carried on the newfound religion.

She pictured herself as the virgin mother of the Savior, and told the world she had borne a son who was to be the Savior. A complete and total counterfeit of the virgin birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ was contrived two thousand years before Jesus Christ was ever born.

To help her teach these lies to this world, Semiramis established a religious priesthood. The priesthood grew in power and scope until it became the very heart and core of this religion system. Over hundreds of years, it developed more and greater powers.

THE MYSTERY SYSTEM SPREADS

This religious-political system spread from Babylon to all nations of the world. Finally, after the Persians conquered the great Babylonian empire in 539 B.C., the headquarters of this great pagan religious system moved TO SAMARIA. But the system continued.

Simon Magus was the great high priest of this very same religious Babylonian system.

When recognized by Peter as counterfeit, Simon Magus conceived the idea of founding a NEW RELIGION. Using the name and many of the doctrines of the true Christian Church, Simon Magus INTERMINGLED his pagan Babylonian superstitions and doctrines, replacing them with new names and titles and using Jesus Christ as the champion of this new-found religion.

Shocking as it may seem, by the end of the first century A.D., Simon Magus and his counterfeit "Christian" religion had gained the preeminence and far outnumbered the true followers of Jesus Christ.

James Hastings writes of Simon's change in religion:

But it need not be supposed that when Simon broke with the Christians he renounced all he had learned. It is more probable that he carried some of the Christian ideas with him and that he wove these into a system of his own. This system did contain some of the germs of later Gnosticism. Thus, he became a leader of a retrograde sect, perhaps nominally Christian and certainly using some of the Christian terminology, but in reality anti-Christian and exalting Simon himself to the central position which Christianity was giving to Jesus Christ.¹⁵

SIMON MOVES TO ROME

Although Simon Magus is a subject of great controversy in theological circles, there can be no doubt about what Justin Martyr wrote concerning Simon in about 150 A.D. From the Dictionary of Christian Biography we read:

When Justin Martyr wrote his Apology, the sect of the Simonians appears to have been formidable, for he speaks four times of his founder, Simon; and we need not doubt that he identified him with the Simon of the Acts. He states that he was a Samaritan, adding that his birthplace was a village called Gitta; he describes him as a formidable magician, and tells THAT HE CAME TO ROME in the days of Claudius Caesar (45 A.D.), and made such an impression by his magical powers, THAT HE WAS HONORED AS A GOD, a statue being erected to him on the Tiber, between the two bridges, bearing the inscription 'Simoni Deo Sancto'—'The Holy God Simon.'¹⁶

Concerning the accuracy of this statement, James Hastings says:

There is considerable force...in the plea of the editors of the 'Ante-Nicene Library' that this is 'very slight evidence on which to reject so precise a statement as Justin here makes; a statement he would scarcely have hazarded in an apology addressed to Rome, where every person had the means of ascertaining its accuracy. If...he made a mistake, it must have been at once exposed, and other writers would not have so frequently repeated the story as they have done.'¹⁷

Thus, we can plainly see the headquarters of the pagan Babylonian religious system now moves to Rome—the center of culture in the Roman empire and the world at this time. But it moves under a NEW NAME. No longer was it recognized as a Babylonian mystery system—it had taken a new name—"Christianity."

SIMON MAGUS, NOT SIMON PETER, AT ROME

It has been common tradition in almost all Christianity that the apostle Peter eventually moved to Rome where he became the chief apostle of the early New Testament Church. There is absolutely no evidence in all Biblical history that the apostle Peter was ever at Rome.

In fact, all evidence in the Bible denies even the presence of Peter in Rome.

Certainly, Peter never went to Rome prior to the writing of the book of Romans by the apostle Paul in 55 A.D. If Peter had been at Rome, it would have been a great offense and effrontery to his ministry for Paul to write such a strong rebuke to the Church as he did. No, Simon Peter was never at Rome. The Encyclopaedia Biblica plainly states:

The attempt has been made to meet this by pointing out that church fathers mention the presence of SIMON in Rome while at the same time NOT speaking of controversies between him and PETER. This is indeed true of Justin [one of the earliest witnesses], IN ROME AT ALL...¹⁸

Plainly, it was Simon Magus—not Simon Peter—who moved to Rome. He moved the whole false system of “Christianity”—the false names, the added pagan doctrines, everything—with him.

And not only did he move himself and his headquarters to Rome, but through a whole priesthood and ministry he preached his doctrines and conspiracy around the entire empire—just as God’s true ministers preached throughout this entire period.

Certainly, Simon Magus is appropriately named in Church history as THE FATHER OF HERESY.

A FALLING AWAY

There is no doubt the influence of Simon Magus was well known by the true ministers of God. Undoubtedly, the very reason Luke records so much about Simon in the eighth chapter of Acts is that Luke recognized his great influence while in Rome about 60 A.D. Simon Magus had already been in Rome some fifteen years at the time of the apostle Paul’s imprisonment.

Even many years before, the apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonian church:

For THE MYSTERY OF INIQUITY DOETH ALREADY WORK: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is AFTER THE WORKING OF SATAN with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.¹⁹

Simon Magus had begun to deceive even converted individuals who should have known better than to believe his lies. Yet he had great and tremendous powers of mystic and magical arts which caused thousands to follow him. So important was this man and his influence in the early New Testament Church that the apostle Paul WARNED the Church to BEWARE of him and not to follow his mystery religious system called by a “Christian” title.

This man was used here in II Thessalonians as a very type of the last and final end-time GREAT FALSE PROPHET who will deceive millions prior to the SECOND COMING of Jesus Christ to this earth. There is, living on earth today, a great high priest of a religious system who believes and teaches exactly the same as his prototype—Simon Magus. The apostle Paul clearly records that this system—by the 50’s A.D.—was already working.

THE CHANGING TIMES

As the years passed, times changed. We have already read about some of the persecutions of Nero and a great martyrdom in the mid 60’s A.D., which even brought about the death of the apostle Paul. After his death, only a few years passed before the Romans marched against Jerusalem, causing the Church to flee. Christians had to make a decision. Many lost their lives in martyrdom remaining faithful to the God they had proved existed, and to His Son in whom they knew they would obtain salvation.

Undoubtedly, many others gave in. The true Church of God began to vanish. By the 80’s A.D., the apostle John recorded how Diotrefes, a false minister masquerading under the title of a true minister of God, had gained such control of the Church that he was actually forbidding true and converted church members to attend services.

I wrote unto the church: but Diotrefes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and FORBIDDETH THEM that would, and casteth them out of the church.²⁰

Almost every one of the later epistles written in the New Testament contains an admonition or warning against this GREAT CONSPIRACY which had arisen. God has not left us without a witness and warning.

Even Jude had to write:

Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye SHOULD EARNESTLY CONTEND FOR THE FAITH WHICH WAS ONCE DELIVERED UNTO THE SAINTS. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into LASCIVIOUSNESS [permission to do as you please], and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.²¹

With their doctrines perverting the true knowledge of God's ways, and with their false names and titles of Christianity, Simon Magus and his priesthood succeeded in gaining more followers than true Christianity.

There can be no doubt that Simon Magus and the whole religious system he taught wielded a great deal of influence in the latter part of the first century A.D.

But working at the same time were other systems which would contribute philosophies and doctrines to the counterfeit system which would masquerade under the name of "Christianity" for the next 2,000 years.

CERINTHUS IN THE EAST

While Simon Magus headquartered in Rome in the west and proclaimed his doctrine and religion to the empire, there was also a man in the east who was conspiring against God's true Church.

This man was Cerinthus.

Of his birth and origin little is known for certain. Some believe he was a Jew by religion and by nation.²² Others believe he was of Egyptian origin and educated in Alexandria.²³

But in all likelihood, Cerinthus was a Samaritan just as Simon Magus was. Samaritans constantly called themselves Jews when it was to their advantage, as Josephus points out.²⁴ And there were Samaritans who studied in Egypt. But his origin is not important enough at this point to discuss further here.

What is important is to know what influence he and his teachings had on early Christianity.

Just as the first writers of Church history in the second century recorded a witness against Simon Magus, so they also wrote against Cerinthus.

Hippolytus wrote, "Cerinthus...determined that the world was not made by the first God, but by certain angelic power. And this power...knows not the God [that is] above all things."²⁵

And Tertullian said concerning the beliefs of Cerinthus: "Affirming that the Law was given by angels: representing the God of the Jews as not the Lord, but an angel."²⁶

Again, Hippolytus wrote that Cerinthus taught: "After Jesus' baptism, Christ came down in the form of a dove upon Him from the...Father...and...at the conclusion of the passion, Christ flew away from Jesus..."²⁷

And it that were not enough of a strange doctrine about God and Christ, Cerinthus taught:

...that the kingdom of Christ would be on earth, and being fond of his body and very carnal he dreamt of a future according to his own desires, given up to the indulgence of the flesh, that is, eating and drinking and marrying, and to those things which seem a euphemism for these things, feasts and sacrifices and the slaughter of victims.²⁸

Yet, in spite of these weird doctrines, Cerinthus had a certain influence in early Church history. He apparently observed the Sabbath and taught that the examples of Jesus should be followed.

Most Church historians readily believe that some of what Paul and even John wrote in their epistles was to combat the heresy of this unusual man.

His import to a student of Church history is that he provides a bridge for Eastern Gnosticism to unite with the Gnosticism of later times.

MITHRAISM, ANOTHER COUNTERFEIT

Another religious system which spread throughout the Roman empire at the same time as Christianity was the Eastern Persian religion called Mithraism. Jackson and Lake record:

Mithraism had originated in Persia at a remote period, but was widespread in Asia Minor during the last three centuries before the Christian era.²⁹

This Eastern religion was also a part of Satan's great preparation for Christianity. In theory, ritual, and practice, it had already counterfeited the central ideas of Christianity. According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, some of the tenets and concepts of Mithraism are:

Mithras was born of a rock, the marvel being seen only by certain shepherds, who brought gifts and adored him...Mithras was...the creator of life...Ahriman sent a deluge, from which one man escaped in a boat with his cattle. Finally a fire desolated the earth, and only the creatures of Ormazd escaped. Mithras, his work accomplished, banqueted with the Sun for the last time, and was taken by him in his chariot to the habitation of the immortals, whence he continued to protect the faithful.³⁰

With a pagan twist, the true teachings of God were perverted by Mithras and the religion founded by him.

There was a priesthood. The Encyclopaedia Britannica states:

The Mithraic priest, sacerdos of antistes, was sometimes also of the degree of PATER. Tertullian (De praescr. haeret. 40) calls the chief priest summus pontifex, probably the pater patrum who had general supervision of all the initiates in one city...Each day of the week was marked by the adoration of a special planet, the SUN being the most sacred of all.³¹

This has quite an amazing similarity to what later developed into what was called the "Christian" church. Yet, these customs and practices were NEVER adopted by the one and only true Church of God. The spread of sects and schisms who fell away or were influenced by these great pagan systems incorporated both Gnostic and Mithraic customs and doctrines. Some of the most recent studies of Mithraism confirm a close association of terminologies with early Christianity and Mithraism:

But even though Mithraism did present itself as a serious rival to Christianity and has left throughout Europe material evidence of its presence in every corner of the empire where the army set up camp—and the other Graeco-Oriental religions seem to have attracted even more attention—the frugal Roman religion continued throughout to maintain a firm hold on the minds of men. Probably the best evidences for this are the many compromises with its practices and concepts which found expression WITHIN CHRISTIANITY.³²

Writers from all sources recognize these ancient pagan documents and traditions of the ancient Babylonian mystery system found their way into Christianity. There can be little doubt that a great conspiracy did wield a tremendous influence late in the first century A.D. But, perhaps the GREATEST INFLUENCE of all was the entire system of GNOSTICISM of which Simon Magus was a part.

THE GNOSTICS

A study of Gnosticism becomes a study of many different branches and philosophies. Nearly every writer who researches the subject draws different conclusions. Here is what some writers say about Gnosticism:

In logical order we ought to begin by defining Gnosticism...a point on which writers on the subject are not agreed.³³

No question, however, has more perplexed historians than that which refers to the direct origin of Gnosticism.³⁴

Defining Gnosticism is an extraordinarily difficult task, since modern writers use the term to cover a wide variety of speculative religious phenomena.³⁵

But in reality, Gnosticism is not that hard to define. Although there are many Gnostic sects, there are numerous features they all have in common. Here are the main principles of Gnosticism even though divided among many groups:

1. All sects attempted to explain the origin of the universe and the origin of evil. All viewed the universe in some way as DUAL—full of good and evil. Dualism also has to do with the pagan doctrine of the immortality of the soul and the mortal body.
2. All were blends of Oriental theosophy with Hellenic philosophy, with blends of many other religions added in.
3. All reasoned that since God is good, and the world is evil, God did not create the world, but rather some inferior power.
4. They all believed they had all knowledge (gnosis) which others did not have. They believed Christians only had faith; Gnostics had faith AND “revealed” knowledge.
5. They all separated themselves from Church authority, although Gnostics first met with Christians whenever possible.
6. All had the same form of the Oriental “Great Mother” worship—a parallel with Mariolatry today. “In almost all systems an important part is played by the Great Mother...”³⁶
7. Most Gnostic philosophies had a system of sacraments. The Encyclopaedia Britannica states, “The Gnostic religion...is above all things A RELIGION OF SACRAMENTS and mysteries...Gnosticism introduced for the first time into Christianity a whole mass of sacramental, mystical ideas...”³⁷

To classify these different Gnostic philosophies and sects is not important. Gnosticism, obviously, is a religion of demons and is in chaos. What we need to understand is the true origin of Gnosticism and what, if any, bearing it might have had on Christianity.

THE ORIGIN IS CLEAR

There can be no doubt there was a PRE-CHRISTIAN GNOSTICISM. And secondly, there can be no doubt that Gnosticism was not Jewish, BUT SAMARITAN! These two keys answer the “when” and “where” of the origin of Gnosticism. This is perhaps best explained by M’Clintock and Strong:

Ever since the conquests of Alexander the Great, an intense interest had been felt throughout Asia Minor and Egypt in Hellenistic philosophy and Oriental theosophy...The result was that, near the time of the first promulgation of Christianity, a number of new systems of religious philosophy sprung up independently in different countries, and exhibited similar characteristics. They were usually formed by incorporating with the national religion what seemed attractive elements in foreign systems, and softening down what was harsh and incredible in the popular faith and worship. In this way we discover a nearly simultaneous origin of the Judaistic philosophy at Alexandria, of Essenism and Therapeutism in Egypt and southern Palestine, of the Cabbalistic literature in Syria and the East, and

of New Platonism among the Hellenistic nations. THESE WERE ALL OFFSHOOTS FROM THE SAME GENERAL ROOT, and not necessarily deriving anything original, but unquestionably drawing much assistance from one another.³⁸

As was already mentioned, Satan was equally prepared for Christ and the gospel. Certainly, God would not let Satan destroy the truth. But Satan did all he could to confuse and deceive those who would believe. His preparation was this whole pagan system headquartered out of Samaria. As early as 33 A.D. (the probable date of Simon Magus' baptism), Satan tried to infiltrate true Christianity.

When this first infiltration did not work, the solution was to form a new group—which Simon Magus immediately began.

Concerning this preparation in pre-Christian times, the Encyclopaedia Britannica states:

Thus the essential part of most of the conceptions of what we call Gnosticism was already in existence and fully developed BEFORE the rise of Christianity.³⁹

And further:

...The accounts given of Simon Magus, Menander and Dositheus [Simon's teacher], who have become almost mythical, at least prove that in Syria Gnostic tendencies made their appearance at an early period.⁴⁰

Thus, we see Gnosticism developed through Simon Magus and Samaria—not Judea. Notice it:

Simon's doctrines were substantially those of the Gnostics, and he is not without reason regarded as the first who attempted to engraft theurgy [the science of compelling a supernatural power to refrain from doing something] and egotism of the Magian philosophy upon Christianity.⁴¹

Even Justin Martyr wrote of Gnosticism, Simon, and his doctrines:

...after Christ's ascension into heaven the devils put forward certain men who said that they themselves were gods...There was a Samaritan, Simon...And almost all the Samaritans, and a few even of other nations, worship him, and acknowledge him as the first god...⁴²

Justin Martyr recognized Simon to be the first Gnostic—he mentions him to be the first god.

Certainly, nearly every study on Gnosticism leads back to Simon Magus—at least in part.

That ought to make plain the origin of Gnosticism was certainly pre-Christian—but that its development paralleled Christianity. Now we need to see what influence it had on the early true Christian Church.

THE Gnostics GAIN INFLUENCE

Now that we have seen the proper origin of Gnosticism in Samaria under Simon Magus, we can better understand exactly what happened in the late first century A.D.

But how did Gnosticism influence Christianity? That is the question that now needs to be answered.

A very important fact about Gnosticism was written by the German scholar, Lipsius, which shows the development of Gnosticism is similar to a curve which began only slightly "off" from the truth, diverged far out, and finally returned close to Christianity.⁴³ But by this time "Christianity" was not the original Christian Church founded by Jesus Christ—it was the beginning of a great universal or CATHOLIC system.

But Gnosticism finally approached the teachings of the Catholic Church. Notice it from M'Clintock and Strong: "...finally, under the Marcionites, the

Gnostic speculation approximates very nearly that of the more liberal CATHOLIC TEACHERS."⁴⁴

So, although Gnosticism was a combination of religions and philosophy in background, it soon formed a religion of its own. What Gnosticism became was a DEVIATION from the truth. When the Gnostics came in contact with true Christians—beginning with Simon Magus—they found similarities to their own system. Remember, we have already seen how Satan the Devil organized this counterfeit system long prior to Christianity. Gnostic teachers recognized this similarity. Notice it:

When these Gnostics, WITH THEIR SYSTEM READY MADE, looked into the New Testament they could easily find it all there, since they only sought for points to which they might attach it.⁴⁵

They wormed their false system into the Church. The apostle Paul warned the Church to be aware of this when he mentioned the system of iniquity which we have already read of in II Thessalonians, chapter two. Paul warned the Ephesian elders to watch out for the same system in the twentieth chapter of Acts. And by the time of the epistles of John and Jude in the late first century, they both warned true Christians to beware of the conspiracy which had already risen to great power in some areas. Masquerading under the name of "Christian," Simon Magus and his Gnostic religion had gained an immovable foothold.

These Gnostics for the most part had no intention of separating from the rest of the church, and establishing distinct communities of their own...they were for UNITING WITH THE ORDINARY CONGREGATIONS, and establishing in connection with them a kind of theosophic school of CHRISTIAN MYSTERIES..⁴⁶

Do you see the connection?

The Gnostics wanted control of the Church—and when they gained their foothold, they brought in their mystery religious system with its NEW TITLES—now known as "Christian." Now, let's see how this affected the early New Testament Church.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF HERESY

With its new titles, Gnosticism must have spread rapidly throughout the Roman empire. There can be no doubt the true ministers of God readily recognized the dangers of this system and left us a WITNESS and TESTIMONY of its rising influence. The apostle Paul began his first letter to the evangelist Timothy by warning him, "Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith..⁴⁷

Almost all Bible scholars recognize Paul was warning Timothy to beware of the Gnostic system of explaining the origin of the universe through genealogies and endless ages and eons. All of this profited nothing—it only brought about questions. Notice especially how he ended this first epistle to Timothy, "O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you. Avoid the godless chatter and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge."⁴⁸

Notice it. Paul warns Timothy to avoid the godless chatter, or as the King James version translates it, "profane and vain babbling," of those who had a FALSE knowledge. The Greek word "gnosis" is translated "knowledge" in English. This is the same exact root word from which the word "Gnostic" comes. As Mansel points out in his Gnostic Heresies, "In the First Epistle the heretical teaching is distinctly mentioned under its own name—pseudo-numosgnosis, 'knowledge falsely so called.'"⁴⁹

Since Paul was the one who warned of both a falling away and FALSE TEACHERS which were to enter with a system of iniquity and mystery, it is only logical Paul would in his last letters (I and II Timothy) warn of that system. But Paul's last letters were written in the mid 60's A.D.

The later writings of Peter, John, and Jude are even more concrete in their warning of the system which was beginning to work its way into Christianity yet in Paul's day.

The apostle Paul wrote in the late 70's A.D.:

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be FALSE TEACHERS among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that brought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. Many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom they way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through coveteousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.⁵⁰

What system was there at this time in history which was trying to bring into God's Church its heresies?

The only possible answer is that some branch of Gnosticism, Mithraism, or the followers of Simon Magus had gained much influence.

We have already seen in the writings of John and Jude how late in the first century the warning was still being made to God's true Church to beware of these conspirators. We also saw in the book of III John how Diotrephes had gained such control of some church congregations that he was actually forbidding the true brethren to even enter into the Church.⁵¹ And we saw how Jude admonished those to whom he wrote to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered."⁵²

The point to emphasize here is that in spite of the fact that the conspiracy gained the upper hand toward the end of the first century, there WAS STILL A TRUE CHURCH WHICH DID NOT EMBRACE THE MINISTERS OR THE TEACHINGS OF GNOSTICISM AND THE GREAT CONSPIRACY!

THE CONCLUSION OF THE FIRST CENTURY

We now come to the end of the first century A.D. We have seen the beginning, the development, and the spread of true Christianity throughout the empire. We have seen a complete and thorough preparation of the whole world for the Church founded by Jesus Christ.

But we also saw how the prophets and apostles were only the FOUNDATION of the Church. The Church was founded and built upon Jesus Christ, as the Chief Cornerstone, and was to continue BUILDING.

Christ promised, "...I will build my church; and the gates of hell [hades, the grave] shall not prevail against it."⁵³ The Church of Jesus Christ was not to die. The Church founded by Jesus Christ was not to drift astray, embracing paganism and the ancient Babylonian mystery system. Upon commissioning His Church to preach the gospel to the world, He promised, "I am with you Always, EVEN UNTO THE END OF THE WORLD."⁵⁴

And the apostle Paul records, "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he [Christ] hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."⁵⁵

The Church founded upon Christ and built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, was to continue under the direct guidance and inspiration of Jesus Christ. That Church has continued through the centuries, and it can be found on earth today.

But Satan the Devil also founded his system.

We saw how that mystery system began with Semiramis and her illegitimate son-husband, Nimrod, not many years after the Flood which destroyed all mankind. Soon after the establishment of Jesus Christ's Church, Satan the Devil infiltrated, took the names and titles of Christianity, and applied them to the same old ancient mystery system he had always used. You have seen through the pages of this work just exactly how that system rose and finally succeeded in gaining a greater number of followers than true Christianity.

A GREAT CHANGE IN THE CHURCH

Every writer of Church history has not failed to notice the tremendous change in the entire structure of the Church in the second and third centuries A.D.

There was never a change in the one true Church of Jesus Christ. The history of that Church is accurately preserved and recorded in the four gospel accounts of Christ's life and the book of Acts, supplemented by all of the epistles of Paul and the others whose works are preserved in the God-inspired New Testament of the Bible.

But the church of history which is later called "Christian" is NOT the same Church teaching the same gospel as the gospel Christ brought, which was preached around the world by His apostles.

Notice this amazing quote from A.C. McGiffert:

The change from the original condition of things was STUPENDOUS, but the process by which the change was wrought was gradual and entirely natural, as has been seen.⁵⁶

Yes, there was a change—a traumatic change. There is a vast difference between the original Christianity of the Bible and the "Christianity" of the history books. The change from original conditions was stupendous!

YOU CAN KNOW

But you no longer need to be indecisive or in doubt. You have seen the establishment of the gospel and the one and only TRUE CHURCH of Jesus Christ as revealed in God's word. You have checkpoints. If anyone really wants to search for the truth, God has left a recorded witness, both in His Word and in secular history.

If you have read carefully, you have undoubtedly noticed the real followers of Jesus Christ—the true Christians—all but completely drop out of the writings of Church historians as the end of the first century approached and certainly by the beginning of the second century. But you now have the KEYS which will guide you to RECOGNIZE where God's Church has been in history—and will lead you to a means of finding where that Church is today!

FOOTNOTES FOR INTRODUCTION

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2. Schaff, History of the Christian Church, p. 196.

FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER I

1. Jackson-Lake, The Beginnings of Christianity, p. 177
2. Strabo, Geography, xvii, 3, 24-25
3. McGiffert, History of Christianity in the Apostolic Age, p. 151
4. Acts 17:26
5. Enslin, Christian Beginnings, p. 37
6. Jackson-Lake, The Beginnings of Christianity, p. 183
7. Jones, The History of the Christian Church, p. 2
8. Daniel 2:32, 33.
9. Daniel 2:28
10. Daniel 2:37, 38
11. Daniel 2:39
12. Jones, The History of the Christian Church, p. 2
13. Daniel 2:40
14. Galatians 4:4
15. Jackson-Lake, The Beginnings of Christianity, p. 185
16. Acts 1:8
17. Schaff, History of the Christian Church, p. 79
18. Jackson-Lake, The Beginnings of Christianity, p. 194
19. Bourne, A History of the Romans, p. 363
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21. Jackson-Lake, The Beginnings of Christianity, p. 196
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FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER II

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(see also Irenaeus, Against Heresies, iv. 30. 3).
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6. II Corinthians 11:25
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FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER III

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3. Farrar, The Early Days of Christianity, p. 2, (Le Maistre, Du Pape, i. 283).
4. Tacitus, Annals, iii. 53.
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7. Philippians 4:21.
8. Acts 13:1.
9. Farrar, The Early Days of Christianity, p. 33, (Seutonius, Dom. 15).
10. Farrar, The Early Days of Christianity, p. 5, (Dionisius ii. 25).
11. Farrar, The Early Days of Christianity, p. 5, (Seneca, De Benef. iii. 6).
12. Romans 1:21-31.
13. Farrar, The Early Days of Christianity, p. 6.
14. II Corinthians 1:8-9.
15. I Corinthians 15:32.
16. II Timothy 4:17
17. Farrar, The Early Days of Christianity, p. 6, footnote.
18. Acts 17:22-23.
19. Jackson-Lake, The Beginnings of Christianity, p. 225.
20. Acts 17:17-18.
21. Acts 17:21.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER IV

1. Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, xviii. 1.
2. Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, xviii. 1.
3. Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, xviii. 10. 5.
4. Hollmann, The Jewish Religion in the Time of Jesus, p. 26
5. Baron, A Social and Religious History of the Jews, vol. II, p. 35.
6. Hollmann, The Jewish Religion in the Time of Jesus, p. 26
7. "Pharisees," Jewish Encyclopedia, vol IX, p. 662.

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9. "Jewish Sects During the Second Commonwealth," Encyclopedia Britannica (1963), vol. XIII, p. 42B
10. Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, xviii. 1. 4.
11. "Sadducees," Hastings, A Dictionary of the Bible, p. 818.
12. Hollmann, The Jewish Religion in the Time of Jesus, p. 31
13. Halley, Bible Handbook, p. 377
14. Acts 4:1, Acts 5:17
15. Matthew 9:34, Luke 16:14, John 7:32
16. "Essens," Jewish Encyclopedia, vol. V, p. 224.
17. Josephus, Wars of the Jews, ii. 8. 2-8.
18. Josephus, Wars of the Jews, vii. 2. 3.
19. Fisher, The History of the Church, p. 14.
20. Josephus, Wars of the Jews, vii. 2. 3.
21. Acts 13:42.

FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER V

1. Daniel 9:22-27
2. Numbers 14:34
3. Ezekiel 4:6
4. Halley, Bible Handbook, p. 312.
5. Luke 3:23
6. Matthew 2:1-23
7. Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, xvii. 8. 1.
8. Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, xvii. 6. 4.
9. Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, xvii. 6. 5.-8.1.
10. Luke 2:2
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12. Lardner, Works, vol. VII, pp. 626-627
13. Ramsay, Was Christ Born at Bethlehem?, pp. 227-228, 273
14. Acts 5:37
15. Schaff, History of the Christian Church, p. 121.
16. Martyr, I Apology, 34.
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4. John 2:13-17
5. Seutonius, Lives of the Caesars, viii. 4. 5.
6. Tacitus, The Histories, v. 13.
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9. Hurst, History of the Christian Church, vol. I, p. 87.
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11. Faber, Eight Dissertations, vol. II, p. 97 (see also: Du Halde's China, vol. I. p. 360, 361. Le Compte's China, p. 118, 200).
12. Acts 26:26
13. Tacitus, Annals, xv. 44.

FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER VII

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| 1. Mark 1:14 | 11. Rev. 3:21 | 21. Genesis 2:2-3 |
| 2. Mark 16:15 | 12. Rev. 5:16 | 22. Matthew 28:19 |
| 3. Matthew 13:34-35 | 13. Matthew 5:17 | 23. Matthew 24:14 |
| 4. Matthew 13:13-15 | 14. Isaiah 42:21 | 24. Daniel 9:26-27 |
| 5. Matthew 25:19 | 15. Matthew 19:16-19 | 25. Matthew 12:40 |
| 6. Matthew 25:21, 23 | 16. Luke 4:16 | 26. Luke 24:1-7 |
| 7. John 14:1-3 | 17. Mark 1:21 | |
| 8. Luke 22:29-30 | 18. Mark 6:2 | |
| 9. Rev. 19:11-16 | 19. Luke 4:31 | |
| 10. Rev. 2:26-27 | 20. Mark 2:27-28 | |

FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER VIII

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| 1. Acts 1:15-16. | 16. I Corinthians 15:5-8; 11:23 | 31. Acts 13:44 |
| 2. Luke 24:49 | 17. Acts 11:26 | 32. Acts 17:1-2 |
| 3. Acts 2:1-4 | 18. Acts 14:23 | 33. Acts 18:4 |
| 4. Leviticus 23:15-16 | 19. Acts 16:8-13 | 34. Luke 21:20 |
| 5. Acts 2:5-11 | 20. Acts 24:27 | 35. "Nazarenes," |
| 6. Matthew 16:18 | 21. Acts 25:11 | <u>Encyclopaedia</u> |
| 7. Ephesians 2:19-20 | 22. Acts 28:30 | <u>Britannica</u> , |
| 8. Colossians 1:17-18 | 23. Tacitus, <u>The Annals</u> , xv. 44. | (1911), vol. XIX, |
| 9. Acts 2:41 | 24. Galatians 1:8 | p. 319. |

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| 10. Acts 4:4 | 25. Acts 1:3 | 36. Hurlbut, <u>The Story of the Christian Church</u> , p. 41. |
| 11. Acts 6:7 | 26. I Corinthians 1:10 | |
| 12. Acts 1:8 | 27. Acts 8:25 | |
| 13. Acts 8:1 | 28. Acts 14:7, 21 | |
| 14. Matthew 10:5-6 | 29. Acts 13:14 | |
| 15. Galatians 1:15-18 | 30. Acts 13:42 | |

FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER IX

1. Acts 8:9-10
2. Acts 8:13
3. Acts 8:18-19
4. Acts 8:20-21
5. Ezra 4:9-10
6. Harnack, The History of Dogma, vol. I, pp. 243, 244.
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8. Acts 8:23
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10. II Peter 2:5
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20. III John 9-10
21. Jude 3-4
22. M'Clintock and Strong, Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature, vol. II, p. 190.
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24. Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, ix. 14. 3
25. Hippolytus, The Refutation of All Heresies, VIII, 21
26. Tertullian, Against All Heresies, Pt. Second IX, 3.
27. Hippolytus, The Refutation of All Heresies, VIII, 21
28. Eusebius, The Ecclesiastical History, III. 28.
29. Jackson-Lake, The Beginnings of Christianity, vol. I, p. 258.
30. "Mithras," Encyclopaedia Britannica, (1959), vol XV, p. 623
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32. "The Pagani Among the Contemporaries of the First Christians," Weiss, Herodl, Journal of Biblical Literature, March 1967, vol. LXXXVI, p. 52.
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34. "Gnosticism," M'Clintock and Strong, Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature, vol. III, p. 891.
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41. Fallows, The Popular and Critical Bible Encyclopaedia, vol. II, p. 1591.
42. Martyr, The First Apology, Chapter 26. (See also The Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. I, p. 171.)
43. "Gnosticism," M'Clintock and Strong, Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature, vol. III, p. 892. (See also Lipsius, Gnosticism, Its Essence, Origin, and Development, 1860.)
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46. Neander, General History of the Christian Religion and Church, vol. II, p. 33.
47. I Timothy 1:4
48. I Timothy 6:20 (R.S.V.).
49. Mansel, The Gnostic Heresies of the First and Second Centuries, p. 56.
50. II Peter 2:1-3
51. III John 10
52. Jude 3
53. Matthew 16:18
54. Matthew 28:20
55. Hebrews 13:5
56. McGiffert, A History of Christianity in the Apostolic Age, p. 671.

A GLOSSARY OF CHURCH HISTORY TERMS

AMBROSE (340-397 A.D.): The earliest of the Latin Fathers, the bishop of Milan. He is best known for this commentaries on the Old Testament and for his influence in bringing Augustine into the Catholic Church.

ANTI-NICENE FATHERS:

Justin Martyr	Cyprian	Origen
Irenaeus	Caius	Commodianus
Hermas	Novatian	Municuns Felix
Tatian	Gregory Thaumaturgas	Lactantius
Athenagoras	Dionysius the Great	Hippolytus
Theophilus	Julius Africanus	Cunobius
Clement of Alexandra	Methodius	Tertullian

ANTINOMIANISM: The term means "against law." It was coined by Luther in 1527 to stigmatize the teaching that Christians were under grace and had no need for the Law.

APOCRYPHA: The name given to several books claimed to be missing from the Bible. The word often refers to the seven books which the Roman Catholic church places on a level with the Bible: Tobias, Judith, I and II Maccabees, The Book of Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, and certain additions to Esther and Daniel.

ARCESILAUS (316-241 B.C.): Greek philosopher of the Socratic method. He was opposed to the Stoics and maintained that man could not know anything and must, therefore, be satisfied with probability. Arcesilaus wrote nothing and is noted for his clearness of thought and facility of speech.

ARIANISM: School of thought founded by Arius in the fourth century A.D. It was strongly opposed to the doctrine of the divinity of Christ. Arius maintained that there was a time when the Son was not, therefore, the Son could not be eternal or equal with God.

ARISTOTLE (384-322 B.C.): Ancient Greek philosopher who influenced the thinking of many of the early Church Fathers, especially Thomas Aquinas.

ASCETICISM: Rigorous self denial of self discipline. Asceticism had been practiced from the times of the ancients and can take the form of a religion. Some forms of primitive asceticism are: fasting, denial of sexual drives, self infliction of pain, mutilation.

AUGUSTINE (354-430 A.D.): Considered one of the greatest of the Catholic Church Fathers. His writings established many of the Church's doctrines and also the Catholic views on sex.

BARBABAS (Epistle): One of the apocryphal books of the New Testament. It stood at the end of the Codex Sinaiticus as a sort of appendix to the New Testament. The epistle is sometimes ascribed to the apostle Barnabas, but internal evidence makes this assumption impossible. It is more reasonable to assume it was fathered by the Alexandrian Church, where it also had its greatest authority.

BASILIDIANS: A heretical sect founded by Basilides which appears to have died out after the fourth century. Their philosophy seems to have been a tangent of Oriental dualism which later produced the religious system of Manicheism.

BOËTHUSIANS: A Jewish sect founded by Boëthus in rejection of the Torah. The sect is closely related to, if not a development of the Sadducees. The Sadducees were the political and the Boëthusians the religious opponents of the Pharisees.

CASSIANUS (?360-?435 A.D.): A monk of the fifth century, one of the first founders of monastic institutions in western Europe. He founded the doctrine of Semi-Pelagianism, a doctrine strongly opposed to that of Augustine. Semi-Pelagianism contends while man is by nature sinful, he has some good in him, and that while the immediate gift of God's grace is necessary to salvation, conversion may also be begun by the exercise of man's will.

CATHOLIC: The term originally meant wholly or entirely. Modern usage now renders it as a member of the Roman Catholic Church, or pertaining to a universal belief or Church.

CATHOLIC EPISTLES: A term applied to those books of the New Testament not addressed to any specific group of people, but to the Church as a whole. Usually refers to the epistles of Peter, James, John and Jude.

CERINTHUS (circa 100 A.D.): A heretic of the first century. He taught a mixture of Judaism, Christianity, and Gnosticism. He lived principally in Palestine, Syria, and Asia Minor.

CHRYSOSTOM (345-407 A.D.): Known as "Goldenmouth" because of his speaking ability. He was the most famous of the Greek Church Fathers. He served as an archbishop in the Catholic Church at Constantinople. He was martyred because he would not lower his moral convictions.

CICERO (106-143 B.C.): Great orator and philosopher of Rome. His prime concern was human cooperation. He believed that there was a divine element in every human being, therefore all human beings are essentially equal.

CLEMENS OF ALEXANDRIA (?155-?217 A.D.): Greek theologian and head of the catechetical school of Alexandria. He is not very well known because his student, Origen, did much more writing, but they both believed the same things. Clemen's main contribution was that of tying all the religious beliefs together into a unified religion by philosophies.

CLEMENT OF ROME: One of the "Apostolic Fathers," and third successor to the papacy after Peter, according to Irenaeus. He is best known by his only surviving work, the Epistle to the Church of Corinth, which is one of the most important documents of the subapostolic age.

CONSTANTINE (272-337 A.D.): The first professing Christian emperor of the Roman empire and was largely responsible for the turning point in the history of the Catholic Church in its rise from persecution on to officialdom and dominance.

DIDACHE: "The Teaching of the Lord by the Twelve Apostles to the Gentiles." This is a work discovered in Constantinople among remains of early Christian literature. It claims to reflect the style and method of Christian teaching in the age immediately succeeding that of the apostles.

DIO CASSIUS (?150-?235 A.D.): Roman historian noted particularly for this work on the last years of the republic and the early empire.

DIOCLETIAN (245-313 A.D.): Roman emperor from 284-305 A.D. He effected an administrative and financial reorganization of the Roman empire and ordered the last great persecution of the Christians.

DIONYSIUS EXIGUUS (?-?445 A.D.): Roman theologian and scholar. He is credited with a collection of 401 ecclesiastical canons, and he also introduced the present method of calculating the Christian era.

DISPERSION: Refers to the scattering of the Jews throughout all the kingdoms of the world as a result of captivity and wandering.

DOCETISM: A religious sect of the nature of Gnosticism. They maintained that Jesus' body was not physical, but only appeared that way. They also rejected the idea of Christ's physical birth.

DOGMA: When used in reference to religion, the term applies to the doctrines set down by the different churches and preached as Biblical truth.

DUALISM: The philosophy that regards the realm of matter as illusory or evil, or both. It regards that body as a tomb from which the immortal soul must be released.

EASTER: The annual festival throughout Christendom in commemoration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The name is a corruption of "Ishtar," pagan sun-goddess. The early Christian Church did not keep Easter, but the Passover. Easter was not universally observed until this was made mandatory by the Council of Nicea. The Council declared that Easter was to be kept the first Sunday after the full moon following the vernal equinox.

EBIONITES: Obscure Jewish-Christian sect extant during and shortly after the Apostolic Age. They denied Paul and the virgin birth and insisted on strict adherence to Mosaic law and circumcision.

ECCLESIASTICAL: Relating to the church or the clergy; pertaining to anything associated with the church.

EPICUREANS: Name applied to the followers of Epicurus.

EPICURUS (342-270 B.C.): Greek philosopher who taught that pleasure is the ultimate good, while pain is the ultimate evil. Therefore, man should regulate his desires to achieve pleasure.

EPIPHANIUS (?315-403 A.D.): Greek Church Father, bishop of Constantia. He is noted for his severe opposition of Origen. It was his life's task to crush this opponent whom he considered the father of all heresies. His importance lies in the writings which afford a valuable insight into the theology of the period. His works are also a valuable source for the heresies of the fourth century.

EPIPHANY: A Christian feast celebrated on January sixth originally and still in the Eastern Church commemorating the baptism of Christ and secondarily the marriage feast at Cana. Since the fifth century, the Western Church has used it to commemorate the coming of the Magi as the occasion of the first manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles.

ESCHATOLOGY: The study of last things (as the second coming of Christ, resurrection, judgment, et cetera).

ESSENS: As ascetic and monastic brotherhood among the Jews of Palestine from the second century B.C. to the second century A.D. who practiced a community of goods and rigorous discipline and for the most part shunned the company of women.

EUCCHARIST: The name applied to procedures involved in the celebration of the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion.

EUSEBIUS (260-341 A.D.): He is known as the "Father of Church History." His works serve as the primary source of Church history up to 324 A.D. He was also well known as a corrector of Biblical texts and drew up a standard Bible under imperial commission.

EXEGESIS: The science and art of interpreting literature, especially the Scriptures.

EXEGETAE: A board of three persons in ancient Athens to whom application might be made in all matters relating to sacred law and celestial phenomena or signs by which future events were foretold.

GIBBON, Edward (1737-1794): Historian noted for his work, The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. He was seemingly an agnostic and his writing shows a prejudice against Christianity.

GENS: Among the Romans, those persons who were born of freemen, had no slaves among their ancestors and who had not been reduced from a superior to an inferior condition.

GNOSTICS: A series of religious sects predominant in the second and third centuries which derived their principles from combining various Judaic and Chaldean and Oriental concepts into a philosophy attempting to solve the problems of the origin of the universe and its destiny. The following is a representative list of Gnostic sects:

Adamites	Clementines	Madeaens	Ophites
Basalidians	Docetists	Manicheans	Peratikoi
Cainites	Elkasaites	Marcionites	Sethites
Carpocratians	Encraties	Montanists	Simonians
Cerinthians	Entychites	Naassenes	Valentinians

HAMARTIOLOGY: That part of theology concerning the doctrine of sin.

HEGESIPPUS: Early Christian writer from the period of 150-180 A.D. He wrote a five-volume history of Christianity which became lost after the sixteenth century.

HELLINISTS: Jewish people who were usually born and/or trained in a country where the Greek language, education and cultural environment was predominant.

HERESY: Originally the term signified as act of choice whether good or bad. However, modern usage describes it as adherence to religious opinion that is contrary to established doctrine of a church.

HERODIANS: Members of a political party of biblical times which consisted of Jews who were apparently partisans of the Herodian house and together with the Pharisees opposed Christ.

HIPPOLYTUS (?-236 A.D.): The most important theologian and most prolific religious writer of the Roman Church in the pre-Constantine era. Most of his works have been lost or are known only through scattered fragments.

IGNATIUS (50-?115 A.D.): One of the early Church Fathers. His main contribution was the crystallizing of the doctrines concerning the holiness and infallibility of the Church, and the immaculate conception of Mary.

IRENÆUS (?130-? A.D.): Bishop of Lyons at the end of the second century and one of the most distinguished theologians of the ante-Nicene Church. He is credited with the wide spread of Christianity in Lyons and its neighborhood. He devoted particular attention to trying to reconcile the many sects which menaced the Church. He produced a work which is still valued as the first systematic exposition of the Catholic belief.

JEROME (?340-420 A.D.): One of the more important of the early Church Fathers. He is known for his translation of the Bible into Latin. This translation is commonly known as the Vulgate. He was also the main instrument in introducing the ascetic life into the Catholic Church.

JOSEPHUS (37-?95 A.D.): Jewish historian and military commander. He was a precocious law student and a member of the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essens. He had a considerable part in the Jewish rebellion of 66-70 A.D. His most important contribution was the writing of his two books: The Jewish Wars and The Jewish Antiquities. These are both valuable reference sources for that period.

KABBALISTS (Cabala): A system of mystical interpretation of the Scriptures, developed among Jewish rabbis in the Geonic period and transmitted to certain medieval Christians. The system laid stress on the hidden sense in the scriptures and occult means of interpretation.

KARPOKRATES (Carpocrates): An Alexandrian Jew who founded the sect of the Carpocratians. The basic doctrine was based on Platonism, interspersed with Christian ideas. The religion was an offshoot from Simon Magus' religion.

LAODICEA (Council): A council held by the Catholic Church somewhere between the years of 320-380 A.D. It was held primarily to condemn the growing custom of praying to angels. It also adopted sixty canons (rules of Law). Most of these were disciplinary.

LINUS: The first bishop of Rome after the martyrdom of Peter and Paul in 64 A.D. He was called an Etrurian, a native of Volanterrae.

LIVY: A Roman historian of the first century B.C. His works are considered one of the most precious relics of Latin literature and have become a primary source of all knowledge for that period of Rome's history.

LUCIAN (120-180 B.C.): A satirist of the Silver Age of Greek literature. He was a sceptic, scoffer, and non-believer of all religions. He maintained that there was no such thing as truth.

MAGUS, Simon: High priest of the Chaldean mystery system during the time of the early apostles. Simon had done magical signs and wonders for a long time in Samaria and had become known throughout all Samaria as a "Great One," a god.

MANICHEANS: The followers of an Eastern religion based on dualism founded in the third century. The religion was founded by Mani, whose basic belief was that there existed only two forces, light and dark. Light is good, dark is bad.

MARTIAL: The greatest of the epigrammists. He revealed through his epigrams the decay and daily living of the time between 50-100 A.D.

MARTYR, JUSTIN (?100 A.D.-169 A.D.): One of the ablest men of his time, and defended of the faith. His books give valuable information about the Church in the middle of the second century.

MENANDER: One of the earliest Gnostics. He was a pupil of Simon Magus and formed the transition from Oriental to Hellenistic Gnosticism.

MILLENNIUM: Derived from Latin word "mille" meaning a thousand years. It usually refers to Christ's messianic reign after His return to earth.

MITHRAISM: Oriental religion which rivaled Christianity for leadership of the Roman world. It parodied the central ideas and practices of Christianity, and was the forerunner of Manichaeism.

MONASTICISM: A life of total abstinence brought down through the ages by the Ascetics. Life is spent in the solitude of a cloister pursuing religious ideals.

MOSHEIM, Johann Lorenz von (1694-1747): Important German Lutheran Church historian of his age.

NAZARENES: The name applied to the true Church as a result of their following Jesus of Nazareth. The Nazarenes fled to Pella shortly before the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

NERO: Roman emperor from 54-68 A.D. He is often charged with the conflagration of Rome in 64 A.D., which resulted in the persecution of the Christians and the martyrdom of Paul.

NESTORIANISM: Religious sect from the fourth century to the present. Their main doctrine taught that Christ was two persons, human and divine. They currently reside in Iraq, a very primitive and downtrodden people.

NICEA (Council): Called in 325 A.D. by Constantine to resolve two major controversies in the Catholic Church: 1) the question over the deity of Christ, and 2) the celebration of Easter. It was the first ecumenical council called, and made the Sunday observance of Easter universal.

NICOLAITANS: Religious sect beginning during the Apostolic Age of the Christian Church, sometimes falsely tied with Nicolas of Antioch (Acts 6:5). Their basic doctrine was one of freedom of the flesh. They taught that the deeds of the flesh had no effect upon the health of the soul.

ORIGEN (185-254 A.D.): Writer and philosopher known as the Father of the Eastern Church's science of biblical criticism and exegesis in Christendom. He laid the foundation of all criticism of the Old and New Testaments of the Bible.

PAPIAS (70-155 A.D.): A student of John who recorded traditions about the origin of Matthew and Mark.

PELLA: Ancient city located east of the Jordan in the Gilead Mountains. It is the city in which the Christians sought refuge during the siege and destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

PERSIUS (34-62 A.D.): Roman poet and satirist. Although obscure and difficult, his writings reached the pinnacle of Roman satire.

PHARISEES: The most popular party among the ancient Jews noted for strict observance of rites and ceremonies of the written law, and for insistence on the validity of the traditions of the elders. They differed from the Sadducees in traditionalism and in their teachings concerning the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, future retribution and a coming Messiah.

PHILO: Most important representative of Hellenistic Judaism. His writings give the clearest view of what this type of Judaism was and aimed at. He had a close affinity to Plato, and many of his ideas are of Platonic origin.

PILATE, Pontius (30 B.C.-40 A.D.): Roman governor of Judea, 26-36 A.D. He is known for his part in the trial of Christ whom he sentenced to death.

PLINY (The Elder, 23-79 A.D.): Roman historian known for his description of the Roman empire as it was in the time of Christ. His main work is Naturalis Historis, a type of encyclopedia of the entire Roman civilization consisting of 37 volumes.

PLINY (The Younger, 61-113 A.D.): Nephew of the Elder, but became his adopted son by the Elder's request. Spent most of his life as a member of the Senate. Known for his series of writings, "Letters of Pliny," picturing the interests of Roman gentlemen.

PLATO: Eminent Greek philosopher of the fourth century B.C. He is the originator of many of today's ecclesiastical beliefs: immortal soul, hell, purgatory, heaven, and the Trinity.

POLYCARP: A Gentile convert to the Church in Asia. He was taught by the apostles and appointed bishop of the church at Smyrna. He is known for his appearance before Anicetus, bishop of Rome, at which time he defended the observance of the Passover rather than accept Easter.

POLYCRATES: The bishop of Ephesus during the latter part of the second century. Chief mention is made of him in connection with the Easter controversy. He called a synod of the bishops of Asia Minor, and they determined to keep the 14th of Nisan as the celebration of the Passover rather than consent to a Sunday observance of the resurrection.

POLYTHEISM: The doctrine of, or belief in, a plurality of gods.

POST-NICEAN FATHERS:

Socrates	John of Damascus	Aphrahat
Sozomenus	St. Ambrose	Eusebius
Curil of Jerusalem	Tulpitius Severus	Theodoret
Gregory of Nyssa	Vincent of Lorens	Jerome
St. Jerome	John Cascian	Gennadius
Basil	Leo the Great	Rufinus
Hilary of Poitiers	Ephraim Syrus	

PROSELYTE: Modern usage designates a convert from one religion to another.

PYTHAGORAS: Philosopher of the sixth century B.C., and founder of the Pythagorean Theorem of geometry. Believed in transmigration of the soul and asceticism. Influenced the Essens and the Therapeutae.

QUARTODECIMAN: A controversy which arose between the Christians of Jewish descent and those of Gentile descent over the day upon which Easter was to be observed. The Jewish Christians observed Easter immediately following the end of the Paschal fast (which ended on the 14th day of the moon at evening), without regard to the day of the week. The Gentile Christians identified the first day of the week with the Resurrection, and kept the preceding Friday as the commemoration of the crucifixion, irrespective of the day of the month. The controversy was settled by the Council of Nicea, whose decision was that Easter was to be kept on Sunday, and on the same Sunday throughout the world.

QUIRINIUS (Cyrenius): The governor of Judea during the time of Jesus' birth. He is known because of the census and taxation which he took of the Jews.

SADDUCEES: A sect among the Jews dating from the second century B.C. to the latter part of the first century A.D. It consisted largely of priestly aristocracy. They opposed the Pharisees politically and doctrinally. They interpreted the law more literally and less strictly, rejecting the authority of the other parts of Scripture and the rabbinic tradition, the immortality of the soul, retribution in a future life, and the existence of spirits.

SAMARITANS: A nation of people extant at Christ's time which is now almost extinct. Their doctrines and beliefs came from their Pentateuch, rather than the Bible. They believed Moses to be the only Prophet and that he will intercede for them at the Judgment Day. They observed the Babylonian mystery system of religion. Their high priest was Simon Magus.

SANHEDRIN: The supreme council and tribunal of the ancient Jewish nation consisting of 70-72 members and having jurisdiction over religious matters and important civil and criminal cases.

SCRIBES: A class of men devoted to the study and exposition of the law during Persian and early Greek periods of Jewish history. Originally they served as copyists, editors, and interpreters of Scripture and especially of the Law. In New Testament times they acted mainly as jurists.

SEMI-PELAGIANISM: See "Cassianus."

SENECA, Lucius Anneus (3 B.C.- 65 A.D.): Eminent statesman and philosopher in the early Roman empire. Taught a theistic conception of soul-happiness and soul-obligations. Also emphasized the right and privilege of suicide.

SEUTONIUS: Roman historian of the first century A.D. His Lives of the Caesars is the only work which is entirely preserved and is esteemed as authoritative by Tertullian, Horace, and Servius. About his personal life very little is known.

SIMONY: In ecclesiastical law, the practice of buying and selling holy orders and offices.

STOICISM: A system of thought founded by Zeno in the fourth century B.C. It declared virtue to be the supreme good and that man should live according to nature, subduing all rebellious emotions.

SOTERIOLOGY: That branch of theology dealing with the study of salvation.

STRABO: Famous Roman geographer. His writings comprise an encyclopedia of information pertaining to the various countries of the inhabited world.

TACITUS: Considered by many the greatest Roman historian. His "Annals" and "Histories" covered Roman history from the death of Augustus to that of Domitian.

TERTULLIAN (150-220 A.D.): Eminent Catholic Church Father, second only to Augustine, His various writings have influenced church doctrine along almost every facet of canon law.

THEOSOPHY: Belief about God and the world held to be based on a combination of mystical insight and philosophical speculation.

THERAPEUTAE: A monastic sect of Jewish ascetics extant long before the Christian era. They devoted their lives to abstinence and contemplation. The community included male and female members.

VALENTINIANISM: A form of Gnosticism founded by Valentinus which gained prominence during the early part of the second century. The system attempted to amalgamate Greek and Oriental speculations with Christian ideas.

ZEALOT: A Jewish sect fanatically opposed to Roman rule. Founded by Judas of Gamala. The Zealots were influential in bringing on the Jewish War of 66-70, which resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem.

ZORASTER: An ancient Persian prophet who founded the religion of Zoroastrianism. It is from this religion that Christianity has received its ideas on dualism.

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