

*The
Fabulous
First Centuries
of Christianity*

*The Lives and Struggles
of Christians in the Early Centuries*

by
Vance Ferrell

**THE MOST ASTOUNDING FACTS
OF EARLY CHURCH HISTORY
YOU WILL EVER READ !**

**YET FULLY LOYAL TO OUR LORD
AND SAVIOUR, JESUS CHRIST,
AND TO THE HOLY BIBLE !**



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AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

When I started this project, I had in mind to only carry it as far as the end of the first century. The plan was to provide you with a rather complete understanding of the entire historical background of the New Testament. In view of our understanding of parallel events occurring at the same time in the New Testament record, some of the things I found were astounding.

However, history has a way of continuing;—and, soon I found myself in the midst of startling discoveries beyond that,—in the second and third centuries. So I decided to conclude the book during the rule of Constantine in the fourth century.

But then I found that events during his turbulent reign propelled Christian history into strangely new paths.

I can assure you that writing this book was an exciting adventure. So many fascinating things happened back then. You are likely to experience a similar thrill as you come upon one new discovery after another.

By the time you complete the book, you will have a far better understanding of the trials and struggles of early Christians than you ever had before. Indeed, you will have become something of an expert on a subject that most people in our time know almost nothing about. Yet, for those of us who are Christians, these are very important matters.

So let us not tarry longer. Just now, turn the page

to Part One, and we will begin our journey. —*vf*

ó PART ONE ó

EVENTS TO THE DEATH OF CHRIST

WHO WAS HEROD THE GREAT?

The Bible (Matthew 2:16) tells us that, in order to kill Christ at His birth, Herod the Great was the man who ordered the death of all the infants of Bethlehem.

So we will begin our fascinating story of the beginnings of Christianity with this strange man whose biography, like so many others in this book, is remarkable.

Herod the Great was born about 74 B.C., into a wealthy Idumaeen (Edomite) family which had nominally accepted the Jewish religion.

The historian Josephus described him as a man of great physical bravery and skill, a perfect marksman with arrow and javelin, a mighty hunter who in one day caught forty wild beasts, and “such a warrior as could not be withstood” (*Josephus, Wars of the Jews, i, 21*).

Yet it was his ability to outtalk or outbribe the enemies, who sought to get various Roman leaders to banish or kill him, that was Herod’s special accomplishment.

Although the Edomites had been the hereditary enemies of the Jews, Herod, an Edomite, managed to gain control of Judea shortly after Julius Caesar was murdered in Rome.

Here is how it came about:

The man who always won—When Pompey was slain in Egypt in 48 B.C., after his defeat in battle by Julius Caesar, *Antipater*, Herod's father, quickly switched sides and threw his loyalty to Caesar. As a reward, Antipater was confirmed as ruler of Judea. He immediately appointed his son, Herod, as governor of Galilee.

But, four years later, when Julius Caesar was treacherously assassinated by Brutus and Cassius in 44 B.C., Antipater immediately declared his loyalty to Cassius, who had taken control of the eastern part of the Roman Empire. As a reward, Antipater was confirmed as ruler of Judea, and his son, Herod, was made governor of Syria. But it was dangerous to be a ruler back then; and, shortly afterward, Antipater was poisoned in Jerusalem.

When the Roman general, *Mark Anthony*, defeated Brutus and Cassius at Philippi in 42 B.C., both of them committed suicide soon after. Two men were now in charge of the Roman Empire: Mark Antony and *Octavian*, the 18-year-old grandnephew of Julius Caesar. As the result of a friendly conversation, they divided the empire between them, with Antony taking everything on the east. Immediately, Herod bribed his way into favor with Antony.

But, just then, Parthians, who occupied territory to the east of the Roman Empire, invaded Judea. Herod barely escaped and fled to Rome. Arriving there in 40 B.C., he cemented his friendship with Antony, who arranged for the Roman Senate to award him the title, "*King of the Jews*." It is from that year that historians date the beginning of Herod's rule.

Roman forces, sent to Judea, helped Herod drive

out the Parthians. But upon returning to Judea, he was met by a rebellion! The Jewish insurgents opposing him eventually made their last stand in Jerusalem. But it still took almost three months before Herod was able to take the upper city and the Temple site. The subsequent slaughter was immense; for the Roman soldiers were enraged at the stubborn resistance they had encountered.

It was at this time that Antigonus, the last Jew to ever function as a king, was scourged and put to death. The year was 37 B.C. According to the historian Josephus, Herod was “master of a city in ruins and king of a nation that hated him.” The clock was ticking. It was 33 years before the birth of Jesus.

But more trouble was brewing. *Cleopatra*, queen of Egypt had been using her wiles to gain political control of the Eastern Empire. But Antony had spent so much time living with her that he had let his military defenses become weak. In 32 B.C. Octavian (only 28 at the time) declared war against him. The next year, in a great naval victory at Actium on the western coast of Greece, Antony’s forces were annihilated—and he and Cleopatra fled back to Egypt.

As the decisive battle had drawn near, Herod had determined to stand with the one he thought would win: Anthony. But, when Anthony lost, Herod immediately took ship to the Island of Rhodes and there met with Octavian. Lavishly promising him the fullest loyalty that he had previously given to Antony, Herod was confirmed in his kingship of Judea. Upon arriving back home, Herod killed his wife’s mother Alexandra, because he suspected her of treason.

The end of Cleopatra—Having fled to Egypt, Cleopatra decided she needed to rid herself of Antony

and win the love of Octavian, the new ruler of the Roman Empire. So she had word sent to Anthony that she had committed suicide. Distraught at the news and, in accordance with an earlier agreed suicide pact with her, Anthony tried to kill himself. But the sword thrust into his body only wounded him seriously. Discovering this, Cleopatra and the women with her slew the Roman leader she had pretended to love.

Cleopatra was now determined to win the affection of Octavian, as earlier, when for a full year she had given herself to Mark Anthony and, before that, to Julius Caesar prior to his assassination.

On August 1, 30 B.C. Octavian entered Alexandria, Egypt. But, unlike his predecessors, he was always faithful to one wife. When he refused to yield to her wiles, Cleopatra held an asp to her breast and committed suicide.

Both the death of Cleopatra and Roman control of Egypt strengthened Herod's position; for Egypt had been a continual threat to his rulership. Cleopatra's possessions in Palestine, given her by Ptolemy, were added to Herod's domain, along with several other cities ceded to him by Emperor Octavian (who later changed his name to *Caesar Augustus*). Herod had now become the ruler of a large territory.

Always killing his friends—Soon after, Herod had his wife, Mariamne, put to death because he also suspected her of plotting against him. Herod was obviously a difficult man to live with.

When he was not preoccupied with having friends and relatives slain, Herod spent his time building gymnasiums, baths, marketplaces, and cities, in the vain hope of pleasing the Jews.

Always fearful that some enemy would eventually

attack him, another pet project of Herod's was the construction of five major isolated fortresses, to which he would be able to flee in case of trouble. One was Masada, which he specifically built as a perfect refuge. Another was the Herodium, a festal retreat and his intended final burial place. Machaerus was another, where one of Herod's sons (Herod Antipas) later imprisoned John the Baptist. More on that later.

Herod wanted the Jews to appreciate him; but he was hated because he was an Edomite and not a Jew and because he represented the Roman power which they wanted to cast off. They were also angry with the way he kept killing his relatives and anyone else who gave the slightest hint of opposing him.

Antipater, Herod's son by his first wife, Doris, wanted to get rid of his half-brothers. So when he falsely charged that Herod's two sons by Mariamne (Alexander and Aristobulus) were plotting against him, Herod had them strangled to death.

But when Antipater was later suspected of attempting to poison Herod, he was also sentenced to death (*Josephus, Antiquities, xviii, 1*)

When news of all these murders reached Emperor Augustus, back in Rome, he is reported to have commented, "I'd rather be Herod's hog (*hus*) than his son (*huios*)." In order to appease the Jews, Herod did not kill his hogs!

After murdering his dearly beloved wife, Mariamne, Herod became psychologically disturbed and suffered prolonged delusions. At times, demanding his servants to bring Mariamne into his presence, he would fly into a rage when they could not produce the dead woman.

The battles Herod had to fight both inside and outside his kingdom, the dissension and murders

within his court, his sexual and drinking excesses, and his tiresome journeys overseas—prematurely aged him. Suspicion and uncontrollable anger gradually became a way of life for him.

At about the age of 65 (about 9 B.C.), Herod became seriously ill for a time; then he appeared to recover rather well.

—But then, nearly five years later, another event occurred during the last part of Herod’s reign. It is mentioned in the book of Matthew:

“The book of the generation of Jesus Christ . . . When as His mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.”—*Matthew 1:1, 18.*

More on this very soon.

WHAT DID THE TEMPLE LOOK LIKE?

It was not until he had reigned eighteen years that Herod began the work of rebuilding the Temple in Jerusalem. Historians date that event at 20/19 B.C.

Deciding he should live in style like his friends in Rome, Herod had already built himself a palace, filled it with gold, marble, and costly furniture, and surrounded it with extensive gardens.

This palace occupied the citadel area on the west side of Jerusalem. Fifteen acres in size, it was enclosed by a wall which, according to Josephus, was 65 feet high. Part of that palace is preserved today in the massive lower walls of the citadel beside the Jaffa Gate.

(Later in the first century A.D., when Roman procurators ruled Judea, that palace of Herod’s became their headquarters. It was here that Christ would be brought for trial before Pilate. A detailed analysis of that trial comes later.)

Work begins on the restored Temple—When Herod announced to the Jews that he was going to rebuild their Temple, which Zerubbabel had erected five centuries earlier, the Jews were utterly shocked! Herod told them it was too small, and he wanted to tear it down and erect a larger one on the Temple site. Despite their protests and fears, he set to work on the reconstruction project.

It was not until 20/19 B.C., when all the materials had been gathered nearby, that Herod ordered the work to begin. Skilled workmen, numbering 10,000, were chosen for the task. A thousand wagons carried immense stones to the site.

On Mount Moriah, the Temple site, Herod had an area 750 feet square leveled out, greatly widening the flat top of the Temple site. It was enlarged to twice its previous size of some 17 acres. This was done by new excavation work on the north side, plus the construction of immense retaining walls rising 450 feet above the Kidron Valley floor, on the south-east.

After being enlarged, the flat surface of the Temple Mount measured 351 yards on the north side, 512 yards on the east, 536 yards on the west, and 309 yards on the south.

The Temple that Jesus saw—The actual inner part of the Temple was rebuilt exclusively by the priests and Levites, with the work completed within a year and a half—with no interruption in daily sacrifices.

It took another eight years to complete the outer courts. The entire structure was arranged in a series of ascending terraces, with one court higher than the next; and the Temple highest of all. So, apart from some embellishments, the Temple and its outer

courts were completed in 12/11 B.C.

We know what it looked like from the descriptions given by Josephus (*Antiquities*, xv, 11) and the Mishnah (*Middoth*).

The outermost part consisted of covered-over porticos, which were roofed with cedar “curiously graven,” and supported by multiple rows of Corinthian columns in bronze. Each column was so huge that three men could barely join hands around it.

This was the largest outer court, and in it were booths for the money changers. As a lucrative sideline, the priests required that all local and foreign currency be changed into “temple shekels.” Also here were stalls where one might buy animals to offer in sacrifice. The whole thing sounded like a noisy cattle yard and was a national disgrace, yet the priests reaped immense profits from it, which they split with the exchangers and sellers.

Years later, on two different occasions Christ closed down this noisy marketplace for a time: the first time was near the beginning of His three-and-a-half-year ministry (John 2:12-22), and the second near its end (Matthew 21:12-13, Mark 11:15-17, Luke 19:45-46).

Nearby were other covered porticoes where teachers and pupils met to study Jewish philosophy. When Christ was twelve, He met with these Jewish leaders and asked them questions which they could not answer (Luke 2:41-47). More on that later.

The outer court was open to the Gentiles (and those Jews who, for one reason or another, could not approach closer).

From this “*Outer Temple*,” a broad flight of steps led up to an inner walled space which non-Jews were forbidden to enter. Beyond this first wall was “*The Court of the Women*.”

From this second enclosure, the worshiper passed up yet another flight of steps and, through gates plated with silver and gold, into an inner “*court of the Israelities*”—which was reserved for Jewish men. Here, in the open air, was an immense altar of burnt offering upon which sacrifice was offered.

Inside the sanctuary—Beyond this point, more steps led up through massive bronze doors—75 feet high and 24 wide—which were overhung with a famous golden vine. Through this door only the priests could pass into the sacred inner precincts. Inside, everything was built of white marble, in set-back style, and faced in gold plate (*Josephus, Antiquities, xv, 11*).

Like the ancient tabernacle in the wilderness, the inside of this building consisted of two apartments. The first was twice as long as it was wide and high. The second, inner apartment was a perfect cube. These two rooms were divided crosswise by an immense veil, embroidered with blue, purple, and scarlet. Josephus tells us the cloth was one inch thick, and renewed yearly.

When Christ died, a hand tore that veil in two “from above (*Greek: anothēn*) down,” totally splitting it apart and exposing to view the innermost sanctuary of the Temple (Matthew 27:51, Mark 15:38, Luke 23:45).

Before the veil, on the right in the first apartment was a golden table bearing unleavened “shewbread” (Hebrew: the “bread of the presence”). On the left was the golden, seven-branched lampstand (not “candlestick”). Immediately before the veil was the golden altar of incense. Beyond the veil was the second apartment—the Holy of Holies, which in the earlier Temple, before its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar

in 586 B.C. (2 Kings 25), was the golden Ark of the Covenant, containing God's covenant with His people: the Ten Commandments (Deuteronomy 5:2-21).

Josephus tells us that there was "nothing whatever" in the Most Holy Place of the Temple in Christ's time. This was because, just before Solomon's Temple was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, the prophet Jeremiah directed that the Ark of the Covenant be hidden in a cave somewhere in the surrounding hills. To this day, it has never been located.

As mentioned earlier, the main structures of this historic edifice were finished in eight years. Some additional adornment was still being added during the ministry of Jesus (cf. John 2:20). After 80 years, the work was finally completed in A.D. 64 (*Josephus, Antiquities xv. 11; Wars of the Jews, v. 5*), during the time of the procurator Albinus (A.D. 62-64). That was only six years before the armies of Titus destroyed the city of Jerusalem and its Temple in A.D. 70 (Matthew 24:2, 15-22, 32-35).

Josephus tells us that the Temple was constructed of white marble stones, each one immense in size: 25 cubits (37½ feet) in length. Jesus predicted that all those stones would be thrown down (Matthew 24:1-2). Later in this book, you will learn how happened.

The Israelites were proud of this glorious shrine of white marble, gold, and cedar. It ranked among the marvels of the Augustinian world. Because of its splendor, they almost forgave the Greek Corinthian-style columns in the porticoes, and the immense golden eagle that—defying the Jewish prohibition against carven images—was above the entrance gate to the outermost court of the Temple. That eagle symbolized the power of Judea's enemy and master, the

Roman Empire.

THE BIRTH OF JESUS

Mary the mother of Jesus—The Israelites had long been expecting that the promised Messiah would be born among them, and, when the angel announced to Mary that she was to be the mother of the Redeemer, her submission to the Divine will was remarkable. Well she knew that conceiving a son without having known man would bring her reproach for a lifetime. But she was willing to do whatever God wanted. Her godly example is a powerful lesson for us.

“Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary.”—*Luke 1:26-27*.

Some historians have assumed that the ancient Hebrews treated their women the way modern inhabitants of the Near East frequently do. It is sometimes claimed that Mary was 12 when she was betrothed to Joseph and Jesus was born. But the present writer suggests that Mary of Nazareth was a mature woman of about 20 when He was conceived. If so, she was about four years old when work on the Temple began, and grew up hearing stories of its gradual erection. Throughout her childhood, she probably heard about some of the terrible things Herod was doing. When Mary was about 14, the outer courts were completed and she and her parents were able to enter them.

It appears that, as soon as she was told that she was to be the mother of Jesus, Mary journeyed to the hill country of Judea to visit her cousin Elizabeth (Lk 1:36). It was not until about three months later,

shortly before the birth of John the Baptist, that she returned to Nazareth. About six months after that, she and Joseph made that fateful journey to Bethlehem.

The registration decree—The year was 4 B.C. Not far from Herod’s golden palace in Jerusalem, something was about to happen in an animal shed in nearby Bethlehem.

It was the 23rd year of the reign of Caesar Augustus, and he had just issued a proclamation, calling on everyone in the entire empire to go to the city of his birth and register for tax purposes.

“And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.”—*Luke 2:1*.

Every 10 to 14 years, the rulers of Rome checked on how many people were in the empire; not only the *dyes Romani* (the Roman citizens), but also those living in Spain, Gaul, Egypt, Syria, and Palestine. We know from Roman historical records that this was done periodically (generally every 14 years) until A.D. 175.

As with the other tax-enrollment decrees, this “decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed”, was actually an order for the taking of a census. “All went to be taxed (Greek: *apographo*, “enrolled”), every one into his own city” (Luke 2:3). The tax levy on each nation was based on this census. Rome used the income to build great buildings and sport arenas, and provide the people with free *panem et circenses* (“bread and circuses”) to keep them contented.

This particular census was taken “when *Cyrenius* (Latin: *Quirinius*) was governor of Syria” (Luke 2:2).

He was the Senator P. Sulpicius Quirinius who is known to us from Roman documents.

Until recently, it was thought that there was a historical problem here, since Quirinius did not go as legate to Syria until A.D. 6—a full ten years after the census of 4 B.C.

But it is now known that a fragment of a Roman inscription, found at Antioch, mentioned that Quirinius had been the emperor's legate in Syria on a previous occasion, when Saturninus was procounsul. Quirinius had gone to Syria between 10 and 7 B.C. and ruled over it for several years. While there, he led a campaign against the Homanadenses, a tribe in the Taurus Mountains of Asia Minor. So now we know that Quirinius was, indeed, "governor of Syria" at the time stated in Luke 2:2. He later died when Jesus was 25.

Arrival in Bethlehem—Because of this imperial decree, a man and his betrothed wife, heavy with child, journeyed south to Bethlehem for the enrollment.

"And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.

"(And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

"And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

"And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

"And she brought forth her firstborn son and wrapped

him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.”—*Luke 2:1-7*.

Here is some historical background on this amazing event, told to us in Matthew 1 and Luke 2:

The inn—The “inn” was a small Oriental *khan* or *caravansary*, which usually consisted of rooms facing on a covered porch, surrounding a central courtyard. The travelers would either be assigned a small space in a room or on the covered porch. For protection, their animals and baggage would be kept in the courtyard.

There was “no room in the inn” because many descendents of Judah, Benjamin, or Levi (whose parents had earlier lived there), had also come to Bethlehem to be registered.

The place of His birth—When Christ was born, He was laid in a manger. This was a trough where cattle were fed dry food. An early Christian writer, Justin Martyr (c.A.D. 110-165), wrote that Jesus was born in a cave. So where was it that Jesus was born? There are several possibilities:

Today in Bethlehem, caves are still used to stable sheep and cattle. A number of old houses, built over limestone caves, have been found. (Less frequently, the house was built into a cliff, with the cave behind the house.) The people lived in the houses, and their animals were kept at night underneath in the caves. It is a very efficient method: The animals were themselves sheltered, and heat from the animals rose and kept the people warm; so one dwelling served them all.

In most instances, the cave was level with the road, and the house, above it, was reached by climbing stone steps. Within the cave, which had been cut into

the soft limestone, a stone trough was cut from the rock. Iron rings were attached to it, to which the animals were tied at night.

Several centuries later, in A.D. 325, Macanus, the Christian bishop of Jerusalem, informed Emperor Constantine that, in Bethlehem, there was a cave which the people of the town venerated as the birthplace of Christ. The next year, construction of a church began over that cave. Whether or not it is the correct site, we cannot know. But today it is called the Church of the Nativity. The cave itself, called the Grotto of the Nativity, is beneath the church building, and has been rebuilt many times over the centuries. This cave is about 40 feet long and 12 feet wide. At its entrance is a heavy, iron-studded door, narrow enough that only one person can enter at a time and so low that the tall must stoop before entering.

There is yet another possibility, and an intriguing one: On the evening of the Nativity, Joseph and Mary may have found refuge in a *fundak*, a walled enclosure open to the sky with covered wooden stalls built against the enclosing walls for the accommodation of cattle. It is of special interest that the most protected part of the *fundak* would be the feeding trough, set against the back wall. As you know, baby Jesus was placed in the feeding trough.

His infant clothes—The “swaddling clothes” (Greek: a “*swathing band*”) consisted of strips of cloth wound loosely about the body and limbs of the infant. According to the usual custom, the baby was laid diagonally on a square piece of cloth, two corners being folded over its body, one over its feet, and the other underneath its head. This was held in place by bands loosely wound around the outside.

Bethlehem Ephratah—So it was that, in fulfillment of a prophecy made centuries earlier, the Eternal One, known in this world as Jesus Christ, was born in the little town of Bethlehem, which in the Hebrew means “the house from which we get bread.” He who was to be the Saviour of all who would accept Him, had come to earth to live a life of obedience to His Father’s laws, as an example to us, and then die at the hands of those He came to save.

“But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.”—*Micah 5:2*.

Some are puzzled why it says “*Ephratah*” in Micah 5:2? It is not commonly known that there were two Jewish “Bethlehems” in existence at that time. The promised Messiah was born in the right one: Bethlehem Ephratah, which was the Bethlehem in Judea only five miles from Jerusalem, where King David had been born a thousand years earlier. (The other Bethlehem, located in Palestine, was Bethlehem of Zebulun.)

The Judean Bethlehem, located close to the ancient town of Ephrath, is where the ancient tomb of Rachel, the wife of Jacob, was still located in the time of Christ.

“And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem.”—*Gen 35:19*.

That verse will help you understand the reference to Rachel in Matthew 2:16-18, when Herod slew some of her distant offspring.

The shepherds—Because the shepherds were out in the field at night with their flocks, we know that Jesus was not born in December!

“And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.”—*Luke 2:8.*

After the rainfall of spring and before the rains of November began, the shepherds would be out in the fields with their sheep both day and night. More on the date of Christ's birth later.

The dedication at the Temple—In accordance with the ceremonial law (Lev 12:1-8), 40 days after the birth of Jesus, Joseph and Mary made the short trip from Bethlehem to Jerusalem to present baby Jesus, so He could be registered as an Israelite on the Temple rolls. Entering through the main gate, they found themselves in the outermost court, where those massive Corinthian pillars supported the covered porticoes. Here is where the Child was registered, and was blessed by Simeon and Anna.

The words of Simeon were deep with prophetic meaning!

“Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel . . .

“And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”—*Luke 2:29-32, 34-35.*

Joseph and Mary then returned to Bethlehem, thinking that perhaps that is where they should settle in order to raise Jesus. As a skilled carpenter, Joseph could find work anywhere.

The arrival of the wise men—The root word, *magoi*, means highly educated men, not magicians.

The Magi were wealthy men of high rank who had studied the Bible prophecies and knew that the coming of the Jewish Messiah was near.

“Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.”—*Matthew 2:1-2*.

It is believed that the Magi were alerted to begin their journey to Jerusalem as soon as Christ was born (rather than up to two years later, as is sometimes speculated), because Herod died not long after Christ was born—and the Magi saw Herod while he was still alive.

The apparent star that guided them could not have been a real one, for it led the travelers toward the west, and then, after leaving Jerusalem, turned southerly toward Bethlehem. It is believed to have been a cluster of shining angels.

It is estimated that their journey to Jerusalem from Mesopotamia could have taken two or three weeks at the most, if they rode camels. But actually they had six weeks in which to make the trip, because, as noted above, Mary did not present Christ at the Temple until 40 days (nearly 6 weeks) after the Child’s birth (Lk 2:22-24; Lev 12:1-8).

THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

“Behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.

“When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt.”—*Matthew*

12:13-14.

The date of Christ's birth—In the providence of God, the wise men from the East were guided so that they arrived in the fall of 4 B.C.—not long after the birth of Christ, which apparently occurred in the early fall of that year.

It is generally imagined that, because of Herod's order to slay all children in Bethlehem two years old and younger, the wise men did not arrive in Judea until nearly two years after His birth. But, according to the chronological development of what actually occurred, that cannot be correct.

According to one of the best-known books on the life of Christ (*Desire of Ages*, p. 60), the magi first saw the light in the sky on the night that Christ was born. The present writer suggests that, within a very short time, they set out on their journey and completed it much more rapidly than is generally supposed. They did not sit around thinking about it for nearly two years, till 2 B.C.,—two years after Herod, the one they spoke to in Jerusalem, had died. Only a brief amount of time need have elapsed between the night of Christ's birth, when the light first appeared (*DA* 59) and when they were given the dreams (*DA* 60).

About forty days after Christ's birth (*DA* 50), Jesus was presented by his parents at the Temple in Jerusalem; following which they returned with Him to Bethlehem. All during that time, the magi were journeying west.

By that time, it was late October or the beginning of November,—and now the magi arrived in Jerusalem. Jewish leaders had ignored the earlier word-of-mouth news spread by the shepherds. But the excitement engendered by the arrival of the magi in

Jerusalem and their question, “Where is He that is born *king of the Jews?*”—quickly brought them into the presence of King Herod.

We know what happened after that. After speaking with Herod, that same night the magi were quickly led by the light to Bethlehem and to Jesus. Very likely on the same night of the magi’s visit, Joseph was warned in the dream to quickly flee with Mary and Jesus into Egypt. The expensive gifts of the Magi provided all the funds needed for their stay there and later return to Nazareth.

Upon learning from the Magi that a genuine King had been born to the throne, Herod the Great waited a day or two for their return—and then immediately ordered the slaying of the infants of Bethlehem. But by that time, Joseph, with the mother and Child were far away on the road to Egypt.

If Christ was not born in 4 B.C., He would have had to be born 10 to 14 years earlier, during the previous census of Augustus. But if that was so, certain other facts would not fit.

Although it is commonly supposed today that Jesus was born on December 25, the evidence is clear that Jesus was born in the fall of the year, when the shepherds were out in the fields with their sheep. (In December, the sheep were penned up to keep them and their owners warm.)

We also have another evidence: Jesus was born in the fall, for He was baptized when He became 30, and three-and-a-half years later died at the time of the spring Passover.

It was not until the fourth century A.D. that December 25, the birthday of Mithra, the pagan sun god, came to be observed as the birthday of Jesus.

Mithra’s birthday on December 25 was called, *Dies*

Nataus Invicti, “the birthday of the unconquerable one.” He was also called *Sol Invictus*, the “Unconquerable sun god.” In the third century A.D., the more worldly Christians in the larger cities of the empire began celebrating the birth of Christ on the birthday of the sun god. They were accommodating their pagan friends, in order to be better accepted by them.

Arrival in Egypt—Joseph, Mary, and the Christ Child were guided by the angels to go quickly to a place of refuge in Egypt. Fortunately, through the rich gifts of the wise men, God had provided them with funds for trip and their entire stay in that foreign land.

An exile from any part of the Roman world could more easily lose himself in Egypt than anywhere else. He would find those of his own race and language there. In addition, he would no longer be subject to the ordinary surveillance of a Roman governor, nor would he be at the mercy of some petty king.

There was a reason for this: Egypt differed from all the other provinces of the Roman Empire, because it was directly subject to the administration of the emperor. Since it was the source of grain for the teeming populace of Rome, it was important that the emperor keep it under direct control. No senator or general could even set foot in Egypt without special permission. In fact, the army there was under the command of the wealthy classes of Egypt.

On the road from Palestine to Egypt, about six miles north of (what is today called) Cairo, is the quiet little village of Mataria. It is situated on the eastern bank of the Nile. The Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus (who lived in the first century A.D.), wrote that a Jewish settlement was there in which herbs (and especially Balsam bushes) were cultivated.

That herbal settlement was started about 37 B.C., by order of Cleopatra. It has been suggested that Joseph may have settled his family in or near Mataria and its fragrant balsam gardens.

HEROD'S HORRIBLE DEATH

Rumors had been circulated for years that Herod was stealing gold from the Temple and using it to build the great artificial harbor of Caesarea, as well as sending lavish gifts to the emperor.

Repeatedly, plots were formed against Herod's life. But, as fast as he discovered them, he would arrest the conspirators, torture and kill them. Sometimes entire families were put to death. He frequently set spies among the people, searching for evidence of new conspiracies.

But Herod finally met his end when he tried to kill Christ. Very soon afterward, he experienced a most horrible death.

Here is how it came about:

Suddenly a terrible illness—Apparently, it was the beginning of November, in the year 4 B.C. This was the last year of King Herod's life, and he had just spoken with the magi. When they did not immediately return within a day or two, he quickly flew into another of his rages and ordered the slaughter of the children of Bethlehem.

By this time, Herod was about 70 years old. This latest tyrannical rage was to be his last, for he became deathly ill. Historians are not certain of its length, but agree that this sickness came on suddenly and rather quickly ended in Herod's death.

During this final illness, Herod suffered horribly. Only once did he rally briefly, and then quickly suc-

cumbed (*Antiquities* 17.183). Josephus provides us with the significant news that this fatal illness began with a vague condition causing “uncontrolled anger” (*Antiquities* 17.148).

It appears that Herod’s rage at being rebuffed by the magi immediately led into the illness which rather quickly killed him.

Historians are baffled by the suddenness, severity, and multiple causes of this final illness. Coming as it did at the time that Herod ordered the death of both Jesus and every other child in Bethlehem, the sickness hit the ruler like a freight train and caused him immense suffering.

We are told that the illness “increased greatly” and was “incurable” (*Antiquities* 17.150). A fever developed, along with a strange urge to scratch his inner organs, which he could not reach. The fever added to “the malignancy of the innards. Because of this he also had a terrible desire to scratch; for it was impossible not to seek relief” (*Antiquities* 17.168-169).

“There was also an ulceration of the intestines with particularly terrible pains in the colon, and a transparent swelling of fluid around the feet. And similarly there was a malignancy in the abdominal area, as well as a putrefaction in the private member which was creating worms.

“His breathing had a high pitch, and it was extremely loathsome because of the disagreeable exhalation and the frequency of gasping. He also had spasms in every limb that took on unendurable force.”—*Josephus, Antiquities*, 17.169.

We know that such a worm infestation would also later be a judgment from God on Herod’s grandson—Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:23; d. A.D. 44).

Herod’s final sufferings—Herod could no longer lay down, but had to sit upright in order to take

breaths, which were accomplished only by short and rapid gasps. This continued day and night. The pain and suffering was immense.

Not knowing what else to do, his physicians quickly decided to move Herod to the hot springs at Callirhoë, located beyond the Jordan River. He was placed on a litter with a chair on it. Bars extending from it were held by four strong men; and slowly the party walked from Jerusalem down to Jericho and beyond. (Remember: Herod could only breathe sitting up.) At every jarring step, Herod experienced renewed pain. His sufferings were intense.

These hot springs were located close to the point where the Jordan River flows into the Dead Sea. But, because bathing in the springs did not improve his condition, the physicians decided to bathe Herod in warm oil; which, according to Josephus, nearly killed him (*Antiquities*, 17.172).

By this time, Herod had developed a convulsive, unremitting cough. Since the facilities at Callirhoë were limited, he was carried back to a spacious residence in Jericho, where, we are told, a powerful sense of foreboding filled Herod with both terror and rage (*Antiquities*, 17.173). He was angry at everyone that approached him. Always suspicious, he was certain his enemies were trying to kill him. For a brief time, he refused to eat any food brought to him. Then he asked for an apple and a paring knife to cut it with. So great was his pain that, upon receiving the knife, he tried to commit suicide, but was stopped by his cousin Achiab who cried out for help (*Antiquities*, 17.183-184).

Recognizing that his end was near, Herod called in aids and ordered the arrest and imprisonment of all the Jewish leaders in the nation! He said they

were to be slain as soon as he died, because he knew the Jews would otherwise rejoice at the news of his death—and he wanted to give them something to mourn about on that day. (The order to kill the leaders was never carried out.) He was filled with anger over the Jewish leaders' recent indifference, upon their learning of the birth of the new king had goaded him to terrible anger.

Herod lingered on for five more days and then died a miserable death (*Antiquities*, 17.191).

It was said of Herod by his enemies, "He stole to the throne like a fox, ruled like a tiger, and died like a dog" (*N. Klausner, Jesus of Nazareth*, 145).

Reconstructing the dates—Historians are in agreement that Herod died in 4 B.C., but do not agree on the month in which it occurred. Some sources place it in the spring; others in the fall or near the end of the year. The present writer places it in December.

We know that Christ was born in the fall of 4 B.C. As mentioned earlier, it was still warm enough then for shepherds to be out in the fields at night with their sheep. (Thirty years would take us to the fall of A.D. 30. Three-and-a-half years beyond that [Daniel 9:25-27] to Passover of A.D. 31.)

The present writer suggests the following dates: Jesus was born in late September. Forty days later, at the beginning of November—immediately after Jesus' presentation at Jerusalem—the magi arrived. Within half a week, Herod's order to slay the innocents had been issued,—and he was immediately seized with a variety of horrible diseases. While the family secretly journeyed to Egypt, Herod was suffering terribly in Jerusalem, then taken to the hot springs, back to Jericho, and a few days later died in

December of 4 B.C.

Although for centuries, it has been theorized that Herod ordered his body to be placed in a tomb in the fortified palace inside the immense conical fortress of Herodium, eight miles south of Jerusalem, his actual tomb has never been found.

What discoveries may we have made here?

- Because of the narrowed timing involved (less than three months from late September to late December 4 B.C.), Herod's final, terrible illness began immediately after he ordered the slaying of Jesus and the children in Bethlehem. It would thus be a direct judgment of God.

- The timing would require that the journey of the magi began—and was completed—far more quickly than previously suggested (40 or 50 days rather than two years). There is no indication that Joseph and Mary lived an extended period of time in Bethlehem, nor that the magi waited before beginning their journey. If the time span allotted to the magi's journey seems too brief, Herod's final sickness could easily have occurred within three weeks in December. That would have given the magi over two months for the trip (late September to early December).

- Herod's death apparently occurred in December of 4 B.C. It is true that some historians suggest that the date of his death may have been earlier that year. But the events of Christ's life, plus secular evidence, require a fall 4 B.C. date for Christ's birth.

IMPORTANT EVENTS AFTER CHRIST'S BIRTH

Major changes occurred at about the time of Christ's birth. One was the death of Herod the Great

in 4 B.C. Another was the increasing physical collapse of Emperor Augustus, back in Rome. More on Augustus later.

Yet another was the redivision of Palestine. Herod's final will divided his "kingdom" among three of his remaining sons.

To *Philip* went the eastern region known as Batanea, containing several cities including Bethsaida and the ten cities (the Decapolis; the word means "ten cities").

To *Herod Antipas* went Perea to the east (also called the land beyond Jordan), and in the north, Galilee, which included Tiberias and Nazareth.

To *Archelaus* went Samaritis, Idumea, and Judea. Included in his territory was Gaza, Emmaus, Caesarea, Jericho, Bethlehem, and Jerusalem.

(Later in this book, we will learn how the other two sons of Herod the Great who inherited portions of greater Palestine, Herod Antipas and Philip, figure into the New Testament story.)

When did Joseph return with Mary and Jesus from Egypt? In view of the astounding events which occurred in Judea and Galilee during the first nine years of Christ's life, this is an extremely intriguing question.

If the family's return came after A.D. 6, the family missed becoming embroiled in an immense amount of warfare, here and there, throughout Judea and Galilee.

But we know that the family returned prior to that date—because, on their return, Archelaus was still ruler over Judea (Matt 2:22). We will learn later that Archelaus reigned until A.D. 6, and the intense warfare did not end until he was removed from the throne.

THE REBELLION IN JUDEA

Shortly after Joseph and Mary fled to Egypt, a riot occurred only a few yards from where, probably less than a week earlier, Jesus had been dedicated! Here is how it happened:

Events had occurred rapidly. After speaking with Herod, the Magi had visited the family in Bethlehem, and then were immediately warned in a dream to journey home without passing through Jerusalem.

Probably that same night after the Magi's visit, Joseph was warned in a dream to flee with the mother and child into Egypt.

A couple days later, having issued the order to slay the children in Bethlehem, Herod was immediately struck with a terrible assortment of diseases, which rather quickly led to his death.

Removal of the golden eagle—As soon as it was known that Herod was sick and nearing death, several zealous Pharisees hurried to the Temple—and pulled down the golden eagle which Herod had erected over its great, central entrance gate.

This symbol of Roman authority was regarded as a “graven image,” and the Jews were determined to get rid of it. By order of Herod, soldiers were immediately sent to quench the riot which ensued, slay the instigators, and put the eagle back on the gate.

But when it was afterward announced that Herod's successor over Judea was his vicious son, Archelaus, the most zealous of the Jews began a revolt. When Archelaus' troops arrived, and found the rebels encamped in tents about the Temple, they slew 3,000 of them.

The revolt spreads throughout Judea—Sabinus, a government auditor temporarily in town,

took advantage of the presence of Roman soldiers in Jerusalem trying to deal with angry Jews. Knowing they would protect him, he robbed the Temple treasury of 400 talents of silver.

To the Jews, this was like throwing gasoline on the fire. As rioting Jews drew near, he and the soldiers accompanying him on this looting project barely escaped. Rushing west from the Temple, Sabinus entered Herod's palace and barricaded the doors and windows. Rapidly, the revolt spread through the countryside, including Bethlehem. But Joseph and the family were gone; God had told them to go to Egypt.

Government palaces throughout all of Judea were plundered and set ablaze. The situation became so desperate that Quintilius Varus, the governor of Syria, hastened to the scene with a powerful Roman army, strengthened with troops from Beirut and Arabia.

As soon as the army approached the city of Jerusalem, the rebels fled through the opposite gates. In hot pursuit, the soldiers captured them in droves. Two thousand Jews were crucified.

The revolt widens and includes Galilee—As more and more of the citizenry learned about this, the revolt became even more widespread. Now not only Judea was involved, but also Galilee, where Nazareth was located.

At two different feasts in Jerusalem, there were riots and great slaughter of Jews, which included many innocent visitors to the Temple. Temple porticoes (very close to where Jesus had earlier been dedicated) were burned to the ground, the treasures of the sanctuary were plundered by the Roman legions, and many Jews killed themselves in despair.

Bands of Jewish patriots formed out in the countryside, and killed any Jews and Gentiles who ap-

peared to be in support of Rome.

One such band, under Judas the Gaulonite, captured Sepphoris, a town located just across a small valley from Nazareth. (He is the "Judas the Galilean" mentioned in Acts 5:37, who also led several hundred people into the desert.)

In response, Varus, the governor of Syria, entered Palestine with 20,000 men, razed hundreds of towns, crucified 2,000 rebels, and sold 30,000 Jews into slavery (*Durant, Story of Civilization, Vol. 3, p. 543*). This warfare continued on for nine years!

Durant ably describes the carnage:

"When Herod the Great died the [Jewish] nationalists, spurning the pacific counsels of Hillel [a leading Pharisee], declared a revolt against Herod's successor Archelaus, and encamped in tents about the Temple. Archelaus' troops slew 3,000 of them, many of whom had come to Jerusalem for the Passover festival (4 B.C.). At the following feast of Pentecost the rebels gathered again, and once more suffered great slaughter; the Temple cloisters were burned to the ground, the treasures of the sanctuary were plundered by the legions, and many Jews killed themselves in despair. Patriot bands took form in the countryside, and made life precarious for any supporter of Rome. One such band, under Judas Gaulonite, captured Sepphoris. Varus, governor of Syria, entered Palestine with 20,000 men, razed hundreds of towns, crucified 2,000 rebels, and sold 30,000 Jews into slavery."—*Will Durant, Caesar and Christ, pp. 542-543.*

Peace came in A.D. 6—Because of the intolerable viciousness of Archelaus, warfare between Jews and Romans continued without stopping until after Archelaus was removed from office.

Finally, in A.D. 6, as the fighting continued unabated, a delegation of leading Jews journeyed to Rome and begged Caesar Augustus to abolish the

kingship of Judea—and place the nation under procurators directly answerable to Rome (*Durant, Ibid., p. 543*).

Augustus agreed and immediately removed Archelaus from rulership of Judea, and made it a Roman province of the second class, under a procurator responsible to the governor of Syria.

Archelaus had inherited his father's character without his capabilities. The people had rightly complained that his reign was barbarous and tyrannical. So Augustus had him banished to Vienne in Gaul (modern France). Not until then, could peace return to the Roman provinces of Judea and Galilee.

When did Jesus arrive in Nazareth?—When was it that Joseph left Egypt and returned to his home town of Nazareth?

“And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judaea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee: And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth”—*Matthew 2:21-23*.

We have learned from little-known history that there were riots and sporadic warfare in Jerusalem, Judea, and Galilee and the surrounding countryside from 4 B.C. until A.D. 6. We have also learned that this warfare did not end until Archelaus was removed from rulership.

However, Joseph returned with his family to Nazareth *before Archelaus was banished*. So there was still warfare, to one extent or another, throughout Judea and Galilee, when the family returned.

As to when the family arrived in Nazareth, we know it was prior to A.D. 6, because Archelaus continued to “reign in Judaea” (Matt 2:22) until that year.

How old was Jesus when He first came to Nazareth? Probably a little before He was 9 years of age.

Figuring dates between B.C. and A.D.—If, after reading that, you do a little quick figuring, you will notice that 4 B.C. plus A.D. 6 equals 8, not 9. However, there is an odd querk about the B.C./A.D. dating pattern. Here it is:

B.C.—4 3 2 1 1 2 3 4 5 6—A.D.

Normally, we would expect the pattern to be 4-3-2-1-0-1-2-3-4-5-6, but James Ussher (1581-1656), the man who invented B.C./A.D. dating, did not use our modern positive/negative decimal system (such as is used in figuring temperature).

The problem is that lack of a zero. Because of it, when figuring time spans that cross over from B.C. to A.D., you must figure each part separately. Here is an example: 4 B.C. to 1 B.C. is 4 years. A.D. 1 to A.D. 6 is 6 years. Inclusively, that totals 9 years.

However, Jesus was born in the latter part of 4 B.C., and partway through A.D. 6, Archelaus was banished. So the best we can say is that Christ probably arrived in Nazareth a little before His 9th birthday.

Appointment of Annas—Another important event in A.D. 6 was the appointment, by Quirinius, of Annas to the office of high priest. Annas, being a Sadducee, was a nonbeliever in the doctrine of the resurrection—and therefore much more willing to cooperate with the Roman masters of Palestine. From the time that Jesus was ten years old, onward, Annas controlled the high-priestly office. On the day of His death, Christ was first brought before Annas for examination. Later in this book, we will discover the many illegalities of that and the other trials.

A HOME IN NAZARETH

Joseph had at first planned to return to Bethlehem, since that was the city of David. But Micah 5:2 had only predicted that the Christ would be born in Bethlehem, not that He would be raised there.

As mentioned earlier, Joseph's return with the family from Egypt to Nazareth had to have occurred prior to Archaelus' banishment and the end of the war in A.D. 6.

Description of the town—Nazareth had been the home town of both Joseph and Mary. The village located now at the site of ancient Nazareth is today called *En-Nasirah*. It is situated immediately north of the great plain of Esdraelon, about 64 miles north of Jerusalem, and about 17 miles west of the southern tip of the Sea of Galilee. About 1,1500 feet above seal level, the town is in the saddle, or hollow, of a not too steep hillside, with the hill facing southward into a broad plain—the valley of Esdraelon. Nearly the entire town is on the side of this hill. (Old Nazareth lies farther up the hill than modern Nazareth with its population of 8,000.)

From the top of the hill, one can see the Mediterranean Sea off to the west. It is believed that, during His personal hours of worship, Jesus may often have climbed to the top of the hill.

It is of interest that Nazareth was located near several thoroughfares of travel. The Roman military road from the north, which came down through the hills of Galilee, passed Nazareth. Not far south, an ancient caravan route between Damascus and Egypt crossed the plain of Jezreel. Also, not far away, was the main highway from Jerusalem to, what is today

called, Haifa. The little town, *En-Nazirah*, is still there, and excellent, free-working limestone is still dug out of that hill.

Jesus probably lived in a white limestone house, similar to those seen there today. But the only place on the Nazareth hillside which can clearly be identified as existing in the time of Christ—is that single well, to which everyone must go for water. It was the well from which Jesus Himself drew water so very long ago.

Today the town is a popular place of pilgrimage. Many of its shrines have been rebuilt after their destruction by the Mohammedans in the Middle Ages. These include the so-called “Church of the Annunciation” (thought to be where Mary’s house was located), “the Church of St. Joseph,” and “St. Mary’s Well.”

THE REBUILDING OF SEPPHORIS

You very likely missed something very important, that was mentioned in our earlier summary of those years of war: the capture of Sepphoris.

Why Sepphoris is important—Josephus mentions a city by the name of Sepphoris, which was rebuilt in the first century A.D., then surrounded with a wall; and eventually became a leading city of Galilee throughout most of the century (*Antiquities*, 18, 2). That item of information took on a special interest when, in 1931, it was discovered that *Sepphoris was located close to Nazareth and was built when Jesus was a young man*. Carpenters were needed to work on the new city!

Sepphoris was set on a hillside only a few miles from the town of Nazareth, where Jesus lived with

His parents! It had earlier been built by the Romans as the capital of Galilee, and was entirely inhabited by Roman officers and their servants.

Its capture by Jewish zealots during the rebellion so angered Governor Varus, that in retaliation he killed many Jews and burned their towns. Apparently, in the providence of the Lord, Nazareth was spared. There is no historical record that it was injured. More on this later.

But Sepphoris had been damaged by the zealots and, for about 10 or 15 years thereafter, gangs of carpenters and stone masons were hired to rebuild that city—situated a very short distance from Nazareth.

Therefore, it is believed that Jesus, working with Joseph, spent years building cabinets and other woodwork for that city. Sepphoris was an important city, since, at that time that Christ was growing up in Nazareth, *it was the capital of the large territory of Galilee*, which included Capernaum, Tiberius, Magdala, and other important cities on the western shore of Lake Gennesaret (the Sea of Galilee).

How Sepphoris had been destroyed—As mentioned earlier, major riots and rebellions flared up in several locations after the death of Herod the Great. Sepphoris had been a center of the uprisings in Galilee. A rebel leader, named Judas, the son of Ezekias, attacked Herod the Great's arsenal and armed his men with its weapons. In reprisal, the Roman legate of Syria, Quintilius Varus, ordered his legions to crush the rebels in Galilee. The Roman army, commanded by Varus' son and by Gaius (a friend of Varus), was supported by infantry and cavalry sent by Aretas, the Nabataean king of Arabia. This combined force attacked Sepphoris, burned it to the ground, and

sold its inhabitants into slavery. History does not record that Nazareth received any damage.

At some point after that event, Joseph returned with his family from Egypt and made their home in tiny Nazareth, a town of about 400 people. But, within less than a year, Herod Antipas decided to rebuild Sepphoris, which the war had left in smoldering ruins, as his new capital city. He wanted it to become the largest city in the province of Galilee.

(You will recall that, by the terms of his will, upon the death of Herod the Great, his son Herod Antipas was given rulership of Galilee, which included Nazareth and Sepphoris. This was the same Herod who later beheaded John the Baptist and officiated in one of the trials of Christ.)

Rebuilding Sepphoris took two decades. In the years to come, Sepphoris was to become the nerve center for the government's control of Galilee and Perea. Political policy military strategy, economic regulations, and cultural affairs were administered from this seat of power. Yet it was only a few miles from tiny Nazareth, nestled on a neighboring hill.

Description of Sepphoris—Josephus tells us that Sepphoris was the largest and most modern city in the region of Galilee. The town of Nazareth, set in the saddle of a hill, faced away from Sepphoris, the center of which was on a hill on the other side of a fertile plain. Leroy Waterman, of the University of Michigan, who excavated Sepphoris in 1931, said that, from the upper part of the Nazareth hill, he could see the peak of snowy Mount Hermon to the west; the blue Mediterranean beyond that; and, closer, the hill which was the center of the city of Sepphoris. Growing up, Jesus could see that same view. Waterman adds that it is only an hour's walk from

Nazareth to Sepphoris and that, in the first century, it was the second largest city in Palestine—second only to Jerusalem in importance, and probably in size.

Beneath the city of Sepphoris, a large underground reservoir was carved by the Romans, out of the limestone bedrock of the hill. It was 541 feet long, 15 feet wide, and 22 feet high. A surface aqueduct brought water to it from the springs of Abel, three miles away. That reservoir was used until the fifth century. Apparently, Sepphoris had a population of about 30,000 inhabitants—Jews, Arabs, Greeks, and Romans. Roads from it went to several other Greco-Roman centers of trade.

Located three miles north of Nazareth and 700 feet below it, Sepphoris had colonnaded streets, theaters, villas, a forum, and a governmental palace. Much of it was constructed of white limestone and colored marble. The amphitheater seated 4,000 people. Archaeologists, working in the 1980s, also found a colonnaded main street bordered by shops and public buildings, pools, fountains, public baths, ritual baths, a residential building, and the location of Antipas' palace.

Because it was the capital of the large territory of Galilee, Sepphoris was an important city which included Capernaum, Tiberius, Magdala, and other important cities on the western shore of Lake Gennesaret (the Sea of Galilee).

The entire city covered about 500 acres, and was nestled on a hill which rose 700 feet from the valley floor. In order to take advantage of the coolness, a large part of Sepphoris was built on the side of the hills facing north, away from Nazareth, which was south of it. This was providential, for it meant that

Jesus' early years were spent in the comparative isolation of a very small country town.

For about 10 or 15 years after Antipas decided to rebuild it, gangs of carpenters and stone masons were hired to rebuild Sepphoris.

As He entered His teen years, Jesus was able, more and more, to help His father in the carpenter shop, preparing cabinets and other woodwork to be used at Sepphoris and elsewhere. We can be sure that He was a master craftsman, and there was a demand for whatever He produced! It is possible that He may, at times, have worked on the carpentry crews at Sepphoris. Scholars believe that, because of the nearness of Nazareth to Sepphoris, Jesus probably spoke Greek as well as Aramaic. (Hebrew, as a spoken language, disappeared centuries earlier; and Greek was the *lingua franca* [common language] of the Eastern Roman world.)

It should also be mentioned that another major building project during the youth of Jesus was the city of Tiberius (named after the emperor), which Herod Antipas constructed on the west bank of Lake Galilee. That lake was not too far from Nazareth, either.

JESUS IN JERUSALEM AT THE AGE OF TWELVE

According to Jewish custom, when Jesus was twelve, He accompanied His parents for the first time to Jerusalem. Figuring from Christ's birth in the fall of 4 B.C., He became 12 in the fall of A.D. 9. This was only three years after order was restored to the nation by the removal of Archelaus.

His conversation with the leaders—While there, Jesus entered into very deep conversations with the

leading Jewish thinkers of the nation. They were astounded at His questions, so simple and direct, yet so profound.

In response, they plied Him with questions—and were amazed at His answers. Having carefully studied the Old Testament Scriptures, Jesus opened before them new vistas of understanding of what the Bible actually taught; principles which could have changed the nation for the better, if His concepts had been accepted.

It is of interest that, today, many followers of Jesus only read the New Testament and consider the Old Testament of little worth. Yet Jesus considered the Old Testament to be extremely important—even after His resurrection.

“And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself”—*Luke 24:27*.

The Jewish leaders were startled, and wanted Jesus as a student in their schools, so they could mold His mind and make Him a carbon copy of their own confused thinking.

But Jesus unwaveringly remained separate, and studied the Word of God on His own.

Two of those Rabbis—We know that two of the most important Jewish teachers of that entire period were among the leading Jewish rabbis who spoke with Jesus that day. One was *Hillel*, who died one year after talking to Christ.

Hillel, born about 75 B.C., was a Babylon-born Pharisaic scholar. He was a liberal who advocated divorce. When Herod the Great attained to full power in 30 B.C., Hillel the compromiser, accepted him as a necessary evil in the nation. For this reason, Herod had appointed him president of the Sanhedrin, a po-

sition he held until he died in A.D. 10. The Pharisees valued Hillel so much that fully acceded to his leadership of the "Great Council" until his death. He was founder and director of the famous "School of Hillel" in Jerusalem. Other rabbinic schools were held in the leading cities of Judea, but none were as important as the one at the Temple in Jerusalem.

The other important rabbi who spoke with Jesus that day was *Shammai*. Much more conservative, he was second only to Hillel in the estimation of the rabbis at the time. Those two men were so famous that their writings were studied centuries later by Jewish scholars. Yet they chose to reject the teachings of Jesus. Lacking humble submission to God's Word and His guidance, even the most brilliant will err.

Philo Judaeus (Philo the Jew) was at that time writing his famous Jewish philosophical works in Alexandria. The speculative teachings of the *Talmud*, although not yet put into written form, were being taught in the schools of Judea to the youth.

The education of Jesus—During His youth, Jesus carefully studied the Sacred Scriptures in a home school with the aid of His mother, Mary.

Although there was a synagogue school in Nazareth, Jesus studied the Word of God for Himself, as well as the natural world about Him. He was to become a highly educated teacher; yet His training was of a different type than that of others.

Throughout His life, Jesus did not concern Himself with Pharisaic rules and regulations which were presented to the people as though they were inspired of God. Instead, Jesus carefully studied the Old Testament, understood it thoroughly, and presented it clearly. It was because He had not studied at their

feet that Christ was later said to be uneducated.

“Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught. And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned? Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me. If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself.”—*John 7:14-17*.

Jesus studied the Bible itself, and obeyed what He read, as you and I should do today.

PALESTINE IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE FIRST CENTURY A.D.

If we could visit the land of Jesus, at the time that He lived there, we would find that in the first half of the first century, A.D., the Gentiles were in the majority in all the coastal towns bordering on the Mediterranean (except Joppa and Jamnia); as well as in the Decapolis (a region of ten cities on the eastern side of Lake Galilee and the Jordan River. The interior villages consisted almost entirely of Jews, with the exception of the small region of Samaria, a little north of Jerusalem, inhabited by the Samaritans.

It is estimated that, at that time, there were about 2,500,000 people living in all of Palestine, with about 100,000 in Jerusalem (*S. Baron, Social and Religious History of the Jews, Vol. 1, p. 131*). Most of them spoke Aramaic (a variant of ancient Hebrew), while officials and foreigners spoke Greek. Back then, Greek, not Latin, was the universal language of the entire empire. That made travel throughout that vast territory much easier than in earlier times.

The majority of the people were peasants, tilling and irrigating the soil, tending orchards, vines, and flocks. In the time of Christ, Palestine grew enough wheat to export a modest surplus, and its dates, figs,

grapes, olives, wine, and oil were prized through the Mediterranean (*Baron, Ibid, pp. 192-193*). It had fewer slaves than any other part of the empire.

THE DIASPORA

For several centuries prior to the birth of Jesus, the Jews had gradually scattered throughout the civilized world. This was called the *dispersion*, or *diaspora*. The number of Jews outside Palestine was far greater than those who remained in Judea and Galilee. This was not a forced resettlement, but a move to foreign lands in order to start businesses and settle down.

The Roman historian, Strabo, reported that "it is hard to find a single place on the habitable earth that has not admitted this tribe of men, and is not possessed by it" *Strabo, in Josephus, Antiquities, xiv, 7*).

Philo, said the continents were "full of Jewish settlements, and likewise . . . the islands, and nearly all Babylonia" (*Philo, Legatio ad Caium, 36*).

Because of their careful obedience to Old Testament health, dietetic, and temperance laws, the Jewish people had clear minds and better than average health. Jewish communities were to be found in most cities of the Roman Empire, and they quickly became leaders in business and finance.

In some cities, like Nahardea and Nisibis in Mesopotamia (where the Magi may have come from), Jews formed a majority of the population. A large proportion of the inhabitants of Syria were Jews. Josephus, a first century A.D. historian, estimated the number of Jews in Egypt alone at one million. The Jewish influence in Rome was significant.

For about two centuries the Old Testament had

been available in a Greek translation (called the *Septuagint*, or LXX—"the translation of the seventy"). Greek was the international language of the time.

Respected until A.D. 70—Although they may not have been popular among their heathen neighbors, the Jews were nevertheless respected, and generally were more prosperous. Their respect for women, care for their families, and morals in general, were far better than the heathen living around them. This caused many pagans to respect the Jews, desire to study into their teachings, and consider keeping the Bible Sabbath commanded by God.

"The masses have long since shown a keen desire to adopt our religious observances; and there is not one city, Greek or barbarian, nor a single nation, to which our custom of abstaining from work on the seventh day has not spread, and where the fasts and lighting of lamps and many of our prohibitions in the matter of food are not observed."—*Josephus, Against Apion ii. 39.*

It was not until their violent revolt in A.D. 66-70 that the Jews of the empire become thoroughly despised, and greatly lost their political influence.

Expectation of a Messiah—There is evidence that the Jewish hope of a coming Messiah affected the thinking of many pagans, who began to believe that someone would come to deliver them from their problems. Here is one example from among many:

"Now is come the last age of the song of Cumae [a pagan oracle]: . . . Smile on the birth of the Child, under whom the iron brood shall first cease, and a golden race spring up throughout the world! . . . Any lingering traces of our guilt shall become void, and release the earth from its continual dread. He shall have the gift of divine life, shall see heroes mingled with gods, and shall Himself be seen of them, and shall sway a world to which His father's virtues have brought peace."—*Virgil, a Roman author,*

Eclogue IV; Loeb ed., Vol. 1, pp. 29,31 [Diane: sp ok]

Eventually, as we will learn later in this book, this led, a couple centuries later, to the general acceptance of Mithra, the dying-rising sun god—a saviour god who alone could bring salvation to non-Christians. Apart from Christianity, Mithra was the only “saviour god;” one that would come and save his people (*F. Foakes-Jackson and Kirsop Lake, Beginnings of Christinity, 134*).

When Christians ultimately decided to compromise with these pagans, it brought great problems into the Christian Church.

THE FINAL YEARS OF EMPEROR AUGUSTUS

Let us now return to Emperor Augustus.

Although two years earlier, he had issued an order for the registration for taxation by the citizens of the empire; by 2 B.C., Augustus was an invalid of sixty, who had experienced great personal problems in his family. His sons had earlier died of sickness or wounds. Left without a successor at a time when Germany, Pannonia, and Gaul were threatening revolt, Augustus reluctantly recalled the Tiberius, adopted him as son and coregent, and sent him off to put down the rebellions.

Upon his return in A.D. 9, after five years of victorious campaigning in several wars, Tiberius became the acting ruler—even though Augustus managed to survive until A.D. 14 when he died.

Augustus had ruled the Western World for 41 years and, until his death, had brought peace to all its territories (with the exception of that internal revolt in Palestine, mentioned earlier).

One of the last acts of Emperor Augustus was the

banishment in A.D. 8 of his granddaughter Julia to an island in the Adriatic. This was due to her lewd conduct.

This small detail of history is only mentioned here because we will later discover that, as a result of one of her escapades, Julia had a daughter which she named Claudia. Here is additional family history:

Claudia was the granddaughter of Emperor Augustus, and her mother, Julia, had for a time (before being put away for her lewdness) been the wife of Tiberius—who later became emperor.

This later made the young man that Julia married very important: His name was Pontius Pilate. More on his life story later.

THE REIGN OF EMPEROR TIBERIUS

Jesus was 18 years old, and working with his father in their carpentry and cabinet shop in Nazareth, when Tiberius became emperor. Born in 42 B.C., Tiberius was 57 in A.D. 14 when Augustus died.

Tiberius would rule until A.D. 37, when he died at the age of 80. Looking back from a later time, the Roman historian, Tacitus, called Tiberius a tyrant.

The year after he ascended the throne (A.D. 15), Tiberius appointed Valerius Gratus as the fourth procurator of Judea. He would govern until A.D. 26, the year before Jesus was baptized and began His ministry.

An extremely capable man, Tiberius could be vengeful. Because of his personality and the many problems he encountered, he increasingly desired solitude. By the time he was 67, he moved to the inaccessible island of Capri and spent the last nine years of his life there.

Repeatedly, Tiberius' wives, sons, and daughters

became involved in scandals or revolts. It is believed that, because of the incredible cruelties he ordered to be done, during his last six years Tiberius had finally become insane.

One day he fainted and fell, and it was thought that he was dead. The courtiers immediately flocked about Gaius, soon to be emperor,—but then were shocked to learn that Tiberius was recovering. But a friend of Gaius solved the problem by smothering Tiberius with a pillow. An immense state funeral followed.

The general that succeeded Tiberius was Gaius, nicknamed Caligula, a vicious man who ruled from A.D. 37 to 41.

JOHN THE BAPTIST

A.D. 26 was another transitional period. First, it was the year before Jesus began His ministry.

That same year (A.D. 26), several other events occurred:

(1) Jesus was 29, and the next year he would be baptized and begin his three-and-a-half-year ministry.

(2) Jesus' cousin, John the Baptist, began preaching that the Messiah was about to arrive—and his message startled the entire nation.

(3) The seventh procurator, a man named Pontius Pilate, was appointed to govern Judea. He would retain that position until A.D. 35—four years after he gave permission for Christ to be crucified. Not long after, he would commit suicide. More on this later.

(4) The following year (A.D. 27), Emperor Tiberius would retire to the Island of Capri, leaving his trusted friend, Sejanus, prefect of the praetorian guard, in charge of Rome and the empire.

The forerunner—John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus Christ. was the son of Zacharias (a priest of the course of Abia) and Elizabeth (Lk 1:5). It was while performing his priestly function of burning incense in the Temple that Gabriel informed him of the birth of the child, told him to call his name John, and said that he would go forth in the spirit and power of Elijah and “make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Lk 1:17).

John grew up in the wilderness where he remained until his ministry began (Lk 1:80). This wilderness was probably the “wilderness of Judea” mentioned in Matthew 3:1, a region of barren hills south of Jerusalem and between the Dead Sea and the highest parts of the central mountain range of Palestine.

A cousin of Jesus, John was about six months older (Lk 1:36), and so began his ministry six months before Jesus, upon reaching the age of 30, began His.

Herod Antipas—You will recall that Herod the Great divided his “kingdom” among three sons: We have already learned about Archelaus, who was in charge of Judea.

Herod Antipas (also called “Herod the Tetrarch” in the New Testament) was given Perea to the east, and Galilee in the north. He is of special interest to us for three reasons: (1) He was the one who, during Christ’s youth, rebuilt Sepphoris and made it his capital. (2) He was the individual who imprisoned and slew John the Baptist. (3) He was the ruler who treated Christ so shamefully during the fourth of the six trials.

The son of Herod the Great and his Samaritan wife Malthace, Antipas was educated in Rome with his brother Archelaus and his half-brother Philip.

In his father’s second will, Antipas was designated

sole successor to the throne, but in Herod's final will he was only given Galilee and Perea, with the title of tetrarch. (Since he is simply called "Herod" in the Gospels, some have confused him with his father.)

Though he was reckless in expenditures, his craftiness enabled him to keep peace in Galilee, and thus avoid the wrath of Augustus.

When Tiberius came to the throne, Antipas built a city on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, and named it "Tiberius." In addition, he changed the name of the lake to "Sea of Tiberius." Jesus called Antipas "that fox" (Lk 13:32).

Antipas married the daughter of Aretas, king of the Nabataeans (whose capital was at Petra, south of the Dead Sea). But, during a visit to Rome, Antipas decided he wanted to take Herodias, his niece, who was the wife of an obscure half-brother of his, Philip who lived in Rome. By living with his brother's wife, he broke up two homes.

When John the Baptist reproved Antipas, and told him he should put away Herodias, stung to resentment, she encouraged Antipas to arrest John (Matt 14:3-4; Lk 3:19-20). This may have occurred a year after John had baptized Jesus. Antipas may have also planned to arrest Jesus (Lk 13:31).

John was imprisoned in Machaerus, a fortress east of the Dead Sea which Herod the Great had built. It may have been about six months after John sent two messengers to speak to Jesus (Matt 11:2-6; Lk 7:18-23), that, through the scheming of Herodias, he was beheaded because of a promise made to her daughter, Salome, when she danced before him at his birthday party, probably held in the same fortress of Machaerus where John was imprisoned (Matt 14:3-12).

Later we will tell what happened to Antipas, Herodias, and Salome. It is an interesting story.

THE PHARISEES AND SANHEDRIN

It is impossible to understand the earthly ministry and crucifixion of Jesus, without briefly pausing to consider the men who opposed Him, and finally led out in causing His death.

So, before we discover the illegalities of the six trials of Christ, and the archeological and medical aspects of the crucifixion which followed, here is a brief view of the Jewish political system at that time:

What was the Sanhedrin?—The *Sanhedrin* was the Jewish supreme court in the time of Jesus. It was also called “the Council of the Seventy.” This Great Sanhedrin of Jerusalem was the leading Jewish judicial body in the nation. Other names for it were “the Council of Elders,” “the Great Council,” and “the House of the Great Judgment.”

In addition, each town had its local Jewish council, but all were answerable to the Great Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin had 71 members, with the high priest as chairman. The membership consisted of the chief priest, all retired high priests, and the scribes who were the leading elders of the nation. These were generally the wealthiest Jews. When death or apostasy occurred, new members were appointed for life by the council members themselves, with the concurrence of the Roman authorities.

Membership in the Sanhedrin originally consisted of priestly aristocracy, selected by the high priest. But, in Roman times, it included an increasing number of Pharisees, Sadducees, and a few professional scribes. These 71 men (including the high priest as

president) claimed supreme authority over every Jew throughout the world.

Orthodox Jews everywhere acknowledged it. But, by the time of Christ, the Roman government (with it the Herods and procurators) only recognized those Sanhedrin court cases in Judea, Idumaea, and Samaria which concerned a Jew who had violated Jewish law, and only when the penalty was not the death sentence (*M. Goguel, Life of Jesus, 471*). So if the Sanhedrin voted the death sentence, it had to be ratified by the Roman government before it could be carried out.

Origin and end of the Sanhedrin—The Sanhedrin, or Great Council of the Elders of Israel, first came into existence in the period of Seleucid rule (c.200 B.C.), to replace the ancient council, mentioned in Numbers 11:16, which advised Moses.

When Herod the Great took Jerusalem in 37 B.C., he executed members of the Sanhedrin which had sided with his rival, Antigonus. Henceforth, the Sanhedrin was reduced from a political to a religious authority in the nation. When Herod died in 4 B.C., Archelaus limited the authority of the Sanhedrin to the territory under His control (Judea, Idumaea, and Samaria). Galilee was no longer included.

After the outbreak of the Roman war in A.D. 66, the Sanhedrin disappeared amid the turbulence and fighting. It was later replaced by the Council of Jamnia, under the leadership of Rabbi Akiba. Jamnia was a small town located near Joppa, on the Mediterranean coast.

The meeting place of the Sanhedrin—The meeting place of the Great Sanhedrin normally was the Hall of Hewn Stone in the Court of Israel (the second

of the innermost courts of the Temple). The Jewish name for this hall was *Gazith*.

The leading Pharisees—As mentioned earlier, in the first century A.D., the two leading Pharisaic teachers of the Sanhedrin were *Hillel* (75 B.C.-A.D. 10) and *Shammai*. Hillel made it easier to loan money and obtain divorces. His rival, Shammai, taught a much stricter interpretation of the Jewish writings and rejected divorce.

Hillel's leading scholar, *Gamaliel*, was also his grandson. He was the member of the Sanhedrin who gave the counsel mentioned in Acts 5:34. Saul of Tarsus had studied under Gamaliel, prior to becoming a Christian (Acts 22:3).

Pharisaic non-Biblical rules—The Pharisees separated themselves from those they considered “unclean,” and continually practiced rituals of purification. Rarely did any of their rituals have a Biblical basis. The Pharisees could invent rules faster than the people could learn them. Josephus, himself a Pharisee, said they were “a body of Jews who profess to be more religious than the rest, and to explain the laws more precisely” (*Wars, i, 8.14*). The Pharisees loved fastings and washings. Most of the middle class sided with this group.

The Pharisees were so adept at burying the Ten Commandments beneath a pile of man-made rules, that the end result was the violation of the Decalogue—in order to obey those rules! A good example of this is found in Mark 7:11, a Pharasaic rule which sidestepped obedience to the fifth commandment, under pretense of obeying it. A Jew did not need to care for his aged parents, if he would agree that, at his death, all his property and wealth would

be given (“*corban*” in the Hebrew) to the Temple.

The Scribes—Siding with the Pharisees were most of the scribes. The scribes were the *Hakamin*, the “learned”. Most of them were Pharisees, but a few were Sadducees. They were not a sect, but a profession. These were writers and scholars of the nation, who lectured on pharisaic books in schools and synagogues, and debated it with their opponents. While the rest of the Pharisees walked around showing off how well they could keep the thousands of invented regulations, the Pharisaic scribes were the ones who occupied themselves with dreaming up those regulations.

The rabbis of later centuries fitted the pattern of Pharisaic scribes. They studied the Jewish speculative books, added still more commentaries to the margins, and taught it all to the people.

The Sadducees—Two factions continually fought with one another for control of the Sanhedrin. On one side were the Pharisees, with their helpers, a majority of the scribes. The very name. “Pharisee,” was an aspersion that was given them by the Sadducees who called them *Perushim*, or separatists, because of the way they considered themselves too pure to mix with common folk.

On the other side were the Sadducees. Most of the upper clergy and upper classes belonged to the Sadducees, so named after their founder Zadok. They were the *Zadokim*. Nationalistic in politics and orthodox in religion, they were concerned about the enforcement of the *Torah*,—but rejected the multitude of additional ordinances of the oral tradition and liberal interpretations devised by the Pharisees. They did not believe in the possibility of life after

death, and were content to enjoy this present world.

The Essenes—A third class, not represented at the Sanhedrin trial of Christ, consisted of the Essenes. These were very strict Jews who lived in communes under monastery-like conditions. They have become much better known since the 1947 discovery of the first of the Dead Sea Scrolls (the Isaiah Scroll, written between 100 B.C. and A.D. 100) in a cave near *Khirbat Qumran*. (Since then, scrolls in more than 11 additional caves have been found.) A few Essenes married and lived in towns, but most of them were almost monastic celibates who lived in Qumran, a community on the west side of the Dead Sea.

THE LAST JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM

For three-and-a-half years, Christ's ministry had brought immense blessings to mankind.

What would it be like to spend some time with Jesus? To be with Him when He prayed? To listen to Him as He spoke to the people? To keep the Bible Sabbath with Him? We surely wish we could, yet we have something that can be equally satisfying: We can open our Bibles and read about how Jesus prayed, and how He spoke to the people, and ministered to their needs.

We plead with Him for forgiveness of sin. We can commune with Him in our hearts. We can experience the witness of the Holy Spirit that we are accepted. We can be strengthened to obey what He has told us in His Holy Word. *How very thankful we are that we have our Bibles!*

Read, Oh read, in that sacred book; it is full of truths which are so much needed now!

The months turned into years, and gradually Christ's ministry on earth gradually passed. Now we draw nearer to the end—edging closer, closer still, to that special day which not only kindles our deepest feelings, but so vitally affects the destinies of mankind.

The trip to Jericho—It was time for Jesus to set out upon His last journey before His death. It would take him from Capernaum, through Palestine, to Jerusalem (Matt 21:1-17; Mk 11:1-19; Lk 19:1-48; John 11:12-15).

But He did not go there by the short route, which went from Galilee to the Holy City directly south through Samaria. That was the high road which led

through the hills of Judea, alongside Mounts Gerizim and Ebal, by Sychar (ancient Shechem), through Bethel and on down to Jerusalem. Instead of taking that three-day journey on foot, Jesus traveled by way of “the coasts of Judea by the farther side of Jordan” (Mk 10:1).

Rapidly the route descended downward into the wide Jordan valley. Crossing over into Perea on the other side of the river, Jesus passed with His disciples by clusters of tamarisks, poplars, and licorice trees. At the ancient ford, near Jericho, the little group crossed the Jordan and entered that fabled city of antiquity. Jericho had been greatly modernized by Herod the Great.

As they approached the town, they could see in the distance the palace, called *Cyprus*, which King Herod had built. Farther in the distance loomed the Roman amphitheater, set in the hills west of the city. The Romans had even built a circus there for the amusement of the multitudes.

Before entering the gates of Jericho, Jesus and His disciples may have stopped to rest in the shade of one of the groves of palm trees, for which Jericho was so famous. Around them were balsam plantations and gardens with flowers.

Shortly after, the little band then went to the home of a Jewish tax collector, by the name of Zacchaeus. Preparations were made, and soon the sun had set. The Sabbath had begun. Would we not have liked to spend that Sabbath with Jesus, and listened to what He had to say!

Onward to Jerusalem—The next morning, after the resting on the Sabbath, they set out once again on their journey. For Jesus had set His face to go to Jerusalem. The only route there from this area lay

through the center of this Jericho metropolis, and then up into the hills along the Jericho road which, Jesus Himself had earlier said, frequently had bandits in hiding.

The Passover was nearing, and thousands of Jews were making their way to the Jewish capital from every direction. Because this was the major route to the Holy City from the east, Jesus and His disciples soon found themselves in the company of large numbers of pilgrims. Slowly they trudged upward along the winding, twisting road, bordered from time to time by steep cliffs on one or both sides.

It is twenty-three miles from Jericho to Jerusalem, and most of the way was hot and dusty. But, gradually, as they climbed higher, the tropical heat departed and the air became refreshingly cooler.

Arriving opposite Bethany, Jesus and most of His disciples paused to rest while two were sent to borrow a young donkey. Taking His seat astride it, the little group continued on.

But this act was fraught with deep meaning; for it was the customary manner in which kings entered the Holy City! Recognizing that fact, the excitement of the crowd reached fever pitch, "Hosanna to the Son of David . . . Hosanna in the highest," they shouted, as they acclaimed Him the promised Messiah (Matt 21:9).

VIEWING THE TEMPLE

At the highest point on the road, suddenly the city of Jerusalem was spread out before the traveler from Jericho. Coming from behind the summit of the Mount of Olives, they looked down below them and—before them like a great panorama—was the entire city. Immediately below them was the immense

Temple mount, with the Temple in its midst (Lk 19:41-44).

What Jesus saw—At that time in history, it was one of the most beautiful views to be seen anywhere in the world. One hundred and fifty feet wide and high, the front of the Temple faced eastward, toward the place where Jesus and the people stood. As mentioned earlier, built entirely of light marble and decorated with gold, its pillared colonnades formed a great square around spacious courts and vestibules. Josephus, the first-century historian, said it sparkled “like a snow-capped mountain.” Gleaming in the fast-westering sunlight, the Temple glistened like a pile of snow.

From where Jesus and the people stood on Mount Olivet, they were looking due west toward the Temple and the city beyond. The great walls of the Temple mount towered 250 feet high above the Kidron Valley beneath it. To the right of it were the sturdy walls of the Roman garrison—the Tower of Antonia, with its four great corner turrets, each 120 feet high. In the distance, and somewhat to the right, could be seen the three towers of the *palace of Herod* in the north-west corner of the city.

In just five days, in that palace Christ would be tried twice before Pilate. Sentence would be handed down—condemning Him to death. Beyond the western wall (later known as the “wailing wall”) of the Temple mount—two other palaces could also be seen in the distance: the *palace of the high priest*, where Christ would soon be tried thrice before the Jews, and the *palace of the Hasmoneans*, where He would be tried before the visiting Herod Antipas.

Then the eyes of Jesus again returned to the Temple, just below and across the Kidron Valley.

He gazed upon its outer-walled porticoes, roofed with cedar, engraved with beautiful designs, and supported by multiple rows of Corinthian columns.

In those porticoes, teachers met with their pupils, to study ancient writings and the Aramaic language. In the main outer court were the money changers, busily exchanging coins of every nation for the Temple shekel, the only coin accepted by the priests. Close by were the sellers of sheep, goats, and doves, shamelessly making merchandise in the courts of the Temple.

The outer courts led up through broad stairs to the immense altar of burnt offering, which symbolized His approaching sacrifice. Just beyond were wide stone steps leading up to two immense bronze doors, over-hung with that massive golden vine.

As Jesus and the throng paused to gaze down at the immense building, the people were silent, entranced by the beauty of the scene. But it all held deep meaning for Jesus.

Within sight was the Sheep Gate, through which Jesus would be led in a few days on His way to Golgotha. Realizing how Jerusalem and the people were so soon to destroy themselves by their actions, Jesus was overcome by grief. And Jesus wept.

Jesus wept for a city so soon to be desolated. He wept for a people who would soon slay Him, their only Saviour. He wept for a world, hardened in rebellion which so needed to return to its God. As usual, His concerns were for others.

What sorrow could equal the sorrow of Christ, soon to lay down His life for a world that did not want Him? *The final week had begun* (Matt 21:1-26; Mk 11:1-14; Lk 19:29-22:8; John 12:12-19).

Predicting the future—That same afternoon,

Christ's disciples asked Him about what was going to happen in the future. That was a conversation we would like to listen in on! Fortunately, it was later written down. You will find it in Matthew 24 and 25.

“His disciples came to Him for to show Him the build-ings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

“And as He sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?”—*Matthew 24:1-3*.

In this prophecy, Christ foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, and many events of later history and the end of the world—just prior to His Second Advent. In mercy, Christ mingled the several events. Terrible persecutions would occur.

“And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another . . . And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. 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.”—*Matthew 24:10, 12-14*.

In response to Christ's prediction that the stones of the Temple would be thrown down, the disciples had specifically asked about the future of Jerusalem, and “the end of the world” (Matt 24:1-3, quoted above). Christ replied by predicting future events and instructing them what they should do when those terrible events occurred. In the midst of sudden persecutions, His followers must remain true to Bible principles, and be prepared to flee. But, regardless of what occurred, He told them that (years after His death) they must continue keeping the Bible Sabbath. They must not stop obeying God's Word, even

though threatened with death.

Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes . . . But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:

“For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened.”—*Matthew 24:18-19, 20-22.*

How thankful that Jesus told us how we were to live—years after His crucifixion!

A council of death—The previous evening, the leaders of the people gathered in the court of the Sanhedrin, enraged that Jesus would permit the crowds to accompany Him as a king into the city. They were also terrified later that same afternoon, when He entered the city and cleansed the Temple—for the second time—of its buyers and sellers.

Meeting hurriedly in council, they decided that Jesus must die. Overriding the protests of a few members, their principal concerns were whether to do it through the Roman court, what charge to use if they did so, and how to get the job done before Passover. Learning that Judas had approached one of their number with an offer to betray Jesus, they worked out a contract to pay him to do just that. All that was needed was for the traitor to return and lead them to Jesus in the dark of the night.

One day ran into another, and then on Thursday afternoon, Jesus told His disciples to prepare a room where they could have supper together. Little did the disciples know it would be His last before His agony and death.

OVERVIEW OF THE FINAL 24 HOURS

Finally that time arrived—the 24-hour period in which Jesus would give His final teachings to His disciples, agonize in an orchard, be arrested, stand before six courts, be scourged twice, attacked and nearly slain four times, crucified, and buried. His trial took place soon after midnight on the 14th day of Nisan (also called Abib), but the 14th day actually began several hours earlier.

Although the Roman day (for legal purposes) began at midnight, the Hebrews began their day at sunset. We will base our study of this 24-hour period on the fact that the Jews were required to begin and end each day at sunset (Gen 1:5, 8, etc.; Lev 23:32).

So, in the time clock of Heaven, Jesus would eat the Passover with His disciples the evening of the day He would die. He ate the Passover because it was still a valid service on Thursday evening; type had not yet met antitype. Then the next afternoon He would die as the Lamb of God—the great Passover Lamb who protects all who accept and, by His grace, obey Him. Thus this special day—the day that Christ died—began at sunset on Thursday and ended at sunset on Friday.

Because Passover occurs each year at the end of March or the beginning of April, we will assume that sunset on that particular day was at 6 p.m., since March 21 is vernal equinox and the days and nights would be of equal length at that time. Therefore sunrise, when Jesus was brought to Pilate at the “third hour,” was 6 a.m. (Mk 15:25); Jesus was led out to be crucified, “the sixth hour,” or 9 a.m.; Jesus died the ninth hour, 12 noon, when darkness covered the land (Matt 27:45; Mk 15:33; Lk 23:44; Jn 19:14).

When the darkness ended, it was 3 p.m. Very soon afterward, He died. His burial was completed before 6 p.m., when the Bible Sabbath, which He and His followers had always faithfully kept, began.

Let us now consider twelve key events which occurred on that fateful day: the 14th day of the first Jewish month (Nisan).

1 - THE FINAL INSTRUCTIONS

We find them recorded in Mark 13:12-31, Luke 22:7-38, and John 13:1-17:2-8.

On one of the highest sections of Jerusalem is a large, cool room, reached by climbing some 20 exterior steps. Lying above what is reputed to be the Tomb of David, the room is beautifully decorated in Byzantine. This is said to be the upper room where Jesus met with His disciples on that final Thursday evening. It was built by the crusaders about a thousand years later. But the location of that original "upper room" is a mystery unsolved.

How would you like to hear special instructions, from Jesus? You can find them in John, chapters 13 to 17. Christ gave some special information to His disciples at the beginning of this special 24-hour period. Realizing it would be the last time He would be with them before His death, He had important things to share.

The initial ordinance—First, He taught them that they were to wash one another's feet as He had washed theirs (Jn 13:2-17). The disciples, each one eager to attain a higher position than the others, had been discussing the question of which one of them "was the greatest" on the way to the upper room. Filled with self-importance, they had forgotten to summon

someone to wash their feet prior to the meal (a common practice in the Near East at that time). No one was about to humble himself to do the task.

Then Jesus arose, and stunned them all—by doing it Himself! This act humbled eleven of the disciples, so they were prepared for the deeper truths He would share with them later that evening. But the same act confirmed in Judas the suspicion that Christ was too demeaning to ever assert His kingship and take the rule of Israel. Surely, he thought, there was no further gain in associating with Him.

It is of interest that three times during this ordinance, called the “ordinance of humility” (Jn 13:1-17), Christ told them that they were to do it thereafter.

“Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for [so] I am. [*First:*] If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet. [*Second:*] For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. [*Third:*] If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.”—*John 13:13-17*.

That is more commands than He gave in the same chapter for them to thereafter practice the Lord’s Supper! So both must be important. It is always safest to go by what the Bible says.

One purpose of this book is to help us journey back to New Testament times and learn the actual teachings of Jesus, and the practices of His followers in the first few centuries before a State Church developed. That was one of the objectives of this exhaustive research project. Unfortunately, amid the persecutions and compromises of the church in later centuries, a number of Bible teachings were lost. It is

hoped that some among God's children today will restore them. Why would God give us teachings if He did not want us, by the enabling grace of Christ, to obey them?

The Lord's Supper—When all of them were again seated, Christ instituted the next part of the service, the Lord's Supper (Matt 26:26-29; Lk 24:30; 1 Cor 11:23). This ordinance was to be the memorial of His death on Friday, just as baptism was to be the memorial of His resurrection (Rom 6:3-8). It is true that some say that worshiping God on Sunday is the memorial of Christ's resurrection, yet we are not told that anywhere in the words of Jesus, the writings of Paul or John, or anywhere else in Scripture. Instead, Paul carefully instructed us that baptism was to be the memorial of Christ's resurrection (Rom 6:3-8).

As they ate their evening meal, Christ told His disciples who would betray Him (Jn 13:18-30). Judas left the room soon after. He was determined to complete his agreement to betray Christ. He wanted that money!

The additional commandment—Following his departure, Jesus gave His disciples still more truths, which we are told about in John's Gospel. He gave His followers a new commandment to love one another (Jn 13:34-35) as He had loved them. Some say that in giving this "new commandment," Christ abolished the previous commandments—the Ten Commandments. But, of course, which one would you want to get rid of? The one about murder? The one about adultery? The one about making God first in your life? None of the Ten Commandments have been abolished or changed. Christ died to strengthen us by His empowering grace to obey that Moral Code,

and live clean, godly lives.

“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as he is.

“And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

“Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.”—*1 John 3:2-4*.

Christ next predicted that the disciples would forsake Him in the coming crisis, and that Peter would deny Him (Jn 13:36-38).

After that, Jesus foretold His Second Coming to earth at a later time (Jn 14:1-3), that He was the only way to heaven (Jn 14:4-6), and that His character was just like that of God the Father (Jn 14:7-12).

Then He told them to obey all His commandments (Jn 14:15, 21, 23), and He said that He would send them His Holy Spirit, to enable them to do so (Jn 14:16-30). Finally, they sang a hymn (Matt 26:30), left the upper room, and headed for Gethsemane (Matt 26:30).

The walk to Gethsemane—During this walk from the upper room to the garden of Gethsemene, Christ gave His final instructions to the disciples, prior to His crucifixion. Surely, we want to know what they were!

Although the sun had already set (it was probably about 9 p.m. by this time), they could see the pathway plainly because it was the time of the full moon. (The moon is always full at the time of the spring Passover.)

As they walked along, Jesus explained to them the deep truth about how close their relationship must be to Him—in order to remain by His side and over-

come as He had overcome (Jn 15:1-9). They must be as closely attached to Him as the branches of the vine are to the parent stock, or trunk, of the vine. Only in this way, He explained, could they love as He loved (Jn 15:9), and obey His commandments (Jn 15:10-14). He then explained that the world would hate them because they were like Him (John 15:18-25). Once again, He promised to send the Spirit to dwell with and in them (Jn 15:26), so they would be enabled to love as He loved and obey as He obeyed. Jesus then went into greater detail on the suffering and persecution His disciples would experience in the years ahead (Jrt 16:1-3); but, He added, the Holy Spirit would be sent to help them remain true (Jn 16:4-15).

Then Jesus explained that, although He would leave them for a time, He would return (Jn 16:16-22); and, in that day, they would rejoice (Jrt 16:22-23). Therefore, because the Father loved them as He did, they were to ask for that which was needed to cling to Christ and, by His grace, live like Him—and the promise was that they would receive it (Jn 16:24-28).

Leaving the upper room, Jesus and His disciples headed toward the Kidron Valley. Only in recent decades has a small stone stairway been found which led from the eastern side of the Temple Mount down into the Kidron Valley. Jesus and His disciples may have taken that shortcut through the Temple Mount rather than going around it. But He probably walked around the Temple Mount, for He had many things to tell His disciples. The jostling crowds were in the Temple courts that evening, so He may not have used the newly-discovered stairs.

Arriving at the brook—It is known that, when

Jesus was in Jerusalem, Gethsemane was a place to which He often went to pray. So His disciples were not surprised that, when supper was ended, He wanted to go there that evening. Carefully, in the gathering darkness, they made their way down to the little Kidron creek and arrived at a small bridge. As they reached the bottom of the trail at the brook, Jesus knelt with them and prayed a most beautiful prayer.

It is frequently said that the wonderful prayer in Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4 is the “Lord’s Prayer.” However, that is actually the disciples’ prayer—the one that Jesus taught His disciples (Matt 6:9). The Lord’s Prayer is found in the seventeenth chapter of John, and it is a most glorious prayer! Read it on your knees several times, and pray over it! It is so filled with the love of God—for you and for your loved ones! Read it and prayerfully make those principles your own.

Crossing the bridge, on the far side, the road turned right, to go around the south end of Olivet. Right there, Jesus and His little band left that road and walked a short distance up the hill along a little path. In front of them was the entrance to an olive orchard.

But, arriving there, Christ swayed as a terrible grief came over Him. *At this point, the separation between the Father and the Son began and Jesus began bearing the sins of the world.* The agony of Jesus and His separation from the Father, because He had become the sin bearer, began in Gethsemane. His experience of being “in the heart of the earth”—that is, separated from God,—an experience which would extend to portions of three days, began then.

We are told about this interlude in Christ life in these passages: Matthew 26:36-46, Mark 14:32-42, Luke 22:39-46, and John 18:1.

Gethsemane was a garden on the western slope of the Mount of Olives. At its base was the Kidron Valley. From its slopes could be seen, just to the west, the Temple Mount and Jerusalem beyond. At its summit was the place where Jesus and the crowd had viewed the Temple just four days earlier. The word, *Gethsemane*, meant "oil press." And that was what Gethsemane was—a large olive orchard. The orchard was large enough for a rock-hewn pressing vat to be there.

And thus it was that here, amid the silent trees, Christ pled for a world lost in sin. And it was here that He was betrayed.

Like olives, crushed in the press in order to produce sweet oil, Christ was crushed under the weight of the world's sin, in order to provide us with forgiving, enabling grace.

Where is that garden now?—Queen Helena, mother of Constantine I (A.D. 306-337), went to Jerusalem in A.D. 326 and tried to locate this garden. Today olive groves owned by the Armenian, Greek, Russian, and Franciscan (Catholic) Churches are to be found on that hillside. Somewhere in that general area was Gethsemane. If you go there, you will still find a few old olive trees. It is said that some of them are at least 800 years old. But none, now existing, were there when Jesus knelt in the garden in A.D. 31, nearly 2,000 years ago. Josephus, the first-century Jewish historian, tells us that, during the siege of Jerusalem by the Roman general Titus (A.D. 69-70), every tree within miles (including trees as far away as Bethlehem) was cut down and used to

crucify Jews (*Wars of the Jews*, 5, 3). More about that later.

So 39 years later the trees, beneath which Christ prayed, were destroyed, and the stones from the nearby olive press were most likely used in General Titus' siege engines, as projectiles to be hurled into the besieged city.

Entering Gethsemene—Arriving at Gethsemene, Jesus bade eight of the disciples stop and pray near its entrance while He went a little farther into the garden with Peter, James, and John. There were only eleven disciples now; Judas had left to meet his appointment with the priests. The triumphal entry was four days past, and a horrible death would come on the morrow. It was time to pray! A horror of a great darkness had descended on the Saviour, for He was now the sin bearer.

We are told about the Gethsemene experience and the arrest which concluded it in Matthew 26:36-56; Mark 14:32-50; Luke 22:39-53; and John 18:1-2.

Pausing, Jesus spoke to the three: "Tarry ye here," He said, "and watch with Me." Then He walked a short distance beyond, and fell prostrate upon the earth. He felt that the weight of the sins of the world were separating Him from the Father. It is a strange fact that men and women can spend a day or a lifetime separated from God, and seem to care not. Yet Christ was in an agony when He found Himself separated from the Father. There is a deep lesson here for us. No problem of life is severe, as long as, by His empowering grace, we are with Jesus and obeying His Word. It is sin which can destroy us, not the perplexities of life or persecution by those around us. Above all else, we must maintain our connection with God!

Jesus was enduring the wrath of God against sin.

“Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the Man that is My fellow, saith the Lord of hosts.”—*Zechariah 13:7*.

As the substitute and surety for sinful man, Christ was suffering under divine justice. As Jesus sensed His unity with the Father broken up, He felt that, in His human nature, He would be unable to endure the coming conflict with the powers of darkness. Satan pressed the situation upon Him: His disciples would forsake and deny Him, and He would die at the hands of those He came to save. “Why not give up, and leave,” Satan whispered.

Rising eventually from the earth, Jesus re-turned to the disciples. But He found them sleeping. Back He went and fell to the ground again in earnest prayer for strength to meet the test ahead. Again He returned to His disciples, and again they were sleeping. A third time He prayed and accepted the cup of suffering. He would drink it to its dregs.

The bloody sweat—In agony, “His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” Although this is a very unusual phenomenon, bloody sweat (known medically as *hemathidrosis*) may occur in highly emotional states. As a result of hemorrhage into the sweat glands, the skin becomes fragile and tender. Louis XVI is said to have sweat blood as he was being taken to the guillotine at the beginning of the French Revolution in 1793. Bloody sweat is a real occurrence, although extremely rare.

The final minutes—Then Christ fell to the ground, as though dying. It was His urgent concern for a lost race, His vicarious bearing of our sins, and His separation from His Father—which caused this great grief; it was not the thought of the terrible ex-

perience He Himself would undergo within a few hours. “If this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done.”

At that moment, an angel was sent to strengthen Christ for what was ahead. The angel came, not to remove the cup, but to encourage Him that the Father approved of His drinking it. Christ was told that He would see the travail of His soul and would be satisfied, for He would see a multitude of the human race saved, eternally saved. In Gethsemane, Christ tasted death for every man.

He now arose and went to His disciples. Thinking how little prepared they were for what was about to happen, Christ looked sorrowfully upon them and said, “Sleep on now, and take your rest. Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.” As He stood there, in the distance, the foot-steps of the mob could be heard, and Christ added, “Rise, let us be going; behold, he is at hand that doth betray Me.”

3 - THE BETRAYAL AND ARREST

This section can be found in Matthew 26:47-56, Mark 14:43-52, Luke 22:47-53, and John 18:2-12.

While Jesus pled with His Father, His disciples had fallen asleep. But Judas was not sleeping; he was quite busy. This was to be the night; Judas had made sure of that.

For the price of a slave—Meeting with the chief priests and Pharisees, he “received a band of men and officers” (Jn 18:3). It is an intriguing fact that Judas, who would rather make a shekel than do anything else, had only made a deal to sell Christ for the going price of a slave—a paltry thirty pieces of silver.

To get rid of Jesus, the scheming priests would willingly have paid the traitor a small king's ransom. Yet, when they made their first offer, Judas quickly accepted it without trying to dicker for more.

The religious leaders knew how to get the job done. Temple police were sent with Judas to take Jesus. As they hurried through the streets, they were joined by rabble loitering on the streets who had nothing else to do that night. Soon a band of thugs, armed with clubs, were headed down one street and through another.

Who did the arresting?—It is quite likely that a detachment of Roman soldiers also followed them, to keep an eye on what was going on. There was always a special danger from riots when the Jews gathered for any occasion, and the city was full of them on this night before the Passover. (The Jews did have authority to make arrests and try Jewish citizens in the court of the Sanhedrin. What they did not have was authority to issue the death sentence or execute it.)

Historians tell us there is the very strong possibility that it was Roman Temple guards who did the actual arresting. This would be a Roman military detachment that policed the Temple grounds (because Jewish riots often started in that area). The Jewish leaders may, as customary, have informed the Romans that they wanted to arrest a Jew. Roman guards may then have been sent with them to make the arrest and bring the suspect to the Sanhedrin for examination. It is believed by many that the Jewish leaders did the arresting, since Christ was first taken, not to a Roman court, but to a Jewish one.

The mob starts on its way—From the best we

can tell, it was midnight when the mob left the high priest's palace. Jesus had been in the garden a little under three hours. According to custom, the gates of the Temple would have been thrown open to the public at midnight. (This is because, at the time of the first passover, just before the Israelites left Egypt, the Israelites were delivered from their enemies at midnight, Ex 12:29.) As the feasts commemorating the Passover deliverance from Egypt ended, the celebrants left the houses and, in ever greater numbers, thronged the streets. At midnight they entered the Temple and then, about an hour or so later, they began retiring for the night. Avoiding the more frequented streets, the arrest party headed toward Kidron Valley. With Judas leading them, they were certain they would be able to find Jesus.

Jesus waited for them.

The arrival of the mob—Down the eastern slope of Mount Zion, the mob hurried toward the Kidron, cursing as they went. Across the bridge, and then up the worn path leading into the garden, they marched. The silence of the garden was no more. Holding torches to lighten the way, they followed Judas. He knew right where to go. Had not Judas promised them:

“Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is He. Hold Him fast!”—*Matthew 26:48*.

“Immediately, while He yet spake, cometh Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders.”—*Mark 14:43*.

A later comment in the *Talmud* mentions the clubs of the street rabble and the staves of the *Boethusian* high priests who had been in control of the populace of Jerusalem since the days of Herod the Great:

“A plague on the house of Boethus: a plague on their clubs! A plague on the house of Annas: a plague on their spying! . . . ‘For they are high priests, and their sons are in the Treasury. And their sons-in-law in the Government, and their servants beat the people with staves.’
—*Talmud*.

That was the same Annas to which Jesus would soon be led.

Judas was in the lead, where he had always wanted to be. He was proud he could be considered important by the Jewish leaders that night. Judas was so anxious to have an important position, that he was willing to betray Christ. Beware lest you do this also.

In order to protect His disciples, Jesus stepped forward. Then, with them in the rear, He said, “Whom seek ye?” The course reply was, “Jesus of Nazareth.” Jesus replied, “I am He.”

As these words were spoken, the angel who had recently ministered to Christ—passed between Him and the mob. Immediately, amid a burst of light, the mob was thrown to the ground. Christ could easily have made His escape, but He did not do so. In this incident, a divine warning was given to the mob. Yet they heeded it not. They staggered to their feet; their hardness unchanged. Yet they were temporarily confused, and uncertain what to do.

Standing there calmly, once again, Jesus asked, “Whom seek ye?” Once again they answered, “Jesus of Nazareth.” In reply, Jesus said, “I have told you that I am He. If therefore ye seek Me, let these go their way.” This He said to protect the disciples. As usual, He was ready to sacrifice Himself for others.

Judas was far more hardened than the others, having already rejected so much more truth than anyone else there. Now he boldly stepped forward.

Drawing close to Christ, Judas kissed Him repeat-

edly. He wanted there to be no doubt as to the identity of the Man He was paid to betray. Looking at him, Jesus said, "Friend, wherefore art thou come?" And then He added sorrowfully, "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man, with a kiss?" Such a statement should have broken Judas' heart, but controlled by Satan he stood before Christ, bold and defiant.

The arrest—Emboldened by Judas' approach to Christ, the officers stepped forward and bound His hands. At this, in desperation, Peter stepped forward. Drawing his sword, he swung it toward one of the men binding Christ. But Peter only succeeded in cutting off an ear. Immediately, Christ slipped His hands out of the tight ropes and the hands of the strong men around Him; and, reaching out, He replaced the ear and instantly healed the wound. Then to Peter He spoke words all of us should take to heart; "Put up again thy sword into his place. For all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword."

He then assured the disciples that He could, if He requested it, receive 12 legions of angels to protect Him. But, He said He must drink the cup which His Father had apportioned Him.

A legion of angels—

Jesus said He could have 72,000 angels to protect Him, if He chose not to be taken by the rabble. In the Roman Empire, at that time, a *legion* numbered six thousand men, and Jesus said twelve legions of angels would be sent by the Father, if He requested it.

At the height of the glory and power of the Roman Empire, under Augustus Caesar, there were only 25 legions of Roman soldiers in the entire empire! So Jesus could instantly have had, in angels, the equiva-

lent of one-half the combined armies of Rome. Under God, just one of His angels is more powerful than 185,000 men (Isa 37:36). Imagine how powerful 72,000 of them would be!

Why the arrest was illegal—But now, turning to the religious leaders and the mob about them, Christ told them that they did their work best in the dark of the night. “This is your hour, and the power of darkness.” At this, the disciples turned and ran. “They all forsook Him, and fled.”

According to Hebrew law, the arrest of Jesus was illegal on four separate counts:

1 - All legal proceedings, including arrests, were forbidden at night. It was a well-established and inflexible rule of Hebrew law that arrests and trials, leading to capital punishment [death], could not occur at night. Dupin, the famous French lawyer, explicitly states that both the arrest and Hebrew trial of Jesus was illegal because both were held at night (*Walter M. Chandler, The Trial of Jesus, Vol. I. 226-227*).

2 - The use of a traitor, and thus an accomplice, in effecting an arrest or securing a conviction, was forbidden by Hebrew law. “Turning state’s evidence” was illegal in Hebrew jurisprudence (Lev 19:16-18).

“The testimony of an accomplice is not permissible by rabbinic law . . . and no man’s life, nor his liberty, nor his reputation can be endangered by the malice of one who has confessed himself a criminal or accomplice of the one judged.”—*S. Mendelsohn, The Criminal Jurisprudence of the Ancient Hebrews, 274*.

“The ancient Hebrews forbade the use of the testimony of an accomplice . . . The arrest of Jesus was ordered upon the supposition that He was a criminal; this same supposition would have made Judas, who had aided, encouraged, and abetted Jesus in the propagation of His

faith, an accomplice. If Judas was not an accomplice, Jesus was innocent, and His arrest an outrage, and therefore illegal.”—*Chandler, The Trial of Jesus, Vol. 1. 226-229.*

3 - The arrest was not the result of a legal summons.

“His capture was not the result of a legal mandate from a court whose intentions were to conduct a legal trial for the purpose of teaching a righteous judgment.”—*Chandler, Vol. 2, 237.*

“This arrest . . . was the execution of an illegal and factious resolution of the Sanhedrin . . . There was no idea of apprehending a citizen in order to try him upon a charge which after sincere and regular judgment might be found just or unfounded; the intention was simply to seize a man and do away with him.”—*Giovanni Rosadt, The Trial of Jesus, 114.*

4 - According to Hebrew law, it was illegal to bind an uncondemned man (Jn 18:12-13).

—Thus, in connection with the midnight arrest of Jesus in Gethsemane, there took place *the first four of a series of more than a score of illegal acts* that made the entire proceeding the greatest travesty on justice in all the annals of mankind.

4 - THE HEARING BEFORE ANNAS

This section is based on historical data and John 18:13, 19-24.

Caiaphas was the high priest at the time when Jesus was arrested. However, Jesus was initially taken to *Annas* for trial.

Christ was then taken to *Caiaphas* for two trials under the Sanhedrin. The third of those Jewish trials occurred just after dawn, and was shorter. The word, *Annas*, is a Hebrew word for “merciful.” So much for the Hebrew; *Annas* was a crafty man, will-

ing to kill when it would further his own ends.

Who was Annas?—In A.D. 6, Quirinius appointed 37-year-old Annas as high priest in Jerusalem. Quirinius was the high Roman official (died in A.D. 21), mentioned in Luke 2:2 as governor of Syria at the time of Christ's birth, when Augustus issued a census for tax purposes. But nine years later, in A.D. 15, Annas was deposed by the procurator of Judea, Valerius Gratus, who replaced him with Ismael, son of Phiabi. However, by that time, Annas was powerful enough that he was able to retain control of the high priestly office for decades to come (Lk 3:2), even though he was no longer the acting high priest.

Very likely, during the time that his relatives held the priesthood, Annas' official title was *sagan*, or high priests deputy. When Christ came before them in the early hours of that fateful Friday, Annas was the president of the Sanhedrin and Caiaphas was the official high priest. (More on Caiaphas' background later.)

In Luke 3:2, both he and Caiaphas were called "high priests." In Acts 4:6, Annas is called "high priest," and Caiaphas is "of his kindred." Annas was so influential that the people of Judea called him "high priest" even when someone else was! He was the real high priest, and the others were just his puppets.

Annas was 62 years old when Christ was brought before him for the first of the three Jewish trials.

After being securely bound by the Temple guard in Gethsemane, Jesus was taken to Annas in the *palace of the high priest*. That palace was built in something of a duplex palace arrangement, with a courtyard in between. On one side was Annas' residence and on the other, the high priest's.

Over the years, Annas had become more and more

crafty. Sixteen years earlier, the Roman procurator, Valerius Grates had deposed him from the high priest's office for imposing and executing capital sentences which had been forbidden by the imperial government. As a result, more cautious, he had become the most politically powerful Jew in the world. Although he was now only an ex-high priest, it was he who decided who would hold that office. Prior to his time, the high priest presided over the Sanhedrin; but, during the "reign of Annas," he himself was its president. Annas practically dictated its decisions.

The office of the high priest remained in his family for 51 years after he was deposed (A.D. 15-66). So Jesus was brought before Annas for an initial "examination". Yet, for all practical purposes, it was a trial. Josephus, the historian, tells us that Annas was "haughty, audacious, and cruel."

The first of six trials—Jesus was examined by a preliminary hearing before being tried before the supreme Jewish tribunal, the Sanhedrin. This initial hearing, before Annas, took place shortly after midnight. It was followed by two others before the Sanhedrin.

It had been decided that Caiaphas, the current high priest, would preside over both sessions of the Sanhedrin. In those hearings, Jesus was closely questioned regarding His disciples and His teachings.

Only John mentions the first hearing before Annas (Jn 18:13-24). John 18:19-24 reveals the questioning before Annas. It was hoped that Jesus would make some statement on which an indictment could be based, charging Him with blasphemy against God, sedition to the government, or both.

This was the first of a series of six trials constituting the world's master judicial burlesque and trav-

esty on justice. Jesus was condemned by two separate tribunals, one Hebrew and the other Roman.

Each of the two tribunals was divided into three parts: the *first* trial being Christ's hearing before Annas, and two before the Sanhedrin. The *second* trial was before Pilate, Herod, and again before Pilate. In the preliminary hearing before Annas, it was hoped that Jesus would incriminate Himself, and thus furnish evidence which would convict Him before the Sanhedrin.

Christ was to be tried formally before the Sanhedrin; but, before Annas He was subjected to a preliminary trial. We will later learn that, for several reasons, it was illegal to do this in the manner in which it was done.

The priests hoped to establish that Jesus was guilty of sedition; that is, treason against the Roman government. Only that charge would be accepted by the procurator, Pontius Pilate, as a basis for crucifying Christ.

The trial before Annas—Christ read their purpose as an open book, and He could easily have thwarted their objective. But, throughout all six trials, we will find that Jesus was silent when He should speak to protect Himself, and He spoke when silence would best help Himself. Several times He spoke because principle required it, even though to do so would lead to His condemnation.

"I spake openly to the world," He said in reply to their questions. "I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the Temple, whither the Jews always resort."

A legal trial depended on witnesses, but where were they? Jesus was saying, "Why askest thou Me? Ask them which heard Me, what I have said unto them; behold, they know what I said." He gave a cor-

rect reply.

At this, Annas was silenced; for he feared that Christ might unveil things which the leaders wished to keep secret. One of his officers, standing by, was angered that Christ's words should cause such uncertainty. So he smote Christ on the face. 'Answerest Thou the high priest so?' Turning to that man, Jesus said calmly, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil. But if well, why smitest thou Me?" Once again, men were trying to assume evil, without establishing it. Yet, through it all, Christ spoke no burning words of retaliation. All this time Christ was bound, indicating He had already been condemned. But that had not yet happened.

Annas had gained nothing. Baffled, he told those in the room that Christ should be taken to Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin.

5 - THE FIRST TRIAL BEFORE CAIAPHAS

This section is based on historical data and Matthew 26:57-27:1,3-5, Mark 14:53-72, Luke 22:54-71, and John 18:15-18.

Quickly, Jesus was hurried across the court-yard which separated the portion of the *palace of the high priest*, in which Annas resided, to the other half, in which Caiaphas lived. Each section had its own meeting hall. Ordinarily, the *Sanhedrin* met in a special apartment in the Temple precincts; but, since the Temple was closed at night and there was no time to lose, this special night meeting had to be held at the palace of the high priest.

In the preliminary hearings before Annas and Caiaphas, it was hoped that Jesus would incriminate Himself, and thus furnish evidence which would convict Him before the final Jewish tribunal—the sec-

ond Sanhedrin trial. So after appearing before Annas, Jesus was led away to a hearing before Caiaphas (Matt 26:57). It is estimated that Jesus was brought before Caiaphas at about 2:30 a.m.

Who was Caiaphas?—His full name was Joseph Caiaphas, and he was the official high priest throughout the ministries of both John the Baptist and Jesus (Lk 3:2 and tin 18:13). When his “bone box” was found in a cave in Israel in the early 1990s, it created an archaeological sensation.

As soon as Caiaphas married one of Annas’ daughters, Annas persuaded the Roman procurator, Valerius Gratus, to appoint his new son-in-law as high priest. Joseph Caiaphas was appointed high priest in the year A.D. 18. He remained high priest for 18 years, the longest of any of the family of Annas. Apparently, he was in his mid-forties when Jesus appeared before him for trial. The name, Caiaphas, means “the oppressor”; and Rosadi declares that “his intellectual caliber was below mediocrity,” and that the power he wielded was only nominal—Annas was the real power behind the priesthood in those days. Caiaphas was deposed by Vitellius in A.D. 36, the same year Pilate was kicked out of office.

Caiaphas’ courtroom—After appearing before Annas (with Caiaphas and other key Sanhedrin enemies present) in Annas’ residence in the high priest’s palace, Christ was then taken across a courtyard to the court of the Sanhedrin—for an appearance before that body, under the direction of Caiaphas.

(For the trial before the Sanhedrin, Christ could instead have been taken from the high priest’s palace to a courtroom of the Sanhedrin, in an inner apartment of the Temple; for there were two different

Sanhedrin courtrooms in the city. However, the time was limited, and soon it would be dawn.)

It is believed that the trial of Christ before the Sanhedrin was held in that courtroom located within the high priest's palace, just across the courtyard from where Christ was tried before Annas. It was in this courtyard that the rabble awaited the outcome of the hearings before Annas, Caiaphas, and the Sanhedrin.

A maid, one of the servants of the palace, kept the door of the courtyard. She was the one who admitted John and Peter. It was in that courtyard that Peter later denied his Lord, as a rooster began its early-morning crowing (Jn 18:15-18; Lk 22:54-62).

Christ before Caiaphas—When the council had assembled in the judgment hall of the high priest's palace, Caiaphas took the seat as the presiding officer that morning. On either side were seated the judges: a large number of the Sanhedrin members. Roman soldiers stood at attention on either side of the platform below the raised throne where Caiaphas sat. Directly below him stood Jesus, still bound.

The men in that room had plotted and looked forward to this moment for over two years. At last, they had Jesus before them. They must not let Him slip from their grasp. Although the excitement was intense, yet Christ was calm and serene. While the men lived with their guilt and counseled with their fears, His trust was in God.

As had every other man who first looked upon Jesus—from the arrest through to His death—Caiaphas was convicted that he was looking upon the Son of God. Quickly banishing the thought, he spoke sharply to Christ. But Jesus gave no reply.

All recognized that they did not have an easy task

before them. If Christ displayed His power or if He stirred up a controversy in the room, their objectives would be thwarted. It would be very easy for this to be done. The Pharisees and Sadducees were at sword's points on many issues, theological and otherwise. All that would be needed was for Jesus to raise one of them, and immediately the two sides would begin arguing with one another. That fear kept them from mentioning much of what Jesus had said publicly. Yes, He had denounced the scribes and Pharisees, but so had the Sadducees. He had disregarded Jewish traditions which were not in the Old Testament, but the Sadducees disregarded most everything religious.

So Caiaphas thought best to turn to false witnesses to prove the case. Men were brought in who had been bribed to accuse Jesus of inciting rebellion and trying to set up a separate government. Yet their statements were vague and contradictory. Repeatedly, they falsified one another's words, as well as their own. Exasperated, the council did not know what to do.

Finally, they settled on one of Christ's earlier statements—and tried to twist it into a charge. He had said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (Jn 2:19). As John commented, "He spake of the temple of His body" (Jn 2:21). But the Sanhedrin now tried to change that to mean that Christ had threatened to destroy the Temple at Jerusalem. Yet there was nothing treasonable in talk about rebuilding a Jewish church building. However, this was all Caiaphas and his cohorts could agree on.

As the trial progressed, His accusers repeatedly became entangled and confused. Something had to be done. Caiaphas was desperate. It appeared as if all their plottings were about to fail. Rising out of his

judgment chair, Caiaphas pointed his finger at Christ and in hot anger said, 'Answerest Thou nothing? What is it which these witness against Thee?' But Jesus remained silent (Matt 26:62-63). At last, Caiaphas raised his hand toward heaven, and cried out, "I adjure Thee by the living God, that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God."

At this, Jesus spoke. He knew that to answer now was to make His death certain, but the query was made by the highest religious authority of the nation and in the name of the Most High. In addition, His relationship to His Father was being called in question. He Himself had told His disciples, "Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven" (Matt 10:32). Now He exemplified what He had taught. Knowing full well that His answer would lead to His condemnation, He spoke. The peace of heaven was on His face as He said, "Thou has said." That was a Jewish term, meaning, "Yes, I am."

Then Christ added a warning: "Nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

As Christ spoke those authoritative words, Looking, Caiaphas and the others were looking into His face—and they started back as they heard those words. They knew He spoke the truth. They knew that they dared not condemn Him. Yet they yielded to Satan and did it anyway. That moment would remain etched in their memory for the remainder of their lives.

The room was silent. Who had the nerve to speak after this? But, by this time, Caiaphas was remarkably hardened.

Some action was needed to bring him back into control of the situation. Reaching down with both hands, he deliberately tore his magnificent high priestly robes, and then screamed: "What further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now ye have heard His blasphemy. What think ye?" All knew it was now or never. So, unanimously, they condemned Him to death.

By rending his priestly robes, Caiaphas had placed himself under the death sentence (Lev 10:6). Yet no one cared to think about God's laws now, any more than they had for years. All that mattered to them was their man-made rules and their thirst for innocent blood.

Illegalities in the trial before Annas and the first trial before Caiaphas—*The trial before Annas, and the first one before the Sanhedrin, were both illegal on five separate counts:*

1 - They were a violation of the rule of law that forbade all proceedings by night. M. Dupin, the French advocate, in speaking of these hearings said:

"Now the Jewish law prohibited all proceedings by night; [this] therefore, was another infraction of the law."—*M. Dupin.*

2 - Hebrew law prohibited a judge or a magistrate, sitting alone, from questioning an accused person judicially or to sit in judgment on his legal rights, either by day or by night. No "single judge courts" were allowed. Their smallest sessions had three and their largest, seventy-one judges. "Be not a sole judge, for there is no sole judge but one [God]" was a well-known saying in the Jewish *Mishna*. It was believed that God alone was capable of judging without counsel.

3 - Private preliminary hearings—regardless of how

many judges were present—were specifically forbidden by Jewish law.

“A principle perpetually reproduced in the Hebrew Scriptures relates to the two conditions of publicity and liberty. An accused man was never subjected to private or secret examination, lest, in his perplexity, he furnish damaging testimony against himself.”—*Joseph Salvador, Histotre des Institutions de Moise, 365-366.*

Yet it was to obtain just such evidence that Jesus was questioned in that first hearing before Annas. The second hearing (the first trial before Caiaphas the Sanhedrin) was similar, for it also tried to obtain evidence to present at the second trial. But such a rule, permitting preliminary hearings to decide if the accused should be tried, did not exist in Hebrew law.

4 - The hands of Christ were bound during the three Jewish trials. This signified that He had already been condemned. Yet, under Jewish law, the one accused was not to be bound until he had been condemned. However, Christ was not condemned during the trial before Caiaphas, nor during nearly all the trials that followed it.

5 - Hitting Jesus during the trial was illegal.

“The striking of Jesus by the officer during the hearing before Annas (Jn 18:22) was an act of brutality which Hebrew jurisprudence did not tolerate . . . It was an outrage upon the Hebrew sense of justice and humanity which in its normal state was very pure and lofty.”—*Chandler, Vol. 1, 245.*

According to Chandler, Jesus gave the correct reply to His smiter (Jn 18:23):

“Jesus planted Himself squarely upon His legal rights as a Jewish citizen. It was in every word [of his reply] the voice of pure Hebrew justice.”—*Chandler, Vol. 1, 246.*

Such an act—a court officer striking a defendant in a court trial—would be illegal in any court in the

world. Christ was acting within His legal rights when He refused to answer the questions of the high priest. His statement was an appeal for the legal testimony of witnesses.

Thus we have five illegalities in the first two Jewish trials. When we consider the next Hebrew trial, we will learn about 24 additional ones.

Peter's denial—During this first trial before the Sanhedrin, two significant events occurred. The first was Peter's denial.

In the upper room, Peter had repeatedly rejected Christ's warning that he would later deny his Lord. Yet he did it during the first Sanhedrin trial. The prediction was: "Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny Me thrice" (Mk I4:30). And that is exactly what happened. After Jesus was examined before Annas, He was taken across the open courtyard to the residence of Caiaphas for a trial before the Sanhedrin. During that trial, John entered that courtyard, and obtained entrance for Peter. Both of them stood there and listened to much of the proceedings. Then, three times, Peter was questioned as to his relationship to Jesus. A rooster crowed the second time, just after Peter's third denial. Then Jesus turned and looked pityingly at Peter,—and Peter ran in shame from the courtyard. We are told in one scholarly book on the subject, *Desire of Ages*, that he went to Gethsemane, and there fell upon the ground, wept and wept, and prayed for forgiveness.

Judas' confession—There was also another person who sinned that night. It was Judas. Peter denied His Master, and Judas betrayed Him. The great crisis in Judas' life also reached its climax during that first trial before the Sanhedrin. Seeing that Jesus

was not going to flee His captors and that He was going to permit them to slay Him,—Judas suddenly strode down to the front of the court-room, flung down the thirty pieces of silver, and demanded that Caiaphas release Jesus. “I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood!” he said. But Caiaphas, confused as to what to say, shook him off and said, “What is that to us? See thou to that” (Matt 27:4). Seeing he would not be able to gain the release of Jesus, Judas cried and ran from the scene.

The Judaic legislators had been exposed as being party to bribing Judas to betray Christ.

What was the difference between Peter and Judas? Both had terribly sinned against their Master. One thing made all the difference: Peter went out and pled with God for forgiveness, but Judas went out and hanged himself. One chose to return to God; the other chose not to.

After Caiaphas tore his priestly robes (which, as we have noted, was contrary to Hebrew law and the rules given to Moses in Lev 10:6), he turned to the men in the Sanhedrin and asked for them to condemn Jesus. This they did.

6 - THE SECOND TRIAL BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN

This section is based on historical data and Matthew 27:1, Mark 15:1, and Luke 22:66-71.

There were three Jewish trials: the preliminary hearing before Annas (*DA 698-703*), the first trial before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin (*DA 703-714*), and the second (daylight) trial before that body (*DA 714-715*). Not yet having an accusation which would stand in a Roman court of law, the third trial was convened. In both the second and third trials, Jesus

was asked if He was the Messiah, and He said that He was.

First period of abuse—As soon as Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin, in the second hearing, condemned Christ for blasphemy, Jesus was taken to a guardroom. There He remained for some time—probably about an hour. During this time, He was unprotected and the guards and the mob pulled Him one way and another, and struck Him. Filled with demons, they attacked Him. Never was a criminal treated in so inhuman a manner as was Jesus in that guardroom.

During this interim, Annas, Caiaphas, and the members of the Sanhedrin who were present at the first trial before Caiaphas, counseled together. The problem was that, although they themselves had condemned Jesus for blasphemy, they did not have a charge which the Romans would accept as worthy of His death. What was needed was not a charge of blasphemy against the Jewish religion, but treason against the Roman government. Another problem was that some of the Sanhedrin members, desirous of seeing Christ slain, had not been present. They needed to be called in. At the same time, Annas and Caiaphas were careful not to notify Nicodemus or Joseph of Arimathaea—for, in the past, both of those members of the Sanhedrin had interfered with attempts to lay plans in the council to seize and slay Jesus.

Lastly, it seemed well to convene one final trial right at daybreak. (Night trials are illegal.) This one should be briefer, so they could then rush Jesus to Pilate for ratification of the sentence.

Second trial before Caiaphas—So at the first glimmer of sunlight, about 6 a.m., Jesus was taken from the guardroom and led back into the council

room of the Sanhedrin. He had declared Himself to be the Son of God, and they had construed this into a charge against Him. But, in Roman eyes, it was not a charge worthy of death. "Art Thou the Christ? Tell us," they ordered Him. But Christ remained silent. Additional questions followed. Finally, Jesus said, "If I tell you, ye will not believe." Then He added a solemn warning: "Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God,"

At this, every man in the room leaned forward breathlessly, "Art thou then the Son of God?" they asked. Jesus replied, "Ye say that I am" (a Jewish idiom for "Yes, I am"). Immediately, the room was in a pandemonium, as they cried to one another, "What need we of any further witness? For we ourselves have heard of His own mouth!" And so this second session of the Sanhedrin condemned Christ.

In their excitement, they ended the trial and arose to their feet. *But, the fact remained that they still did not have the proper charge.* They still only had a charge of blasphemy against their religion, not of sedition against the Roman government.

Second period of abuse—Then came still another scene of abuse and mockery of Christ. And it occurred right there in the presence of the Jewish priests and rulers in the courtroom!

When the condemnation of Jesus was pronounced by the judges, a satanic fury took possession of the crowd. Like wild beasts, they made a rush toward Jesus, as they cried, "Put Him to death!" It was only the Roman soldiers which kept Him from being slain on the spot. Then Jesus was hurriedly taken to Pilate's judgment hall.

24 illegalities in the third Jewish trial—In the

preceding section, we discussed five illegalities in the first two Hebrew trials of Christ. But there were still more. *Here are 24 illegal aspects in the third Jewish trial, many of which would also apply to the first two trials:*

1 - In those cases in which a vote of condemnation was made, Hebrew law demanded two sessions of the Sanhedrin, to be held a day apart. In the case of a capital [death sentence] trial, sentence could not be pronounced until the afternoon of the second day. The Hebrew trial of Jesus was thus illegal, for it was concluded within one day; the entire proceedings taking place on the fourteenth of Nisan, the first lunar month of the Jewish year. Here is what the law says:

“In pecuniary cases [concerning money fines], a trial may end the same day it began. In capital cases [where the death sentence was sought], acquittal may be pronounced the same day, but the pronouncing of death sentence must be deferred until the following day in the hope that some argument may meanwhile be discovered in favor of the accused.”—*Mishna, sect. 8, “Sanhedrin,” 32; also found in sect. 4: 1).*

It is evident from Mark 14:53, 15:1, and other passages that while there were two separate sessions of the Sanhedrin, they were both held the same night. The first was held very early in the morning before daylight, with only a portion of the members present (probably only a quorum composed of the bitterest enemies of Jesus). With Caiaphas they had been up all night in their concern to do away with this Man whom they so much hated.

The second session was held at break of day with the elders, the scribes, and the whole council present. This morning session was probably an attempt to give a semblance of legality to the proceedings, to make them conform to the Hebrew law requiring day-

light trials and at least two trials. But being held the same day, only a few hours apart and one of them in the dark of night—they were nothing more than a subterfuge.

Repeatedly, these men trampled upon Hebrew law in their efforts to destroy Jesus and the few pretenses of legality they did observe were due to the fact that their examinations would be followed by a Roman court hearing.

2 - The fact that the first of these trials was a night trial invalidated both, and was itself illegal. Like the Romans (and most modern civilizations), the Jews prohibited all legal proceedings by night. Night trials would encourage secret sessions which were forbidden. All who wished should be able to attend it, for someone might have testimony or evidence in favor of the defendant. Also it is well-known that men do not think well and make wise decisions at night.

It is unfortunate that many local churches today hold night meetings to decide legal matters concerning rules, standards, and qualifications of members, when the courts of the land refuse to do so!

In the Hebrew system, according to Mendel-sohn:

“Criminal cases can be acted upon by the various courts, during the daytime only, by Lesser Sanhedrins from the close of the morning service till noon, and by the Greater Sanhedrin till the evening sacrifice.”—*Mendelsohn, The Criminal Jurisprudence of the Ancient Hebrews, 112.*

“Let a capital offense be tried during the day, but suspend it at night.”—*From the Mishna.*

Maimonides, a famous Jewish writer of many centuries ago, explained the reason for this:

“The reason why the trial of a capital offense could not be held at night is because, as oral tradition says, the examination of such a charge is like diagnosing a

wound—In either case a more thorough and searching examination can be made by daylight.”—*Maimonides, “Sanhedrin,” III.*

3 - The Hebrew trial and condemnation of Jesus was illegal because it took place before the morning sacrifice.

“The Sanhedrin [legally] sat from the close of the morning sacrifice to the time of the evening sacrifice.”—*Talmud, Jerus, “Sanhedrin,” C.L, Vol. 19.*

“No session of court could take place before the offering of the morning sacrifice.”—*M.M. Lemann, Jesus before the Sanhedrin, 109.*

“Since the morning sacrifice was offered at the dawn of day, it was hardly possible for the Sanhedrin to assemble until the hour after that time.”—*Mishna, Talmid, or of the Perpetual Sacrifice, C. III.*

The reason for this rule of Hebrew law was that no man was considered competent to act as a judge in any question—regarding capital punishment or otherwise—until sacrifice and prayers had been offered to the great Judge of heaven. The three Hebrew trials of Jesus were entirely completed soon after the break of day, and hence before the morning sacrifice had been offered.

4 - The trial of Jesus was illegal because it was held on the day before the seventh-day Sabbath. Even the often-hardened Jews recognized that this was the only weekly day of worship commanded by God—so they had better not ignore it.

5 - The trial was illegal because it was held on the day of a Jewish ceremonial holy day—the Passover. Hebrew courts were not permitted to meet on the weekly seventh-day Sabbath, nor on the day before it occurred. In addition, court trials were not permitted on a festival or ceremonial sabbath (yearly holy day), such as the Passover, nor on the day before it

took place.

The trial of Jesus occurred on the day before the weekly Sabbath and on the day of the yearly Passover, which was a ceremonial sabbath. Therefore, for both of these reasons, the trial of Jesus was unlawful by Jewish law.

(The yearly passover that year occurred on the same Friday on which the trials of Jesus were held.)

“‘Court trials must not be held on the Sabbath, nor on any holy day.’”—*Talmud*.

That was the Talmudic law in the matter. And, of course, the trial of a capital punishment case could not be commenced on the day before the seventh-day Sabbath or before a ceremonial sabbath because, in case of conviction, there must be a second trial the following day—but that would have to convene on the Sabbath or on the yearly festival day.

“They shall not judge on the eve of the Sabbath, nor on that of any festival.”—*Mishna*, “*Sanhedrin*,” IV, 1.

No court of justice in Israel was ever permitted to hold sessions on the Sabbath nor on any of the seven Biblical holidays (see Leviticus 23:4-44 for a list of those yearly events).

“In cases of capital crime, no trial could be commenced on Friday, nor the day previous to any holiday, because it was not lawful either to adjourn such cases longer than overnight or to continue them on the Sabbath or holiday.”—*Rabbi Isaac M. Wise, The Martyrdom of Jesus*. 67.

The passover was called a “yearly sabbath” by the Jews. The trial and execution of Jesus was not only on the preparation day of the weekly Sabbath but, also that year, on the Passover sabbath. Because the Passover sabbath and the seventh-day Sabbath were adjacent to each other on that particular year, the Jews called it a “double Sabbath” or a “high day” (Jn

19:31). In a double sense, the proceedings against Jesus were thus illegal.

6 - Between the two Sanhedrin court trials, as dawn was nearing, the Jewish leaders permitted the rabble to spit upon, torment, and persecute Jesus, the Uncondemned (Mk 14:65; Lk 22:63-65). (Old Testament predictions that this would occur are found in Psalm 18:4, 69:12, and Isaiah 50:6.) The laws of most nations presume a person to be innocent until he is proven guilty; and, prior to a final sentence of condemnation, he is entitled to and given every possible protection by the court from ill treatment. The permitting of a small riot over the person of Jesus, between the two court hearings, was totally illegal by Hebrew law.

7 - The Hebrew court trials of Christ never produced any acceptable testimony of witnesses against Jesus; yet, sentence of condemnation was pronounced. This was illegal.

Consider these facts: According to Mark 14:55-64, two separate charges were brought against Jesus in this court of law. The first was sedition, or a rising of discontent against the Jewish and Roman governments through inflammatory speeches and actions. But this charge had to be abandoned because the witnesses could not agree (Mk 14:55-57, 59). Their testimonies against Jesus were so mutually contradictory and false that even the wicked judges, who had bribed them to give it, had to reject what they said. Yet, according to Hebrew law, the testimonies of the witnesses must agree in all essential details or it must be rejected, and the defendant standing trial must be released at once.

“If one witness contradicts another, the testimony is not accepted.”—*Mtshna*, “*Sanhedrin*,” C.V. 2.

Much of what the Jewish leaders seemed to be basing things on was hearsay evidence, but this too was forbidden under Jewish law.

“Hearsay evidence was barred equally in civil as in criminal cases, no matter how strongly the witness might believe in what he heard and however worthy and numerous were his informants.”—*Rabbi Isaac M. Wise, The Martyrdom of Jesus.*

And so the only hope of the enemies of Jesus was to bring about His condemnation through a change of charges from sedition against the government to blasphemy against God. But this switchover was to result in still more illegalities.

8 - The accusation, charge, and indictment against Christ was illegal on two counts—It was vague and indefinite,

“The entire criminal procedure of the Mosaic code rests upon four rules: certainty in the indictment, publicity in the discussion, full freedom granted to the accused, and assurance against all dangers in errors of testimony.”—*Joseph Salvador, Histoire des Institutions de Moise, 365.*

The second charge was never clearly formulated in the trials against Jesus.

9 - An indictment against a person must deal with a definite crime, and the trial must be carried to completion on the basis of that charge. No prosecutor is ever permitted to change charges during the court proceedings because of a failure to prove the first charge on which the trial was based! When the false witnesses failed to prove the charge of sedition, Jesus should have been set at liberty and the case dismissed. But this was not done. Instead, the presiding judge suddenly shifted to a new charge, that of blasphemy.

10 - As we have noted earlier, not one witness

could be found against Jesus; yet, in Hebrew law, not one but at least two witnesses must come forward and convincingly testify before sentence of condemnation could be pronounced (Deut 17:6; 19:15; Num 35:30). And the testimonies of at least two witnesses must agree.

11 - The use of false witnesses was another serious infraction of Hebrew law. Such conduct not only disqualified the judge in the case from having further jurisdiction in that trial; but, on the basis of it, he would also be relieved of his judgeship entirely. It also condemned the false witnesses involved to suffer the very penalty they sought to bring upon the accused.

Those who testified against Jesus were themselves deserving of death. Under Hebrew law, false witnesses were severely dealt with. Perjury placed a witness in a position fully as serious as that of the one he testified against. This rule is based on Deuteronomy 19:18-21:

“Hebrew law provided that false witnesses should suffer the penalty provided for the commission of the crime, which they sought by their testimony to fix upon the accused.”—*Chandler, The Trial of Jesus, Vol. 1, 140.*

12 - For some time before His trial, the Jewish authorities had Jesus constantly shadowed by hired informers, or spies. This also was unlawful (Lk 20:20). But then, in spite of this, when brought to witness against Him, their testimonies were too contradictory to agree.

13 - Under Hebrew law, the judge was supposed to seek for evidence only in behalf of the accused.

“The judges leaned always to the side of the defendant and gave him the advantage of every possible doubt.”—*Chandler, The Trial of Jesus, Vol. 1, 153-154.*

The judge was not, during the court trial, to be

searching for evidence that would convict the defendant. Benny declares that it was a maxim of the Jews that “the Sanhedrin was to save, not to destroy life.” Here are two other interesting maxims recorded in the *Mishna*: “Man’s life belongs to God, and only according to the law of God may it be disposed of.” “Whosoever preserves one worthy of life is as meritorious as if he had preserved the world.”

Hebrew law provided no lawyers either to defend or to prosecute. The judges were the defenders, and the witnesses the prosecutors.

“The only prosecutors known to Talmudic criminal jurisprudence are the witnesses to the crime. Their duty is to bring the matter to the cognizance of the court, and to bear witness against the criminal. In capital cases, they are the legal executioners also. Of an official accuser or prosecutor, there is nowhere any trace in the laws of the ancient Hebrews.”—S. Mendelsohn, *The Criminal Jurisprudence of the Ancient Hebrews*, 110.

14 - To ensure justice to the accused, under Hebrew law, the arguments must begin in his behalf.

15 - Nothing was permitted to be said against him until after at least one of the judges had spoken in his behalf. Neither of these two rules were followed in the case of Jesus.

16 - The sentence against Jesus was unlawful because it was founded on His own confession (Mk 14:61-64).

“Self-accusation in cases of capital crime was worthless. For, if not guilty, he accuses himself of a falsehood; if guilty, he is a wicked man. And no wicked man, according to Hebrew law, is permitted to testify, especially not in penal cases.”—*Rabbi Isaac M. Wise, The Martyrdom of Jesus*, 74.

Rabbi Wise was a learned Jewish rabbi of over a century ago. The judges of Christ not only violated

the law by acting as accusers, which only witnesses were to do; but, in addition, they illegally extracted a confession from Jesus and, then, used it as the basis for a death sentence.

“We hold it as fundamental, that no one shall prejudice himself. If a man accuses himself before a tribunal, we must not believe him, unless the fact is attested by two other witnesses . . . for our law does not condemn upon the simple confession of the accused [alone].”—*Hebrew law, quoted in M. Dupin, The Trial of Jesus before Cataphas and Pilate.*

Maimonides is an ancient Hebrew legal authority. He made this statement:

“We have it as a fundamental principle of our jurisprudence that no one can bring an accusation against himself. Should a man make confession of guilt before a legally constituted tribunal, such confession is not to be used against him unless properly attested by two other witnesses.”—*Maimonides, “Sanhedrin,” IV 2.*

“Not only is self-condemnation never extorted from the defendant by means of torture, but no attempt is ever made to lead him on to self-incrimination. Moreover, a voluntary confession on his part is not admitted in evidence, and therefore not competent to convict him, unless a legal number of witnesses [two or more] minutely corroborate his self-accusation.”—*S. Mendelsohn, The Criminal Jurisprudence of the Ancient Hebrews, 133.*

17 - One of the strangest rules of law ever known was one in the Hebrew legal system: A person could not be convicted on a unanimous vote of the judges.

A simultaneous and unanimous verdict of guilt rendered on the day of the trial has the effect of an acquittal.”—*Mendelsohn, The Criminal Jurisprudence of the Ancient Hebrews, 141.*

“If none of the judges defend the culprit, i.e., all pronounce him guilty, having no defender in the court, the verdict of guilty was invalid and the sentence of death could not be executed.”—*Rabbi Wise, The Martyrdom*

of Jesus, 74.

The reasons for this rule is simple. It was the duty of the judges to defend the man; and at least one of them had to do it—or he had no one on his side to see that he received justice. Remember that, under Hebrew law, there were no defense lawyers. This was the work of the judges—and at least one of them had to do it.

“With the Anglo-Saxon jury, a unanimous verdict is necessary to convict; but, with the Hebrew Sanhedrin unanimity, the unanimous verdict was fatal (to the case against the accused), and therefore should have resulted in an acquittal . . . Now, if the verdict was unanimous in favor of condemnation, it was evident that the prisoner had no friend or defender in court (for by Jewish law, he had only the judges as his defenders).”—*Chandler, The Trial of Christ, Vol. 1, 280-281.*

Scripture is clear—a unanimous verdict based solely on the testimony of Jesus was handed down by the Sanhedrin judges. “They answered and said, He is guilty of death” (Matt 26:66). “They all condemned Him to be guilty of death” (Mk 14:64). This unanimous sentence was predicted over 600 years earlier (Isa 59:16; 63:3, 5).

It is significant that throughout the trial, Jesus was silent when falsely accused, when one might normally speak.—And then He spoke at a time when silence would have been His best defense.

“The condemnation had already been decided upon before the trial . . . Jesus knew it, and disdained to reply to what was advanced in the first place because it was false; [but] what was advanced in the second place, when He of His own accord, freely admitted because, in its material basis, it was true. When a false and unjust charge was brought against Him, He held His peace, and He answered when no proof, not even a false one, constrained Him to speak.”—*Giovanni Rosadi, The Trial of*

Jesus, 180.

Jesus was asked a direct question as to whether He was the Messiah. It would have been to His personal advantage to remain silent, and He would have been within His rights to do so. We well-know He could not have been compelled to speak if He did not want to. But silence, at this time, would have been a virtual denial of His identity and mission. In every case, Jesus was always true to the right.

18 - The trial was concluded by a judge that had been disqualified to conduct it. This too was illegal. Under the Mosaic code, if a high priest intentionally tore his clothing, he was automatically disqualified as high priest, and was to receive the death sentence (Lev 10:6; 21:10). Caiaphas did this during the trial of Jesus. The official garments of the high priest were symbolic of the Messiah. Also such an act would reveal a rage that was beneath the dignity of the high priest.’

“An ordinary Israelite could, as an emblem of bereavement, tear his garments; but, to the high priest, it was forbidden because his vestments, being made after the express orders of God, were figurative of his office.”—*M.M. Lemann, Jesus before the Sanhedrin, 140.*

19 - By Hebrew law, the balloting carried on here was illegal. In a criminal case, the judges must vote one at a time, beginning with the youngest. Each, in his turn, had to arise and cast his vote and then state his reason for his decision. Both the vote and the reasons for it must be written down by scribes before the next man stood up to give his sentence in the matter. Instead of this, Jesus was condemned by an acclamation—a single chorus of approval—a unanimous voice vote (Matt 26:66; Mk 14:64).

“In ordinary cases the judges voted according to seniority, the oldest commencing; In a capital trial, the re-

verse order was followed [the youngest voted individually before the older ones].”—*Philip Berger Benny, The Criminal Code of the Jews, 73-74.*

“Let the judges each in his turn absolve or condemn.”—*Mishna, “Sanhedrin,” XV.*

The decisions of each judge could not be recorded if this practice were not followed.

“The members of the Sanhedrin were seated in the form of a semicircle at the extremities of which a secretary was placed, whose business it was to record the votes. One of these secretaries recorded the votes in favor of the accused: the other, those against him.”—*Mishna, “Sanhedrin” IV 3.*

20 - The verdict against Jesus was also illegal because it was not given in the place required by Hebrew law. It was believed that Deuteronomy 17:8-9 meant that the death sentence could only be pronounced in one certain place. For this, they chose a room in the Temple that was called “The Hall of *Gazith*,” or “the hall of hewn stone.” Mendelsohn tells us that outside of this judgment hall no capital trial could be conducted, and no capital sentence pronounced. Here is what the law says:

“A sentence of death can be pronounced only so long as the Sanhedrin holds its sessions in the appointed place.”—*Matrnonides, “Sanhedrin,” XIV.*

A sentence in the *Talmud* declares:

“After leaving the hall *Gazith* no sentence of death can be passed upon anyone whosoever.”—*Tulmud, Bab., Abodah Zarah, or of Idolatry, Chap. 1, Vol. 8.*

It is evident from the record that Jesus was tried and condemned in the palace of Caiaphas on Mount Zion, and not in the hall of hewn stone. Edersheim, the Christian Jew, comments on this:

“There is truly not a tittle of evidence for the assumption of commentators, that Christ was led from the palace of Caiaphas into the council chamber. The whole

proceedings took place in the former, and from it Christ was brought to Pilate.”—*Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Vol. 2, 556.*

21 - The trial of Christ was illegal because it was based on bribery. The judges of Jesus had bribed Judas to deliver Him into their hands for a specified sum of money (Lk 22:3-6). Geikie says that the “thirty pieces of silver” was the price paid for a slave. Dwight L. Moody once said, “God sent His only-begotten Son to ransom man; and man offered thirty pieces of silver for Him.”

The Mosaic code was very severe on those who wrested judgment through bribery (Ex 23:1-8). Under Hebrew law, this included judges who gave bribes as well as received them. In all nations and in all ages, the giving or receiving of bribes by judges disqualifies them from office and nullifies their verdict. In this case, the evidence of bribery was publicly given by Judas, in the midst of the judgment hall and in the sight of all the spectators, when he returned the bribe money and confessed his part in the matter (Matt 27:1-6). According to Acts 1:19, this was done so publicly that “it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem.”

22 - The condemnation of Jesus, by the Sanhedrin, was illegal since the judges were disqualified to pass sentence upon Him because of their hatred of Him. Benny, the noted Jewish legal expert, states the law of the Hebrews—and of all nations—when he says:

“Nor under any circumstances, was a man known to be at enmity with the accused person permitted to occupy a position among his judges.”—*Philip Berger Benny, The Criminal Code of the Jews, 37.*

“Nor must there be on the judicial bench either a relation or a particular friend, or an enemy of either the accused or of the accuser.”—*Mendelsohn, The Criminal*

Jurisprudence of the Ancient Hebrews, 108.

If the defendant has the slightest reason to suspect the enmity of a judge, he can demand that his case be brought before another judge. And what is the record? Within the six months previous to the trial, there had been at least three meetings of the Sanhedrin, the highest council and court in the land,—specifically for the purpose of planning the death of Christ.

The first of these three sessions is given us in John 7:37-53. The second occurred a few weeks before the trial, and is recorded in John 11:41-53. The third council meeting, to plan His death, took place just before the Passover (Lk 22:1-3). And, of course, their judicial enmity against Christ is also shown not only by the bribery of Judas, but also by the hiring of the false witnesses. Jesus had been condemned and even sentenced to die, before the trial ever began.

23 - The judges of Christ were also disqualified to listen to the case or to pass verdict on it because most of them had been dishonestly elected to office. Under Hebrew law, the members of the Sanhedrin must be chosen only because of high nobility of character.

“The robe of the unfairly elected judge is to be respected not more than the blanket of a donkey.”—*Mendelsohn, Hebrew Maxims and Rules, 182. 24.*

24 - In addition, they were to receive no salary or reward for their membership in the Sanhedrin. It is a well-known fact that many of the judges of Jesus were not only degenerate and corrupt in character, but they had purchased their seats in the council and were making merchandise of their offices. In fact, several of them had grown rich by this means. This was especially true of the family of Annas, the high

priest. The amount of information available to support these last two illegalities would fill several pages of this book.

“Throughout the whole course of that trial [of Jesus before the Sanhedrin] the rules of the Jewish law of procedure were grossly violated, and the accused was deprived of rights belonging even to the meanest [lowest] citizen. He was arrested in the night, bound as a malefactor, beaten before His arraignment, and struck in open court during the trial; He was tried on a feast day, and before sunrise; He was compelled to criminate himself, and this, under an oath of solemn judicial adjuration; and He was sentenced on the same day of the conviction. In all these particulars the law was wholly disregarded.”—*Simon Greenleaf The Testimony of the Evangelists Examined by the Rules of Evidence Administered in Courts of Justice, 566.*

Simon Greenleaf was professor of law at Harvard University at the beginning of the twentieth century, and was considered to be one of the outstanding legal minds of his day.

“Grasping priests denounced Him; false witnesses accused Him; Judges of bad faith condemned Him; a friend betrayed Him; no one defended Him; He was dragged with every kind of contumacy and violence to the malefactor’s cross, where He spoke the last words of truth and brotherhood among men. It was one of the greatest and most memorable acts of injustice.”—*Giovanni Rosadt, The Trial of Christ, 1.*

7 - THE FIRST TRIAL BEFORE PILATE

The information in this section is based on historical data and Matthew 27:2, 11-14, Mark 15:1-6, Luke 23:1-5, and John 18:28-38.

Lucius Pontius Pilate was a Spaniard, born in the city of Seville, probably about the time of the birth of Christ. We never would have heard of him, except by

a unique set of events that made him one of the most famous men of all history. For Pilate was the judge who approved the death sentence upon Jesus Christ.

The name “Pontius” may have been given him because of fighting that was done earlier by someone in the family in the Pontus, which at that time was the Black Sea region of the Roman Empire. “Pilate” may stem from *pilatus*, “javelin” which was given to victors of certain armed combats. We are told that his father, Marcus Pontius, won the *pilium*, or javelin, for heroic Roman service, and that the name *Pilati* was taken henceforth as the family name to commemorate this medal of valor.

Having fought in the German campaigns of Germanicus, young Pilate at the conclusion of the war went to Rome. Rome was the place to go if you wanted a good job, and Pilate was determined to get one.

Claudia, the daughter of Julia—He had not long been in this city famous for its size and debauchery, when he met Claudia, the youngest daughter of Julia. You may recall that this Julia was the daughter of the previous emperor—Augustus Caesar. Julia was the black sheep of the family. She was so vile that after having married Tiberius, her third husband, her own father Augustus banished her from Rome because of her lewd and dissolute life. Suetonius, the Roman historian, tells us that nothing so embittered the life of Augustus as did the shameful conduct of his own daughter, Julia.

While Julia was in exile, she gave birth to an illegitimate daughter, Claudia. The father was a Roman soldier. But fortunately for Claudia, for on the death of Augustus, Tiberius (who was her mother’s third husband) became Emperor. At about the age of thir-

teen, Claudia was sent to Rome to be raised in the palace of the Emperor. Pontius Pilate arrived in Rome when she was about sixteen.

Handed a document—They were married in a pagan temple in Rome. As Lucius Pontius Pilate and his new wife, Claudia, stepped out of the temple and were about to enter an imperial litter, thus to be borne by slaves to the palace,—Pilate was stopped and drawn aside. *It was Tiberius, the Emperor himself.* He had been one of the twelve witnesses required to attend the marriage ceremony. He held him back and handed him an official document which he had taken from under his coat.

And so it was that Pontius Pilate received his wedding present—the governorship of Judea,—with orders to proceed at once to Caesarea to take over the office recently vacated by the recall of Valerius Gratus.

The year was A.D. 26. What would the future hold for Pilate, a new procurator? Little could he imagine what it would bring only five years later.

Who were the procurators?—Palestine had been conquered by Pompey, the Roman general in 63 B.C., and thus passed under Roman rule. Two years before the birth of Christ, in 6 B.C., Judea was made a Roman province under the rulership of procurators, or governors. Pontius Pilate was the sixth of these Procurators. The procurators were personally appointed by the emperor, and were sent out from Rome as his personal representatives. At this time, Judea was considered one of the most difficult of the provinces to rule, and it is somewhat surprising that it was given to a man as inexperienced as Pilate.

Pilate was immediately notified that his ship was waiting to take him to his province—and that Claudia

would be sent soon after. He did not see her again for several months, at which time she rejoined him at the port city of Caesarea, on the coast of Palestine. Its artificial harbor had been constructed by Herod the Great about 45 years earlier.

When Pilate arrived in Judea—It was a large area that Pilate had been given the rulership over. But when he arrived in Judea, he was totally unprepared for governorship. He had never governed anything in his life, much less an entire nation! One blunder after another followed, which brought upon him the intense hatred of the Jewish people over which he now ruled.

The coastal city of Caesarea was the Roman capital of Judea. Pilate decided to make it his summer capital, and relocate the winter capital to Jerusalem. This bothered the Jews.

Then, when he brought with him to Jerusalem the military standards on which Caesar's image was prominently displayed, the city went into a near-riot. The people petitioned Pilate to remove them, but he refused. This went on for several days and then, following a near-slaughter of a large number of the populace, he finally relented and sent the shields and images back to Caesarea.

Shortly afterward, Pilate made a secret deal with some of the Jewish leaders and obtained Temple money to use to repair the aqueduct that brought water to Jerusalem. When this misuse of Temple funds was discovered, another riot took place.

Pilate sent his soldiers among the mob with concealed daggers—and a great massacre followed. Still later he placed pagan shields dedicated to heathen gods into his winter home in Jerusalem. He refused to remove them also, until at the request of the people

a direct order came from Tiberius for Pilate to take them away.

The predecessors of Pilate had been more careful to avoid offense to the Jews because of their religious ideas, but of this Pilate cared little. Proud and tactless, Pilate defied the religious beliefs of those whom he had been sent to govern, until the emperor himself had to step in, at the appeal of the people, and personally require Pilate to back down from some of his more headstrong ways. All of these experiences served only to deepen Pilate's hatred of the Jews, and their hatred of him.

Both Josephus and Philo, two first century writers, have left on record a very ugly picture of the character of Pontius Pilate. Philo Judaeus lived at the same time Pilate did, and he charged him with:

“. . . corruptibility, violence, robberies, ill-treatment of the people, grievances, continuous executions without even the form of a trial, endless and intolerable cruelties.”—*Philo Judaeus, De Legatione ad Cajum, page 1034.*

Passover time—By A.D. 31, Pilate had learned to remain most of the year in Caesarea, the provincial capital of Judea. He spent but a few days each year in Jerusalem, and this was usually during the great national Jewish festivals when the danger of insurrection was the greatest.

He had reason to be wary, for throughout the first century A.D., the Romans repeatedly had more trouble with the Jews than with any other people that they governed. The Jews had become a turbulent nation, embittered because of the loss of their kingly and judicial authority, and seething with continual discontent that a foreign power ruled them. These feelings seemed to run highest during their

national gatherings.

Josephus, the first century historian, estimated the number attending a single Passover at 2,700,000, including the population of Jerusalem. And so it was, that on such occasions, the governor made sure he was at Jerusalem—accompanied by a small army.

Herod's palace—Before his death in 4 B.C., Herod the Great had built an ornate fortress-palace in Jerusalem, and during his visits to the city, Pilate stayed there. Josephus confirms that it was the official residence of the procurators—the governors—of the province, whenever they stopped over in Jerusalem.

The palace was located in the northwest quarter of the city, on the heights of Mount Zion, a little north of the Temple Mount. From its upper windows the entire city and surrounding countryside could be seen. One of the wings of the palace contained an assembly room in which Roman court trials were held. This was the *praetorium* of Mark 15:16, the “common hall” of Matthew 27:27, the “hall of judgment” of John 18:28, and the “judgment hall” of John 18:28,33; 19:9, and Acts 23:35.

The palace of Herod was the most magnificent home in the city. It was surrounded by walls forty-five feet high, from which rose strong towers. Within the palace were spacious rooms with elaborate carvings on both wall and ceiling, inlaid with gold, silver and precious stones. Between the palace and the guard walls were groves and gardens, pools and walkways.

This palace was to become the hall of judgment and condemnation for Jesus Christ, the Creator of the world and its only Saviour.

Awakened from sleep—It was the time of morning when the birds sing their hardest. The sun was just coming up. But Pilate didn't want to hear it. He wanted to sleep. And he knew he would need it, for this was the time when trouble could come. For today was the Passover.

Hurrying through the streets, priests and rabble pressed toward the gate of the palace of Herod. But upon reaching it they halted. Passover preparation had already begun and defilement was sure to be theirs if they entered this heathen building on this, the most important religious festival in the year. Gradually the crowd increased, and with it the noise. And so when aroused, Pilate knew he had better get out there right away.

And so it was that the Roman trial of Christ took place outside the palace gate, and not in the praetorium. This was the first of several illegalities that occurred during that trial.

The first of two trials—There were two trial sessions before Pilate, interrupted by another before Herod Antipas. You can read the complete story of the first trial before Pilate in Matthew 27:2, 11-14, Mark 15:1-5, Luke 23:1-5, and John 18:28-38. The trial before Herod is given in Luke 23:6-12. The continuation of the trial before Pilate is given in Matthew 27:15-31, Mark 15:6-20, Luke 23:13-25, and John 18:38 to 19:16.

As he strode through the massive rooms of the palace toward the gate, Pilate was told that the Jews had a prisoner to be sentenced,—and just now he was only too glad to be agreeable. A quick decision on his part to please them would put the Jews in a good humor and perhaps make the weekend go better. Pilate had never been a man to worry much about

justice.

Christ before Pilate—Stepping outside, Pilate immediately directed his attention toward the priests, and called out, “What accusation bring ye against this man?” In reply came an evasive answer, “If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee.” Pilate was used to this kind of reply from these men. So let them have him—that’s what they wanted. “Take ye him, and judge him according to your law.” “We can’t do it ourselves—for we want the death sentence!”

—*And just then, for the first time Pilate saw Jesus!* Stunned, Pilate hardly saw the crowd, hardly heard the curses and impatient calls of the rabble and the Pharisees. For Pilate’s eyes were riveted on the face of Jesus.

Pilate had never seen a face like that before in his life. It was so pure—and there was such a kindness in it. It bore a kinglike bearing of patience and dignity beyond anything he had ever seen before. And Pilate was no stranger to the palaces of royalty and kings.

From somewhere he heard contemptuous voices call out the name of the prisoner. “Jesus”, they said. He had heard of Him. What had he heard? Memories of reports submitted to him over the past three years about this man’s activities—his sayings, the speeches, those miracles—it was faintly coming back to his memory.

Pilate was confused. It seemed like an immense decision lay ahead of him. And somehow he knew he hadn’t prepared himself to meet it.

Pilate demands a charge—And now Pilate spoke, and demanded a formal charge against the prisoner.

The Jews were surprised. Pilate usually went along with them better than this. Amid hooting and yells from back in the crowd, the priests called out that Pilate should accept their conclusions in the matter without asking too many questions. But by now, Pilate was trying to regain the firmness of decision that in the past he had never taken time to develop. More clearly he was recalling to mind stories of paralytics and lepers cleansed—and even members of his own centurians' family healed.

Although Pilate did not have much firmness of character, his office had taught him to read people, and it was clear as the day that the Man before him was totally innocent of any accusation. Yet it was not the innocence nor the stories—it was the face of Jesus that held Pilate back from handing Him over to His enemies. Pilate knew he didn't dare. In the shimmering heat of the early morning, Pilate saw before him a man that was god-like.

Important principles in the great controversy between Christ and Satan were here being worked out, and it seemed as if on this day, these men were in close league with devils in their desperation to destroy Jesus.

“We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ a King.”—*Luke 23:2*.

A charge of treason—The men who sought in vain to find a valid charge against Christ when He appeared before them four times earlier that morning, now dreamed up another on the spot. A political charge was needed—and so, in the above statement, three were given. And each one, though without a foundation in fact, was a charge of treason against the government of Rome.

Although the Jews had authority to hold court trials, the Romans forbade them from executing the death sentence. For this reason they had to have the Roman government confirm their sentence as correct. However, a procurator when holding a trial against a provincial citizen, could use either Roman law or the laws of the national that was being judged.—But if the charge was treason, only Roman law could be applied. And so it was Roman law that Pilate must follow in this, the most famous court trial in history.

We well know what that Roman court law was, for it was the law used in judicial trials at Rome, and it was required that it be applied the same way in the provinces. Because of this we can know that the Roman trial of Jesus before Pilate was illegal in several instances. Here are ten of them. More will be considered later in this study:

1 - Private citizens were to present the charges and prosecuted the case, not public officials as was done in the case of Jesus by the priests. Even though a trial had already been conducted by the Sanhedrin, their death sentence required a brand new trial by Rome—and private citizens must initiate it and prosecute it.

2 - If there was more than one accuser, a preliminary hearing must be held to decide which one should prosecute the case.

3 - This preliminary hearing must be an entirely private one—a closed door affair with the defendant and the prosecutors and only those testifying being present.

4 - Only after this hearing could the several prosecutors frame an indictment; that is, state in words the charge against the man.

5 - And it was only after this hearing that the

indictment could be presented to the judge.

6 - Only at that juncture could the trial date could be appointed and fixed on the legal calendar of coming events.

7 - When the day of the trial actually came, the judges as well as the jurors were summoned by heralds.

8 - Next the impaneling of the jury began. This was done in this way: The names of a number of citizens were written on clay tablets, and deposited in an urn or clay howl. Then the number required were drawn out.

9 - Only in the *forum*, or Roman courtroom, could the trial be conducted. In this legislative hall seats were placed for the judges.

10 - Decisions were arrived at by balloting, and this was done as black (condemnation) stones or white (acquittal) stones were deposited in an urn as it was passed.

Pilate becomes frightened—These charges of sedition or treason against the government hit Pilate in a weak spot. We are told the emperor, Tiberius Caesar, was—

“. . . a morbid and capricious temper, whose fretful and suspicious temper would kindle into fire at the slightest suggestion of treason in any quarter. Tacitus [the Roman historian] records fifty-two cases of prosecution for treason during his reign—The most harmless acts were at times construed into an affront to the majesty or into an assault upon the safety of this miserable despot.”—*Walter M. Chandler, The Trial of Jesus, volume 2, page 70.*

Also, Pilate knew that Judea was a powder-keg,—and that Rome knew it also. A charge of treason would be the considered more serious in the eyes of the Emperor and the Senate, in view of where it origi-

nated.

Pilate speaks to Christ—And now for the first time, Pilate entered the *forum*, or Roman judgment hall—the *praetorium*—where the trial was supposed to be held. But this was only for a few minutes. Pilate wanted to speak with Jesus alone. Having heard the charge of treason, his firmness was already crumbling, and he thought that something Jesus might say could give him a fresh outlook on a direction he should head in all this. The idea of standing for the right because it was right—and, without further concern, simply setting Jesus free—never occurred to him.

The conversation can be read in John 18:33-38. It has many lessons for us. At a time when, for His own safety, Jesus should not acknowledge that He might be a king,—*He told Pilate three times in this interview that He was!* And each time He also told him that His kingdom was not of this world.

But more than information or settlement of a court trial, it was truth that Pilate needed. Pilate needed salvation. Jesus was more deeply concerned that Pilate have it, than that His own life be spared. But, just as Pilate was beginning to learn that which he so vitally needed to know—he walked out (John 18:58). Business was calling. If I could write one phrase on Pilate's tombstone, I would pen, "He didn't wait for an answer."

Pilate's official verdict—Pilate was convinced now that Jesus was thoroughly innocent. Reaching the entrance gate where the mob was waiting, *Pilate rendered his official decision in the case as the presiding Roman judge—"I find in Him no fault at all."*

So then the trial was over. But was it?

One of the most prominent legal minds in American court history has written a book on this trial. Consider his words:

“Here was a sentence of acquittal, judicially pronounced, and irreversible, except by a higher power, upon appeal; and it was the duty of Pilate thereupon to have discharged Him.”—*Simon Greenleaf, The Testimony of the Evangelists Examined by the Rules of Evidence Administered in Courts of Justice, page 565.*

As mentioned earlier, Dr. Greenleaf was a professor of law at Harvard University at the beginning of the 20th century, and was considered to be one of the keenest students of jurisprudence of his time.

Clearly, it was the duty of the procurator to enforce his decision, and not only to immediately release Jesus, but to protect Him from the fury of the mob as well. This he could easily do, for at one word from him and a detachment of Roman soldiers would immediately have dispersed the crowd. But this Pilate did not do.

Pilate reopens the case—With eager anticipation the Jewish leaders had awaited the return of Pilate. When he appeared and summarily declared the man innocent, it was too much.

With a roar as of wild beasts about to be robbed of their prey, a terrific shouting and hollering began, and amid it the same charge in new wording was again hurled at Jesus. “He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place.” The Jews were trying to reopen the case that Pilate had just closed, and this Pilate should not have permitted. He had already rendered a verdict of innocence, and the trial was actually over, the case dismissed. It was a rule of Roman law that “no man shall be put twice in jeopardy.”

This principle of double jeopardy is an important one, even in modern law. A man cannot be tried in a court of law twice on the same charge.

But instead of reacting to this offense to the Roman system of law, Pilate used it as an excuse for an easier way out of it all. Rather than stand by Roman law now that the trial had been concluded, Pilate reopened the case and sent Jesus to Herod.

8 - THE TRIAL BEFORE HEROD

Sent to Herod Antipas—You will recall that Herod Antipas (4 B.C.-39 A.D.) was the younger brother of Archelaus (mentioned in Matthew 2:22), who in turn was the eldest of the three sons of Herod the Great, who tried to kill Christ at His birth (Matthew 2:13, 16). Herod Antipas was tetrarch of Galilee and Perea, and his provincial capital, by this time, was Tiberius in Galilee.

He happened to be in Jerusalem for the weekend, and when Pilate heard mention of “Galilee” (Luke 23:5) he thought that perhaps he could transfer jurisdiction in this case that had been concluded—to Herod. So Jesus, the One everybody needed, and the One no one wanted, was sent to Herod—the man who in a drunken party had earlier ordered the death of John the Baptist.

Pilate, the man who was constantly looking for a loophole, now sent Jesus, under escort of a praetorian cohort (band of soldiers), to the palace of the Maccabees where Herod was accustomed to stay on his trips into Jerusalem.

Down the streets of the city the mob followed, bound for another court room. The residence of Herod, when in Jerusalem, was in the same quarter

of the city as was the palace of Herod. It was an older building, this *palace of the Asmoneans*, and lay but a few streets to the northeast, within the same outer wall of the city. Herod's palace crested the slope of a hill.

Although the Jews had refused to enter Pilate's headquarters, Herod was in a far uglier spirit. His life had been stained with the blood of John, and he cared nought for Jewish fooleries. Upon learning that Jesus had been sent to him, he demanded that He be immediately brought into his assembly room. Interestingly enough, the Jewish leaders made no complaint, but quickly followed on in. Jesus was now to appear before Herod Antipas, who had been responsible for the deaths of nearly all of his ten wives, as well as thousands of innocent victims, and the prophet John as well.

Christ before Herod—Yet hardened though he was, Herod was glad to see Jesus. However, much of this seems to be from idle curiosity (Luke 23:8). Hoping for grand entertainment, he ordered the sick and the lame to be brought in that he might see them healed. He gave his promise that afterward, he would release Jesus. The Jewish leaders well knew Jesus' power over disease and feared for what was ahead. But to every one's surprise—Jesus did nothing and said nothing. Jesus' life had never been to live for Himself.

Herod had no intention of killing this Man who was so popular with the common people throughout two provinces. Jesus was considered by many to be a prophet, just as John had been. And the stain of one of their deaths was enough for Herod.

Yet he was not prepared for the amazing self-control of Christ. Herod was without conscience—he had

long since seared it away. And Jesus had no words for him! Try as he would, Herod could obtain no healings, and not even a reply, from the Man who stood before him. This was a rebuke to his pride which Herod Antipas would not tolerate.

The third abuse of Christ—The silence of Jesus finally brought the patience of Herod to an end.

“And Herod with his men of war set Him at nought, and mocked Him, and arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him again to Pilate.”—*Luke 23:11*.

“And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about His head.”—*Mark 15:17* (*John 19:2*).

There is evidence that if the Roman soldiers that were standing there in Herod’s courtroom that day had not saved Him, Herod and the rabble and the priests would have torn Him to pieces. Maddened with fury, Herod left his throne and acted like a demon, and he was immediately accompanied in this diabolical work by nearly everyone in the room.

Few will ever know what Jesus went through that day so that man might have another chance to return to God, and in His strength, obey His requirements.

9 - THE SECOND TRIAL BEFORE PILATE

Christ returned to Pilate, and a second acquittal—But Herod dared not pronounce sentence against Jesus in the case. This was the equivalent of an acquittal. And Pilate acknowledged it as such upon the return of Jesus.

“Ye have brought this man unto me as one that perverteth the people. And, behold, I, having examined him before you,—have found no fault in the man touching those things whereof ye accuse him. No, nor yet Herod,

for I sent you to him, and,—lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him.“—*Luke 23:14-15*.

For a second time Pilate had rendered a verdict of “not guilty.” But instead of releasing Jesus, he said he would have Him beaten before freeing Him.

Again, Pilate was trying to escape the responsibility of freeing Jesus. For the second time he had a golden opportunity to release Him, and for the second time he cowardly let it go. Pilate’s fatal vacillation doomed Jesus. It would also destroy himself.

Choosing Barabbas—Immediately there went up a crying and shouting for Jesus’ death that was deafening. Gradually it subsided as Pilate proposed something new.

It was a Jewish custom that one criminal be freed at each yearly Passover. Pilate now graciously offered to let Jesus be the one set at liberty. Placing Jesus before the people next to Barabbas, a hardened criminal, he appealed to their sympathies, and asked them which man they wanted released. “Whither of the twain will ye that I release unto you?” The contrast between the two men was unmistakable. Pilate was certain the crowd would choose Jesus. But Pilate was wrong.

With a roar as of an ocean in storm came the reply, “Barabbas, Barabbas! Release unto us Barabbas!” “And what shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?” he shouted at the top of his lungs. Like surging waves of sound came the answer. “Let him be crucified!”

This pagan custom had come down from the days of Athens and early Rome. During national festivals the people had the privilege of choosing one imprisoned criminal, and the government would release him. Pilate had selected as the alternate choice, to stand

next to Jesus, the most dangerous and notorious criminal in custody.

An ancient New Testament, in the Syriac language, was found in 1892 in St. Catherine's Monastery at Mount Sinai, that has a different translation of Matthew 27:18. "Which Jesus will you have, Jesus the son of Abba, or Jesus the King?" We have reason to believe that Barabbas was an emboldened criminal *who had claimed to be the Messiah* and had gathered something of a following prior to his imprisonment for robbery and murder. To prove his claim as king of the Jews, he had instigated an insurrection that resulted in the death of many men (Mark 15:7).

"Ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead."—Acts 3:14-15.

Many men are still doing the same thing today. In countless ways, small and great, they are rejecting the only One who can save them.

Forgotten now, amid the hollering, cursing and shouting, was the last concern for legality or justice. All that remained was the battle between the will of Pilate and the will of the mob. Pilate saw that amid it all, Jesus stood there calm and god-like, while the deafening noise of jealousy, envy and hatred beat about Him. Pilate was never to forget the scene, yet just now he felt helpless and defeated.

Claudia's dream—When Pilate had aroused from sleep early that morning at the cries of the Jews, his wife Claudia, the adopted daughter of Tiberius, went back to sleep. She had then been given a dream in which she saw the entire court trial, Pilate, the Jews, and Christ. She, also looked upon the face of Jesus, and she heard all that was said. She saw the death

sentence handed down by her husband, and she saw Calvary.

Now the granddaughter of an emperor was fully awake. Hearing from her maids what was going on at the gate of the palace, she penned an urgent note to her husband.

“Have nothing to do with that righteousness man, for I have suffered much over him today in a dream.”—*Matthew 27:19*.

The first scourging of Christ—Upon reading it, the blood drained from Pilate’s face. He was now more frightened than he had ever been before in his life. Perhaps this was a god that stood before him. What was he to do? All he knew was to try and work out another deal with the adversaries. He was sure it would take some kind of compromise to make the Jews willing to see Jesus released.

“And the soldiers plaited a crown of thorns, and put it on His head, and they put on Him a purple robe, and said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote Him with their hands. Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring Him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in Him. Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, BEHOLD THE MAN!”—*John 19:1-5*.

In his desperation, Pilate allowed this beating of the Innocent One to take place, hoping that in some way this terrible scene would at last awaken pity and mercy in the minds of the blood thirsty rabble. But it didn’t.

The lashes that Jesus received came from a whip with a short handle to which were fastened several cords tipped with pieces of iron, lead, or bone. With each lash, these sharp pieces tore into the flesh and buried themselves in the victim’s bare back.

The fourth abuse of Christ—This had been followed by a beating and mauling at the hands of the soldiers that was a spectacle of horror. In it all, Jesus maintained a dignified silence through which shone a kingly bearing that astonished even the men beating Him.

This living torture took place within the praetorium, and following it, Jesus was brought out and presented to the Jews.

By Roman law, a man could only receive 39 lashes, for it was believed that more than that might kill him.

“Behold the Man!”—With the blood flowing from Him, Christ stood there. Pointing to Him, Pilate cried, “Behold the Man!” as he presented Him to the people. *And now, twenty centuries later, I ask you, Behold the Man! Behold what He went through for you. Behold all that He did that you might have eternal life—Behold what your God has done to open for those willing to submit to His kindly rule—the gates of heaven.*

A third acquittal—And in presenting Jesus to the multitude,—for the third time Pilate had declared Jesus to be innocent. “That ye may know that I find no fault in Him.”

In response, a massive, swelling crescendo of sound erupted. “Crucify him, Crucify him!” In disgust with the unfeeling Jews, Pilate cried out above the uproar, “Oh, take ye him, and crucify him yourselves!—for I find no fault in him!” (*John 19:6*)

Pilate had challenged them to take the law into their own hands, and in response they flung back, “We have a law, and by our law he ought to die—because he made himself the Son of God!” (*John*

19:7-8). So that was it! It wasn't treason at all. They said he must die because he was a god—and what did that mean? Pilate's fearful thoughts were in a whirl.

“From thenceforth Pilate sought to release Him, but the Jews cried out, saying, *If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar.*”—*John 19:12.*

Pilate sat down—That settled the matter for the procurator. The battle was over. Pilate's backer in Rome, Sejanus, was fast losing his hold over Tiberius, and Pilate well knew this. In fact, later that same year Sejanus was put to death by order of the Emperor. Three times in five years Pilate had nearly driven the Jews to revolt, and another near-miss might mean his end.

Pilate felt like a broken man. Calling for a chair, for the first time in this “trial” he sat down.

“When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the *Pavement*, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha.”—*John 19:13.*

Archeologists have found that pavement or *lithostrotos*. Vincent found it several years ago about fifteen feet below the present level of Jerusalem, buried under two thousand years of rubbish. Large, flat stones mark this raised place, a little north of the Temple Mount, from whence the Roman governor would issue his official decisions.

Seating himself on the judgment seat, Pilate pointed to Jesus and said, “Behold your King!” Back came the thunderous bellow—their unanimous decision—“Away with him, away with him, crucify him!” “Shall I crucify your King?”

Just the slightest pause . . . and then the bellowing

roar, “We have no king but Caesar!”

Trying to wash away the guilt—It was time for a legal decision, based on the authority of Rome—but Pilate wasn’t thinking about authority. He wanted to wash his hands. And calling for a basin of water, he did so before them all.

The fourth acquittal—Then Pilate spoke:

“I am innocent of the blood of this just person. See ye to it.”

Pilate had given his fourth acquittal of Christ. In response came the cry,

“His blood be on us, and on our children!”—*Matthew 27:24-25.*

“And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that He might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed. And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required.”—*Luke 23:23-24.*

The second scourging of Christ—Astoundingly, in order to placate the Jews still more, Pilate ordered Christ to receive yet another 39 lashes!

“Then released he Barabbas unto them, and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified.”—*Matthew 27:26.*

This is what Pilate did with Jesus. He had innumerable opportunities to choose the right, but he did not do so. Instead, like many of us today, he chose what he thought was the easier way.

What happened to Pilate later on—But it was not an easier way, for it cost Pilate his job, and his life. It also cost him his soul. Not too long after, a complaint brought an order from the governor of Syria that Pilate must appear in Rome before Tiberius to answer on serious charges. Arriving there he found his Tiberius, his wife’s foster-father dead, and a new

emperor on the throne,—the cruel Caligula. Pilate was stripped of all honors and fired from his office, and soon after “wearied with misfortunes,” as the historian Eusebius tells us, he committed suicide.

“What shall I do then with Jesus, who is called the Christ?” What will you do with Him? You saw what the rabble and Herod and Pilate did with Him. Christ let them do it for your sake—What will you do with Him? Will you accept Him and all that He did for you?

And now I speak to you: Come, fall on your knees, and accept Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord. Do it just now. It is the best choice you will ever make.

10 - THE JOURNEY TO CALVARY

This section is based on historical data and Matthew 27:31-32, Mark 15:20-21, Mark 15:20-21, Luke 23:25-32, and John 19:16-17.

Carrying the cross—It was the custom of the time for the victim to carry his own cross to the place of execution. This practice was followed in the crucifixion of Jesus.

“Then delivered he Him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led Him away. And He, bearing His cross, went forth into a place which is called, in the Hebrew, Golgotha.”—John 19:16-17.

Here they crucified Him between two others who were also to be executed. Plutarch, a first-century Greek historian, wrote this:

“Every kind of wickedness produces its own particular torment; just as every malefactor, when he is brought forth to execution, carries his own cross.”—*Plutarch*.

The cross was borne to the execution by the one who was to suffer on it—perhaps with his arms bound

to it with cords. Frequently, the neck of the victim was fastened within the *patibulum* (the cross-piece), by two horizontal pieces of wood fastened at the end, where the hands were bound. Ordinarily, the procession was headed by the centurion or proceeded by one who proclaimed the nature of the crime and carried a white, wooden board, on which it was written.

Commonly, also, the procession took the longest road, through the most crowded streets to the place of execution, so as to attract the greatest public attention. Scripture tells us that “the place . . . was nigh to the city” (Jn 19:20). But whether or not they took a short route to it that day, we do not know. A pilgrim from Bordeaux who visited Jerusalem in the year 333 specifically mentioned “the little hill of Golgotha (*Monticulus Golgotha*), where the Lord was crucified.” In its full length, the journey from the Praetorium to Golgotha could not have been a long one.

Execution would take place outside the city. Pilate would not dare outrage Jewish feelings by crucifying anyone within the walls of the Holy City.

Inadvertently, that fulfilled another aspect of the Old Testament sanctuary types:

“For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp.

“Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate.

“Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach.”—*Hebrews 13:11-13*.

Is Via Dolorosa the correct route?—Was Jesus led along the street which is, today, called the *Via Dolorosa* (“the grief-filled road”)? In the spring of each year, pilgrims carry crosses along that thoroughfare. Are they going down the right street? Do we know of

any better one?

In order for it to be the correct route:

(1) The trial before Pilate would have had to be held at the fortress Antonia. But Pilate had a judgment hall at his residence, in the northwest corner of the city. He was hurriedly awakened that morning—and the priests wanted an immediate decision. Very likely, he went downstairs and the trial was held there—not at the Antonia.

(2) The site of Calvary would have had to be, what is now called, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre or another point along the same street. But we only have the decision of Constantine's mother, Helena, regarding the likelihood of that. And she made that decision 295 years after Jesus was crucified.

The Temple was located on the east side of Jerusalem. The fortress Antonia was just north of it in the northeast corner. The palace of Herod, Pilate's residence, was located in the northwest corner of town. The palace of Asmoneans, Herod's courtroom that day, was located a few blocks east of Herod's palace. The high priest's palace was also not far away.

Plotting all those locations on a map of Jerusalem—reveals that the Antonia was in the far northeast; whereas all the other trial locations were in the western part of the city. There is some consensus that the fortress Antonia was not the site of Pilate's two trials—nor any other trials of Christ that day. If that is true, then the Via Dolorosa would not be the route that Christ was led along to the Golgotha.

To complicate the situation further, we really do not know where Calvary was located. We only have thoughtful guesses.

Do we have a better route to traverse? Yes, we do! *If you would follow in the steps of Jesus, go to the*

homes of the sick and infirm and minister to their needs. Find someone who has problems and show him solutions in the Word of God. Bring souls to Jesus and help them find peace in Him—and then you will be walking in the footsteps of Christ. When trials and sufferings come upon you, as they surely will, bear them in the strength of Christ, and you will be carrying your cross after Him.

Christ was clothed—When the one to be crucified left the courtroom, he was often stripped of his clothes. In this condition, as mentioned earlier, he was forced to walk through the busiest parts of town, carrying the cross, whipped and mocked all the way. But we are specifically told that, after Christ had been scourged the second time, they “put His own raiment upon Him, and led Him away” (Matt 27:31). One of the old classical authorities, Plautus, wrote:

“Patibulum ferat per urbem, deinde affigatur cruce”

“Let him bear the cross through the town, and then let him be nailed to the cross.”—*Plautus*.

Through crowded streets—The soldiers in charge of the execution formed a bodyguard which accompanied the victim to the place of crucifixion, not only to prevent the victim from escaping but to prevent friends and relatives from attempting a rescue.

The way of the cross must have been thronged. The city was crowded for the festival season of the Passover. While the majority may have reviled the prisoner on the way to the execution, there must have been many who looked on with horror and pity. Those who had known Jesus or had listened to His words (and there were many such in the multitude) must have turned from the scene with pain akin to heart-

break. Although only four soldiers were officially necessary for the actual execution, A large detachment must have been present in order to preserve order.

Parts of the cross—The cross had two primary parts: the upright post (the *stipe*) and the crosspiece (the *patibulum*). It was customary for the condemned to carry his own cross from the gate of the courtroom to the place of crucifixion. However, the weight of the entire cross was over 300 lbs. (136 kg.), so he was required to carry only the cross-bar (the *patibulum*), which was about 75 to 125 lbs. (34-57 kg.).

The crossbar, which looked very much like a railroad tie, was placed across the back of his neck, and then tied to his outstretched arms. The victim was then forced to carry it, naked, to the place of crucifixion. In front of him walked a Roman centurion and several soldiers. One of the soldiers carried a sign (*titulus*), on which the condemned man's name and crime were written.

The appearance of Jesus—The palace gates opened. A strange procession emerged onto the road to Golgotha. Artists attempting to portray that scene usually show the Saviour in spotless garments. The true situation was far different.

This Prisoner was a miserable sight. For long hours, He had undergone tortures of various kinds. His hair was matted with blood from the thorns. His clothing ripped and torn. His body was battered and bruised. He had been struck and beaten, first by Jews and then by Romans. A Roman scourging would render the strongest body a wreck for weeks. Jesus was still bleeding from this torture. His body must have been wracked with pain at every step.

A large crowd followed Jesus from the judgment

hall to the hill of Golgotha. The news of His condemnation had spread throughout the city—and great numbers of Jews were there for the yearly Passover services.

The cross is laid on Jesus—As Jesus passed the gate leading out from Pilate's courtyard, the large wooden cross, which had been prepared for Barabbas, was laid upon Christ's bruised and bleeding shoulders. Crosses were also placed on two other men, associates of Barabbas, who had cooperated with him in his criminal acts.

All that had happened to Him—Because of all that had happened since midnight, Jesus was suffering and was too weak to lift the cross, much less carry it. He had eaten nothing since the night before, had agonized for hours in the garden, endured the anguish of the betrayal, and had seen His disciples forsake Him.

Without sleep or food, He had undergone six trials: three Jewish and three Roman. He had received four beatings at the hands of the mob. He had received two Roman scourgings. But now, only a short time after the second scourging, Jesus could not bear up the cross placed upon Him, and He fell to the ground.

Hitting the ground, with that immense weight on top of Him, crushed His face and chest into the hard surface of the road.

A Roman scourging consisted of 39 lashes, because it was assumed that 40 might kill him. Yet Christ had received two sets of lashes.

After four beatings and two scourgings, amid intense pain and appreciable blood loss, Jesus was in a preshock state. In addition, the bloody sweat expe-

rience of Gethsemane (*hemathtdrosis*) had left His skin in a peculiarly sensitive and tender condition.

For hours, He had received physical and mental abuse. He had been without food, water, or sleep since the night before. Therefore His actual physical condition by this time—even before the crucifixion—was quite serious, and perhaps critical. As He lay there on the ground, with the heavy crosspiece on His back (much like an extra-long railroad tie), no one in the vast crowd expressed sympathy.

Simon bears the cross—Both Romans and Jewish leaders were perplexed to know what to do; Jesus obviously could not carry the cross. But just then a sympathizing voice was heard: Simon, who lived in the city of Cyrene in northern Africa, had arrived in town for the Passover.

As he was passing the crowd on the street, he heard voices crying, “Make way for the king of the Jews!” Stopping in astonishment at the scene, he speaks up, expressing sympathy for the Sufferer. His was the only voice expressing compassion for Jesus. The leaders see in this a solution.

The soldiers are ordered to seize Simon, place the cross on his back, and force him to carry it to Calvary for Christ. Because of the experience, it is believed that Simon was converted and became an earnest Christian.

What a blessed way to learn to know Christ, by carrying His cross. But we all can learn to know Christ better, as we carry our own crosses in His strength. We do not have to go to Jerusalem to do this. Just now, you have a cross you are carrying. Carry it in Christ, carry it with Christ, and you will walk securely.

The weeping women—As the procession gradually wound its way through the streets and out of the city to the hillock of Calvary, several women began weeping for Jesus. This caught His attention, for Christ always notes our sorrows. Turning, He told them they needed to weep for themselves and their children. Our Saviour was well-aware of the terrible retribution which was going to come to the nation.

Burying Judas—That retribution seemed already to have begun. On the road from Pilate's hall to Calvary, the shouts and jeers of the wicked throng were suddenly interrupted. There, by the side of the road, was a dead tree. At its foot lay the lifeless, half-eaten body of Judas. He had hanged himself from a branch, which afterward broke and fell. Dogs were now devouring his body. Quickly, his remains were buried out of sight, but now there was now less jeering of Christ. Many wondered what would come next.

It has been estimated that Christ, in His greatly weakened condition, had to walk one third of a mile (540 meters) to the place of crucifixion. And what was ahead? Crucifixion. The most painful and lingering death in the world.

11- THE CRUCIFIXION

This chapter is based on historical data and Matthew 27:33-56, Mark 15:22-41, Luke 23:26-49, and John 19:18-37.

Defining terms—Several brief definitions of Roman terms will help introduce the subject:

The Pax Romano: For centuries Rome ruled the Western civilized world with a grip that seemingly defied insurrection. It was not only the Roman talent for government that imposed this strict "peace of

Rome,” it was the presence of the cross that solidified it daily in the minds of the people: “Rebel, and we will nail you in the most terrible form of death ever invented by man—the cross.”

Today you and I too can receive peace because of the suffering on the cross by Jesus, our Sacrifice and only Help. Because of the darkness of that experience, and because of the sweet forgiveness and help He offers us right now, our entire future can be changed. The cross itself has no power to save anyone; but the Christ that suffered, bled, and died on it—can save each of us to the uttermost. No matter what you may have done in the past, what you may be now.

Come, just now; come to Jesus your Saviour, your Redeemer—your Enabler, your Friend. Come to Jesus, your Creator and your God. He can empower you to obey all that He asks of you in His Word. He can enable you to follow His example and obey God’s Ten Commandment law, as Christ did, and live a clean, godly life. He can keep you from falling, yet forgive you when you do fall, and deliver you into His kingdom.

The Excruciastus: Pronounced “*ex-crew-see-as-tus*,” this is an ancient Latin word for “the pain of the crucified one” (excruciating). Literally, it means “out of the crucified.” The word, “excruciating”, comes from the word for being crucified.

The cruciform death: In the annals of mankind, there have never been found records of a death more terrible than that of the cross. And yet God’s own Son went through all that suffering and agony in order to forgive your sins, empower you by His grace to obey all that His Father asks of you in His Inspired

Word, and impart to you eternal life at His Second Advent.

The history of crucifixion—Crucifixion is a very ancient form of capital punishment. It was known by the Assyrians and Babylonians of Old Testament times. It was used by the Greeks. When Alexander the Great captured Tyre on his march eastward, he crucified a thousand captured citizens of the city.

Alexander introduced the practice to Egypt and Carthage, and the Romans learned it from the Carthaginians. Then the Romans perfected the practice—and made it utterly horrible. It was designed to produce slow death with maximum pain.

The objective, of course, was to so intimidate the populace that they would not rebel against the government. This most disgraceful and cruel death was generally reserved for slaves, foreigners, revolutionaries, and the vilest of criminals. (Roman citizens were beheaded, not crucified; Paul, because he was a Roman citizen, was beheaded.)

The most horrible method of death—Cicero, the Roman statesman, called it “the most cruel and most frightful means of execution.” Jeseplus recoiled from it as “the most pitiable of all forms of death.” This typical Roman death penalty was unknown in the Jewish penal code.

Sometimes criminals had their feet and outstretched arms tied to the cross. Others had their feet nailed to the upright part of the cross and their hands spiked to the crosspiece, care being taken not to injure arteries or sever large blood vessels lest the agonies of the victim be shortened by excessive bleeding. Either method ensured a long, lingering death with the maximum of torture and pain. Reliable his-

torians report cases of crucified persons living for several days while enduring all the torments of death from simultaneous hunger, thirst, exposure, fever, and excruciating pain.

The horrors of this type of punishment were held up as a deterrence to hardened criminals.

“All who cared to witness the horrible spectacle were free to do so; the Romans, who thought it necessary to rule by terror, chose, for capital offenses by other than Roman citizens, what Cicero called ‘the most cruel and hideous of tortures.’ The offender’s hands and feet were bound or nailed to the wood; a projecting block supported the backbone or the feet; unless mercifully killed, the victim would linger there for two or three days, suffering the agony of immobility, unable to brush away the insects that fed upon his naked flesh, and slowly losing strength until the heart failed and brought an end.”—*Durant, Story of Civilization, Vol. 3, 572.*

The Hemathidrosis: As mentioned earlier, medical scientists have now ascertained that the bloody sweat that was wrung from His body in the agony of Gethsemane greatly increased Christ’s sensitiveness to pain in the terrible hours that were to follow on the cross.

The Flagellum: It is now known that the beating that they gave to Christ in Pilate’s judgment hall, till His back was lacerated and quivering, only intensified the pain of every breath that He took upon the cross as He hung there for hours.

But why did He hang there for hours? The priests mocked Him and told Him to come down from the cross. And He was able to do this. He could have called on angels to take Him from the terrible scene. Yet He did not do that. He remained there, and suffered on and on—for you and me.

Three types of crosses—Not *impalatium* (fastening to a stake), but *crucifixium* (nailing to a cross-beamed post) was to be the lot of our wonderful Lord and Saviour. The crucifixion process was a terrible one.

The Persian form was nailing to a tree. But the Roman method employed an upright post (the *stipe*) and a crosspiece (the *patibulum*).

The *patibulum* was the heavy, horizontal crosspiece, which was laid on the back of Christ at the gate to Pilate's palace, and to which His hands were nailed.

There were several shapes of crosses. One of the most common in Palestine in the time of Christ was the low *tau* cross (the *crux commissa*). This was a cross that was in the shape of a T. The cross, as first used by the Babylonians during the reign of Semiramis, was in the form of a T for Tammuz, one of the names of Nimrod, her son.

But Christ may have been crucified on a cross with an upright post above the T (the *crux immissa*, or Latin cross), so the sign could easily be attached above His head.

A third, lesser used, type was the X cross (the *crux decussata*, or St. Andrew's cross). The descriptions of the cross Christ was crucified on, as given by early writers, agree with the Latin cross (*crux immissa*). The inscription board would most easily be mounted on this one, and the testimony of those who lived nearest the first century (Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and many others) favored this type of cross.

It is also significant that drink was offered Christ while hanging on the cross, by means of a stalk of the hyssop plant. Such stalks were approximately 20 inches (50 cm.) long, and only the short *tau* cross,

with or without the top post for a sign, would fit this picture.

Cursed to hang upon a cross—Because the use of the cross as an instrument of punishment had its origin in the ancient practice of fastening a criminal “to the tree, which was termed ‘accursed,’ and was later known as ‘the cross.’ ” Therefore, even though it was in the shape of a cross, it was therefore still spoken of as a “tree” in the days of the apostles. Peter wrote:

“Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.”—*1 Peter 2:24*.

Wooden rest blocks—In order to prolong the suffering, a horizontal block of wood (*sedile* or *sedulum*) was placed on the upright post. The crucified one could partially rest his body on it. (In later years, a second block—*suppeditaneum*—was placed for the feet to partially rest upon.) Of the ancient cross, Renan wrote:

“A piece of wood was fastened to the upright portion of the cross, toward the middle, and passed between the legs of the condemned who rested upon it. Without that, the hands would have been torn and the body would have sunk down. At other times, a small horizontal rest was fixed beneath the feet, and sustained them.”—*The Life of Christ, 364*.

Irenaeus, an early Christian writer, said:

“The structure of the cross has five ends or summits, two in length, two in breadth, and one in the middle on which the crucified person rests.”—*Irenaeus*.

Justin Martyr, another early writer, mentioned a projecting end from the middle of the upright post, “like a horn on which the crucified persons are seated.” And Tertullian wrote of “the projecting bar

which serves as a seat.” Stroud described the cross as “having a short bar or stake projecting from its middle” (*The Physical Cause of the Death of Christ*, 35-36).

The name of the place—The place where Jesus was crucified was called *Calvary* in Latin, and *Golgotha* in Aramaic. (The New Testament Greek word is *Kranion*.) The name means “skull,” and is spoken of as “the place of a skull” in Scripture. Interestingly, enough, we call it “Calvary” because in just one place the King James translators translated *Kranion* by its Latin equivalent: Luke 23:33.

Some consider, what the Gospels call, “the place of the skull,” to mean a place of skulls—where men died and bones were laying around—a place of death. Others think it to be some place near Jerusalem that resembled a skull, the shape of the summit of the hill on which it occurred.

The location of Calvary—North of Jerusalem is what is known as “Gordon’s Calvary.” Seen from the wall of the city, it somewhat resembles a skull with two small caves below the brow, suggesting eyes. While we are told that the actual place “was nigh to the city” the exact location can only be a matter of conjecture. Jesus was crucified outside the wall; but, until we can identify the exact location of the north wall in the time of Christ, we may never know with certainty the exact location of Calvary.

The *traditional site* of Calvary is *inside* the present north wall, and is covered by the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, which was begun in A.D. 325, following a visit to Jerusalem by Helena, the mother of Constantine the Great. Within the tottering structure, a fourteen-foot hillock that is called “Calvary” can be

seen rising to the balcony level.

Gordon's Calvary, which today is more countrified in appearance, was first identified in 1849 by Otto Thenius. Near it are adjacent gardens that would remind one of the description in John 19:41. Perhaps, in the providence of Heaven, it is best that we cannot identify some of those locations. We should venerate God, not places.

Preparation for the crucifixion—According to Mark 15:25, Jesus was crucified at “the third hour,” or nine o'clock in the morning. Two thieves were crucified at the same time, one on either side of Him. Thus was fulfilled the prediction of the prophet, that “He was numbered with the transgressors.”

Before being crucified, Jesus was stripped of His outer garments, which probably consisted of a cloak, a sort of shirt, a girdle, and a pair of sandals. The soldiers divided these among themselves, casting lots over them.

“They crucified Him, and parted His garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted My garments among them. And upon My vesture did they cast lots.”—*Matthew 27:35*.

This, too, was a Roman custom; and the record of it is another evidence of the truthfulness of the Biblical account.

The crucifixion process begins—The punishment of crucifixion was invented to make death as painful as possible, so the victim will linger according to the power of human endurance. Here is one description of how it occurred:

First, the upright wood was secured in the ground. Next, the transverse wood (horizontal crosspiece) was placed on the ground.

Then the condemned one was thrown on the

ground, on his back. This would grind dirt into his open wounds of His lacerated back, wet with blood, and greatly add to His pain in the hours to come. Then his arms were extended, drawn up, and bound to the crosspiece.

The intercarpal, intertarsal nailing: Prophecy predicted that not a bone of His body would be broken—yet the hands and feet are filled with bones. We now know that the Romans had learned of a space in each hand and foot, through which a nail could pass without breaking a single bone—yet it would injure and inflame important nerves, because the nail rested alongside of them. Every movement brought terrible pain as a result.

In the crucifixion of Christ, strong, sharp nails were next brought—and driven first into the right, then into the left wrist (the *clavi trabales*). The nail was placed in the wrist, between the carpals and the radius, so that it would pierce close to the ulnar nerve and next to the median nerve. This placement would cause intense pain; yet it would result in no bones being broken, nor any major arteries being severed. Note that the nails were driven through the wrists, not the palms. A nail in the palms could not hold up the weight of the person on the cross.

Artists usually picture Christ as nailed in the palm of the hand. However, since the whole weight of a man's body would be upon the hands, a nail placed there would not have the necessary support and would drag through the tendons. So the Roman custom was to drive a nail through the wrist.

“Between the bones of the wrist there is a free space bounded by the *capitate*, the *semilunar*, the *triquetral* and the *hamated* bones, generally known as *Destot's space*.”

Historical anatomists tell us that those who were skilled in executions knew exactly where to drive the nail, both for security and for infliction of greater pain. The nail would go right against the large median nerve, which serves all the sensory nerves of the hand; and, when the hand was stretched, the slightest movement would cause the most excruciating pain. The Flemish artists, Rubens and Bandyke, depict the crucifixion in this way. We are told that archaeology confirms it.

There was an alternate way of nailing the feet. In the 1980s, archaeologists found the bones of a crucified man, buried in Palestine. Instead of a nail driven from the front into each ankle, a single extra long spike was driven from the side through both ankles. In this way, his body was twisted and his knees were flexed. Another way was to cross the legs and place a single spike from the front through both ankles, with the knees flexed. This was done not so much to take the weight off the hands as to permit the victim to raise himself up at times in order to expel air from his lungs.

Type of nails—What kind of nails were used? A crucified body was found in 1970 in an ossuary (bone box) at Giv'at ha-Mivtar, near Jerusalem. The nails used were tapered iron spikes approximately 5-7 inches (13-18 cm.) in length. Each one had a square shaft $\frac{3}{8}$ inch (1 cm.) across. In length and squareness of head and shank, they were remarkably similar to railroad spikes; however, the shank was narrower and came to a sharper point.

Another archaeological discovery, found elsewhere, was an iron spike driven through the ankle bone of a 30-year-old man. This was the result of a first-century crucifixion.

Raising the cross—If the sufferer was nailed on the ground to the complete cross, the feet were nailed next; then it was lifted and thrust into a hole. But if he was only nailed to the crosspiece, the crucified one was hauled up by means of ropes (and ladders, if a long cross was used). The horizontal crosspiece was either bound or nailed to the upright. Then the seat-rest, or support, for the body (the *cornu* or *sidle*) was fastened on it. Lastly, the feet were extended. Finally, either one nail was hammered into each foot or a larger piece of iron was put through both feet together.

In some cases, the whole cross was first erected, and then the victim was lifted up to it; after that, the nails were fastened into his arms and feet. But, at other times, the person was nailed to the entire two-piece cross, and it was lifted up by strong men and hurled into a hole prepared for its base. This brought tearing and searing pain to the one hanging on it.

“As soon as Jesus was nailed to the cross, it was lifted by strong men and, with great violence it was thrust into the place prepared for it. This caused the most intense agony to the Son of God.”—*Desire of Ages*, 745.

Placing Pilate's sign—When the nailing was completed, and the victim fully placed on the upright cross, the *titulus*, or sign, was placed by the soldiers on the cross with a nail.

“Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin.”—*John* 19:19-20.

The actual wording of this title in Latin was this: *Jesus Nazarathaeus Rex Ioudaeorum*. This inscription contained the name of the condemned, his place

of residence, and the charge on which he was sentenced to be crucified. Matthew declared that the inscription was "set up over His head." It was doubtlessly nailed to the top of the upright beam of the cross.

The accusation was written in the three leading languages spoken in Palestine, so that all could read it. *Aramaic* was the dialect of ancient Hebrew used in the first century A.D.; *Greek* was then the universal tongue of the civilized Western world; and *Latin* was the official language of the judicial and executive power of the ruling government of Rome.

Geikie declares that the three languages were symbolic of "the relation of the cross to all the nationalities of the world." It was customary to carry this board before the prisoner, as he was taken to the place of execution, and there is no reason for supposing any exception in this instance.

The inscription, as given by Matthew, exactly corresponds with that which Eusebius records as the Latin *titulus* on the cross of one of the early martyrs.

Crucifixions were generally held by the side of the road leading into town. That day thousands read that title above Christ's head: "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." It gave them much to think about.

This act of Pilate, in having the title affixed to the cross of Christ, was a well-established Roman custom. Suetonius, a Roman historian of the first century, describes an execution by order of Domitian as follows: "He exposed the father of the family to the dogs, with this title, 'A gladiator, impious in speech.' The victim was the father of a family who had spoken disrespectfully of a fellow gladiator.

Dio Cassius, a Greek-Roman historian of the second century A.D., described a crucifixion scene thus:

“Having led him through the midst of the court or assembly, with a writing signifying the cause of his death, and afterward crucifying him.”

On such occasions, the placard was either carried before the victim or hung around his neck.

Hanging on the cross—The crucified one would then hang in unutterable anguish of suffering, until consciousness at last failed.

It was commonplace for insects to alight upon the open wounds of the sufferers on the cross, or their eyes, ears, and nose. At times, birds of prey would tear at the wounds.

Jesus speaks to John—At one point during the crucifixion, as Jesus hung on the cross, He called down to the disciple John, who was standing close to Mary—and told him to care for her. What thoughtful, tender love was this! Amid the agony of His great suffering, He arranged for His mother to be cared for. She was probably in her 50s at the time. John cared for her the rest of her life; and sometime after her death, John wrote the fourth Gospel, three epistles, and the book of Revelation when he was about 62 years of age.

Jesus speaks to the thief—Two thieves had were crucified that day with Jesus; one on each side, with Jesus in the middle.

To Jesus in His agony on the cross, there came one moment of encouragement. It was the words of one of the two thieves. Both thieves had been followers of Barabbas. One became all the more desperate on the cross, and continued to rail at Christ. But the other's heart was softened as he thought back over all that had earlier taken place. He had previously heard of Jesus and His works, and today he had wit-

nessed Christ's Godlike bearing through all that had happened. At first he had joined in casting aspersions on Christ as did his companion, but soon he stopped. His heart was moved upon by the Spirit of God; and there flooded into his mind, not only recollections of the words and works of Christ—but also his own great need of forgiveness and peace with God.

Now, turning his head toward his companion in crime, hanging on the far side of Jesus, he said, "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?"

There was no longer anything to fear from man; soon they would be dead. But they must yet face the judgment day of God. Then he added, "And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this Man hath done nothing amiss." The thief has had time to think. And the realization dawns upon him: *Christ is the promised Messiah!* In Jesus—bruised, mocked, and hanging upon the cross—he beholds the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of those who choose to let Him do it.

Turning to Christ, by faith the dying thief casts himself on a dying Saviour. "Lord," he cried, "*remember me* when Thou comest into Thy kingdom!" Through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, the thief has recognized what few grasped that day—that Christ had to die in order to bring salvation to men!

Quickly, the answer came. Softly, but full of melody and love, the thief heard Christ's answer, "Verily, I say unto thee, today: Thou shalt be with Me in Paradise."

Placement of the comma—Since there are no commas in the Greek New Testament, we must place them where they agree with the surrounding facts. "Paradise" (*paradisos*) is a Persian word for heaven.

Christ did not promise that the thief would be with Him in Paradise that day, for Christ did not, Himself, go to heaven that day. He slept in the tomb until Sunday morning, when He rose from the dead and came out. After His resurrection and departure from the tomb early Sunday morning, He said, “I am *not yet* ascended to My Father” (Jn 20:17).

So, the point of Christ’s statement was that on this very day—the day of apparent failure, defeat, and death, He had divine authority to be able to say that the thief would be with Him in Paradise!

It is a basic teaching of Christianity that Christ did not rise from the dead until Sunday. To say otherwise would be to spiritualize away the great truth of the resurrection.

Surely, at the most discouraging part of His life, the faith of the dying thief must have encouraged the heart of Christ.

Death from hypercarbia:—This is suffocation from excess carbon dioxide. Because the body was suspended from the arms, the only way a breath could be taken was by lifting the body upward—and that could only be done by having the arms push downward on the nails in the wrists and the legs push downward on the nails in the ankles! In addition, the wrists had to be rotated. This downward wrenching brought intense pain to the *median* nerve in each wrist, as well as to the *peronial* and *plantar* nerves in each ankle. In addition, every time the body was raised to catch another breath, the lacerated back would scrape against the rough wood of the cross, tearing open the dirty wounds all the more and adding to the searing pain.

Although scourging could produce considerable blood loss, crucifixion itself caused very little. The

major physical cause of death from crucifixion was the interference with normal breathing. The sufferer had such a difficult and painful time in exhaling air, that he eventually stopped trying to do so—and died from asphyxiation. The weight of the body, pulling down on the outstretched arms and shoulders, would tend to fix the intercostal muscles in an inhalation state. Thus it required considerable effort to exhale air. Breathing was shallow and exhalation was primarily diaphragmatic. The onset of muscle cramps, due to fatigue, would hinder respiration even more.

Other causes of death—Exhaustion asphyxia and shock were the two common causes of death by crucifixion. But dehydration and irregular heart beat also contributed to the problem. When the Romans wanted to bring death quickly, they would break the legs. Then the body could no longer be lifted to exhale—and death would come within a few minutes. Death by crucifixion was in every sense “excruciating.” And, as we earlier noted, that is the meaning of the word in the original Latin: *Excruciatu*s, or “out of the cross.”

As His death neared—And then we come to the scene of the final deathwatch on Golgotha. Events have moved toward the inevitable climax with startling rapidity. Jesus had been taken prisoner before dawn on that fatal Friday in late March or early May of A.D. 31. Now, even before mid-afternoon of that same day, His mutilated body, stripped of its few poor garments, hung on the cross.

The silence, which seemed strange after the tension and tumult, was broken only by the agonized moaning of suffering men, an occasional call of ridicule directed to the One in the midst, and low weeping by a few women who watched from afar.

Out of sympathy, one among the crowd filled a sponge with the rough wine of the soldiers, and fastened it on the stem (reed) of the *caper* (hyssop) plant, which is said to grow to the height of two or three feet. The reed, soaked in the potion, was held up to Christ's lips while on the cross, so He could drink it. But He refused, for He would drink nothing that would cloud His mind.

Soon afterward, for Christ, the end came. His last words were heard: "It is finished!" (John 19:30), and "Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit" (Luke 23:46). The word, "commend," in its New Testament sense, means not merely commending. It means to deposit, to commit something to another for safe keeping. He spoke those words for you and for me. How many thousands have whispered them when dying! They were the last words of Polycarp, of John Huss, of Martin Luther, and of Melancthon. Immediately after this, there was a loud piercing cry from Christ—and His head fell to His chest. He was dead.

"And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost."—*Mark 15:37 (Mathew 27:50)*.

The usual cause of death by crucifixion—Scientific investigations carried out in recent years by medical specialists in Cologne have attempted to answer the question. In the case of a person suspended by his two hands, the blood sinks very quickly into the lower half of the body. Within as little as fifteen minutes, blood pressure has dropped by 50 percent, and the pulse rate has doubled. Too little blood reaches the heart and fainting ensues. This leads to a speedy orthostatic collapse through insufficient blood circulating to the heart. Death by crucifixion is therefore due to heart failure (coronary insufficiency).

It is a well-authenticated fact that victims of cru-

cifixion did not usually die for two days or even longer. On the vertical beam, there was often, as previously mentioned, a small support attached called a *sedile* (seat) or a *cornu* (horn). If the victim hanging there eased his misery from time to time by supporting himself on this, the blood returned to the upper half of his body and the faintness passed.

Here is how Cunningham Geikie described that which occurred:

“The suffering in crucifixion, from which death at last resulted, rose partly from the constrained and fixed position of the body, of the outstretched arms which caused acute pain from every twitch or motion, of the back that was lacerated by the knot, and the hands and feet that were pierced by the nails. These latter were, moreover, driven through parts where many sensitive nerves and sinews come together, and some of these were mutilated while others were violently crushed. Inflammation of the wounds in both hands and feet, speedily set in, and ere long rose in other places where the circulation was checked by the tension of the parts. Intolerable thirst, and ever-increasing pain, resulted.

“The blood, which could no longer reach the extremities, rose to the head, unnaturally swelled the veins and arteries, and caused the most tortures in the brain. The blood could no longer move freely from the lungs. The heart grew more and more depressed, and all the veins were distended. Had the wounds bled freely, it would have been a great relief, but there was very little lost.

“The weight of the body itself, resting on the wooden pin of the upright beam, the burning of sun scorching the veins, and the hot wind which dried up the moisture of the body, made each movement more terrible. The numbness and stiffness of the more distant muscles brought on the painful convulsions, and this numbness, slowly extending through two or three days, at last reached the vital parts, and released the sufferer by death.”—*Geikie, The Life and Words of Christ, 781-782.*

The Crurifragium—In order to finally bring the torture of the crucified man to an end, the *crurifragium* was given: His legs were broken below the knee with blows from a club. That meant that he could no longer ease his weight on the footrests, and heart failure quickly followed.

The legs were broken below the knee with blows from a club. This breaking of the legs resulted in a *crurifracture*. That meant that the person could no longer ease his weight on the footrests, and heart failure quickly followed. The purpose was to hasten death because, as soon as it was done, the crucified ones could no longer rise to catch a breath.

But Christ received no broken bones; He was already dead. He never received this shattering of the legs, or *crurifragium*.

“Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with Him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was dead already, they brake not His legs.”—*John 19:32-33*.

Why, in this case, was *crurifragium* given so quickly to the thieves? Because the Jewish leaders had requested it of Pilate. The day of the crucifixion was “the day before the Sabbath” (Mk 15:42; Luke 23:53-54). In addition, according to Scripture, the bodies of those hung on trees were not to remain hanging overnight (see Deuteronomy 21:23). But, far more important, the Jewish leaders wanted to get the dead bodies out of sight as quickly as possible.

The cause of Christ’s death—Why did Jesus die so soon? What was the actual cause of His *expiratum*—His death? Jesus died of a broken heart. He died from grief because of separation from His Father—and because He bore our sins. He died because He chose to save us, that we might have life.

The infantry spear, thrust suddenly into the side of Jesus to verify death, brought forth blood and water in two distinct streams. Fluid from the *serous pleural* and *pericardial* areas flowed out of Jesus, *along with blood from His broken heart*. All because He loved us too much to let us die the eternal death. He died that we might live with Him forever.

Christ died of a broken heart. *He died of cardiac rupture*. Our redemption meant that He must be separated from the Father, bear our sin, and die on Calvary. The horror of that separation outweighed the physical suffering. And it slew Him. He endured it all. He endured it to the end—for you and me.

The fact that both blood and water flowed from His pierced side established the cause of His death: cardiac rupture. As early as 1847, Dr. Wilson Stroud, in his book, *Physical Cause of the Death of Christ*, suggested that the blood and water was evidence that Jesus died of a physical rupture of the heart. His heart was broken, but not because of suspension on the cross; for it is well-known that victims of crucifixion survived for more than one day. Origen, who lived in the time when crucifixion was still practiced, tells us that the majority of those who underwent the experience lived through the night and the following day.

It was predicted that the Messiah would die from a broken, or ruptured, heart. The fortieth Psalm is a Messianic prophecy. In verse 12, speaking of the troubles that would encompass Him in the climax of His death, we are told, “Therefore My heart faileth Me.” The sixty-ninth Psalm tells us the thought of Jesus on the cross, in which is a forecast of the cause of His death:

“Reproach hath broken My heart; and I am full of

heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none. They gave Me also gall for My meat; and in My thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.”—*Psalm 69:20-21*.

From the Biblical account of the death of Jesus, it is evident that His sudden death resulted from a ruptured heart. Earnest Renan tells us:

“The peculiar atrocity of crucifixion was that one might live three or four days in this horrible state upon the instrument of torture. The hemorrhage from the hands quickly stopped, and was not mortal. The true cause of death was the unnatural position of the body, which brought on a frightful disturbance of the circulation, terrible pains of the head and heart, and, at length, rigidity of the limbs. Those who had a strong constitution only died of hunger . . . Everything leads to the belief that the instantaneuous rapture of a vessel in the heart brought Him . . . to a sudden death.”—*The Life of Jesus, 367-368*.

Geikie wrote:

“The immediate cause of death appears, beyond question, to have been the rupture of His heart, brought about by mental agony.”—*The Life and Words of Christ, 788*.

Living as He did in such close harmony with the laws of nature, there can be no question but that Jesus had more than a strong physical constitution. Under ordinary circumstances, He should have lived several days on the cross before death came. When Joseph of Arimathaea went to Pilate for the privilege of burying Jesus, we are told:

“Pilate marvelled if He were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether He had been any while dead.”—*Mark 15:44*.

It was almost an unheard-of-thing for a crucified person to die within two or three days, unless death was hastened by other means. Jesus did not die as the result of crucifixion. But rather, He died very sud-

denly in the midst of terrible agony of mind and spirit.

The death of Christ immediately followed a loud and piercing cry (see Matthew 27:50 and Luke 23:46). He cried out with a loud voice and then bowed His head and died. This suggests a catastrophic terminal event: cardiac rupture. Usually, at the time of death, the voice is the first organ to fail. It grows weaker and fainter until it becomes inaudible. The loud and piercing cry of Jesus indicated great physical strength which could suddenly be terminated only by the rupture of the heart.

“The cause now assigned for the death of Christ, namely, RUPTURE OF THE HEART FROM AGONY OF MIND has been proved to be the result.”—*Dr. W. Stroud, The Physical Cause of the Death of Christ, 155-156.*

It was separation from the Father that broke the heart of Christ and caused His death. He bore our sins, so that we might come back to God. But, at Calvary, the bearing of those sins brought a separation that killed Him. Our sins have separated between us and our God—and Christ bore the separation that we might return. You and I caused the sufferings and the death of Christ.

Behold the love of God for a world that does not love Him. Oh, my friend, just now as you read this, won't you accept Him as your Saviour? There may never be a better time. God calls us to Himself, but Satan is ever near to whisper that it isn't the “right time.” But how much more time can you count on? At this moment, you know what you should do. And you know that if you wait till that “better time,” it might never come.

Whether you are in the office or the shop, in a car, or at home just now go to a quiet place, bow your head, and kneel down right where you are—tell God

what you've done and ask Him to forgive you. Tell Him that you want to belong to Him from now on. Give Him your will and your plans. Surrender all that you have and are to Him. Tell Him that He shall have the first place in every plan and action for the rest of your life. Ask Him to send His Holy Spirit and His angels to guard and protect you from Satan's power and to give you strength to obey His Written Word. You can know that everything God asks you to do is for your best good.

For the sake of His own dear Son, He will strengthen you, and ennoble you as you come to Him and determine to stay by His side. He will restore to you the years the canker worm has eaten. In place of all the wasted past, He can, and He will, give you a wonderful future in exchange. The more earnest is your cry, the more abundantly will He be able to help you in all that is ahead. And as you found Him, so walk with Him. As a little child, coming home to Father, you found the best Friend you will ever have. And as a little child, stay with Him all the way to the end.

The veil is torn—At the moment of Jesus' death, the veil of the Temple was torn from top to bottom (Matt 27:51; Mk 15:38; Lk 23:45). That was an astounding event! This was the dividing veil which separated between the first and second apartments within the sacred sanctuary of the Temple complex.

Jewish writings tell us that this veil was renewed yearly and was a full inch thick! It was so immensely high, wide, and thick, that no earthly power could walk up to it, grab hold of it, and tear it! Yet this veil was torn from above. That is the meaning of the original Greek of the passage: The veil was torn "from above [*anōthen*] to the bottom." The hand of God

tore that curtain!

Why did Christ have to die?—The tearing of that veil meant that the earthly sanctuary service and its shadow ordinances were at an end. The ceremonial laws had come to an end. No longer need lambs be slain and passovers be kept; for Christ, our Passover Lamb, had died for mankind. But God's moral law of Ten Commandments had been rendered *all the more permanent* by Christ's death.

“Had it been possible for the law to be changed or abrogated, then Christ need not have died. But to abrogate the law would be to immortalize transgression, and place the world under Satan's control. It was because the law was changeless, because man could be saved only through obedience to its precepts, that Jesus was lifted up on the cross.”—*Desire of Ages*, 762-763.

If God's moral law could be set aside, then there would be no standard by which sin could be judged, and the gates of heaven would have to open for every sinner who hates God and rejects Christ.

“It was not merely to accomplish the redemption of man that Christ came to the earth to suffer and to die. He came to ‘magnify the law’ and to ‘make it honorable.’ Not alone that the inhabitants of this world might regard the law as it should be regarded; but it was to demonstrate to all the worlds of the universe that God's law is unchangeable. Could its claims have been set aside, then the Son of God need not have yielded up His life to atone for its transgression. The death of Christ proves it immutable. And the sacrifice to which infinite love impelled the Father and the Son, that sinners might be redeemed, demonstrates to all the universe—what nothing less than this plan of atonement could have sufficed to do—that justice and mercy are the foundation of the law and government of God.”—*Great Controversy*, 503.

Only by the enabling grace of Christ can we be strengthened to obey all that God commands in the

Inspired Scriptures. As we plead for forgiveness and help, He empowers us to obey.

“The new-covenant promise is, ‘I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them.’ Hebrews 10:16. While the system of types which pointed to Christ as the Lamb of God that should take away the sin of the world was to pass away at His death, the principles of righteousness embodied in the Decalogue are as immutable as the eternal throne. Not one command has been annulled, not a jot or tittle has been changed. Those principles that were made known to man in Paradise as the great law of life will exist unchanged in Paradise restored. When Eden shall bloom on earth again, God’s law of love will be obeyed by all beneath the sun.

“ ‘Forever, O Lord, Thy word is settled in heaven.’ ‘All His commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness.’ ‘Concerning Thy testimonies, I have known of old that Thou hast founded them forever.’ Psalms 119:89; 111:7, 8; 119:152.”—*Mount of Blessing, 50-51.*

It is not legalism to obey the commands of God, given in the Bible, for we are to do it (and can only do it) through the enabling strength Christ gives us in His grace. By ourselves, we can do no good thing, but in Christ we can do all that God asks of us in His Written Word.

“From the opening of the great controversy it has been Satan’s purpose to misrepresent God’s character and to excite rebellion against His law, and this work appears to be crowned with success. The multitudes give ear to Satan’s deceptions and set themselves against God. But amid the working of evil, God’s purposes move steadily forward to their accomplishment; to all created intelligences He is making manifest His justice and benevolence. Through Satan’s temptations the whole human race have become transgressors of God’s law, but by the sacrifice of His Son a way is opened whereby they may return to God. Through the grace of Christ they may be

enabled to render obedience to the Father's law. Thus in every age, from the midst of apostasy and rebellion, God gathers out a people that are true to Him—a people 'in whose heart is His law.' Isaiah 51:7."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 338.

12 - THE BURIAL

This chapter will be found in Matthew 27:57-66, Mark 15:42-47, Luke 23:47-56, and John 19:38-42.

The testimony of the centurion—As Christ's head slumped to His chest, the Roman centurion standing below expressed his faith (Lk 23:47). In the days and weeks ahead, many would study the Old Testament Scriptures with a new earnestness and find the prophecies predicting what had taken place. Later, when the apostles began preaching, many would accept Christ as their Saviour and be baptized.

Leaders wanted all three taken down—The Jewish leaders did not want the bodies to remain upon the crosses. The Sabbath was about to begin, and thousands of pilgrims would be in the city this particular weekend, because it immediately followed the yearly passover service. The Jewish elders wanted to hush up what had happened as quickly as possible. So they went to Pilate, to hasten the deaths of the three crucified men and remove them from the cross. Pilate assented, for he also wanted the incident put behind him.

Burial within three hours—Christ's followers also wanted His body removed from the cross, so they could give it a proper burial. But they had two problems.

First, His disciples were poor and had no influence with Pilate. Second, they only had three hours

in which to ask for the body of Jesus, and bury it.

Jesus died at the time of the evening sacrifice, which prefigured His death. At the ninth hour He died. That was 3 p.m. The Bible Sabbath would begin at 6 p.m.

Jesus had taught His disciples to disregard the non-Biblical theories and rules of the Pharisees, which were generally useless and only made life a burden. But He had always obeyed the teachings of the Bible itself—and that included the keeping of the Creation Sabbath (Gen 2:1-3) and teaching His followers to do likewise. That was the only day of the week He kept sacred; the only weekly Sabbath He taught His followers to observe.

Because of this, after His death, His disciples had less than three hours in which to bury their Master. Yet, within that time, in the providence of God, they succeeded in doing it.

Request is made for Christ's body—As soon as Jesus died, the supernatural darkness, which had been over the land for three hours since noon, disappeared and Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus, recognizing that He was dead, immediately left Calvary and went into action.

Joseph and Nicodemus were determined to give Jesus an honored burial that afternoon. Both were Jews of great wealth. They were also members of the Sanhedrin; and, in earlier months, they had stopped efforts by the Jewish leaders to slay Jesus. But they had not been summoned to the Jewish trials which had been held early Friday morning, the 14th day of the first Jewish month *Abib* (also called *Nisan*).

By Friday morning, they had learned about the Jewish trials. Both probably witnessed His crucifixion. Immediately after His final cry, it was obvious

that Christ was dead. Joseph and Nicodemus agreed that Nicodemus would immediately obtain the spices for the burial and make other needed arrangements while Joseph would go to Pilate and ask for the body of Christ, so they could bury it. Only a close relative or a person of importance could obtain that body.

From Golgotha Hill, Joseph went to the Palace of Herod where Pilate was. Because Pilate knew this influential man, he was quickly admitted into the procurator's presence.

This was the first news that Pilate had received of Christ's actual death. Knowing Joseph to be a good man, Pilate was willing to grant permission for him to have the body; but, first, he wanted to check with the centurion for details.

After that tumultuous trial—and especially because of the dream of his wife, Claudia—Pilate had a keen interest in this entire matter. A servant was sent to Calvary and hurriedly returned with the centurion. This was the same man who accepted Christ as He was dying, and who afterward said, "This was the Son of God." Imagine the testimony he gave Pilate that afternoon!

The spearing—It was customary for the Romans to leave the corpse on the cross, to be devoured by predatory birds. However, by Roman law, the family of the condemned could request the Roman judge to release the body, so they could bury it. But this was not done until soldiers confirmed that the person was dead. The normal pattern was for a soldier to verify this by piercing the body with a sword or lance. Traditionally, this was a spear wound to the heart. (In the case of Jesus, the soldiers saw that He was already dead, so a spear was only thrust into His side to see if He gave any movement in response.)

At the request of the Jewish priests, soldiers had been sent, to Golgotha, to hasten the death of the three men. Arriving, they broke the legs of the two; but, when they came to Jesus, they found He was already dead. So they did not need to break His legs. Instead, one soldier pierced His side with an infantry spear. The standard infantry spear was 5 to 6 feet in length (1.5-1.8 in.), and could easily have reached the chest of a man crucified on a cross.

The burial—Upon receiving confirmation that Jesus was really dead, Pilate called in Joseph and gave him permission to take the body and bury it. Joseph immediately returned to Golgotha and found Nicodemus with everything ready. Tenderly, they brought the body of their Lord down from the cross and laid it in a clean, new sheet. Placing the expensive spices about it, they wrapped the sheet about, and then carefully carried it to Joseph's own new tomb. It had been hewn out of rock at great expense, and now Jesus was laid in it. Little did Joseph realize that he would receive his tomb back—empty—not long afterward.

Some rolling-stone tombs have been found by archaeologists, so we have evidence that they existed back then. A circular flattish stone was set into a cut-out strip in the rock, and then rolled into place. Only the very wealthy could afford it, but Joseph had such wealth.

Several women believers were present as the body of Jesus was laid in the sepulchre. They wanted to place additional spices in the tomb, but sunset was nearing and, obedient to the Sabbath commandment, they would have to wait until Sunday to do anything more. So the women watched as the stone was rolled across its entrance; and, then everyone left, planning

to return Sunday morning.

Jesus rests in the tomb during the Sabbath—

Soon after, the hours of the Sabbath began—and, while Jesus' disciples rested in the tomb on that holy Sabbath, Jesus also rested.

God's great time clock was exactly on schedule, and when Sabbath came, Christ rested from His redeeming work—just as, at Creation, 4,000 years earlier, the Creator rested on Sabbath from His creative work of making the world.

The most important day—the day that Christ died—had ended. And history will never be the same because of it. All the tramp of human armies, all the clash of arms, all the march of history, all the theories and inventions of mankind—are as nothing in comparison with the importance of the day that Jesus, the Christ, died.

It has been said that the resurrection of Christ was the most important day in human history. No, that day was inevitable. The grave could not hold Christ! It was the death of Christ which was of supreme importance. Jesus did not have to die. He did so voluntarily to redeem all who would come to Him and, by His empowering grace, be His trusting, obedient children. Because of the death of Christ, you and I can have eternal life. Thank God every day, for the gift of Jesus: and what He has done and will do for you and me—if we will but cooperate with His plan for our lives.

“Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”—*Acts 4:12*.

“Therefore let all . . . know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.”—Now when they heard this, they were

pricked in their heart, and said . . . Men and brethren, what shall we do?"—*Acts 2:36-37*.

"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. "And He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you."—*Acts 3:19-20*.

While Jesus rested in the tomb—Jesus had taught His followers to sacredly guard the Creation Sabbath (Gen 2:1-3). So they faithfully kept it even after He died. They did not learn until later that the Pharisees had no qualms about violating it; another meeting of the Sanhedrin was held on the day after Christ died. The Jewish leaders recalled that Christ had predicted that He would rise the third day, and they wanted to make certain that did not happen. So in a special business meeting, held on the Sabbath, it was voted to immediately send a delegation to Pilate to place a Roman seal over the tomb, so it could not be opened.

Yet others were studying the Old Testament Scriptures on that never-to-be-forgotten Sabbath day. They learned that the prophecies of the coming Messiah found their exact fulfillment in Jesus, the Christ. Prophecies, such as Isaiah 53, were thoughtfully read.

Over at Joseph's tomb, one hundred Roman soldiers stood guard, determined that no one would open that tomb or even come near it.

Sunday morning—It was the early morning of the third day after Christ entered Gethsemane, and everything was quiet and dark.

Suddenly, a flash of bright light was seen, and the earth quaked as an angelic being came to earth. Falling to the ground, the astonished soldiers lay there; and, as they watched, the brilliant form of an angel

stood before the tomb.

“And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven.”—*Matthew 28:2*.

An earthquake marked the moment when Christ laid down His life, and another one occurred when He took it up again. Stepping closer to the tomb, the radiant one rolled the stone aside as though it were a pebble. Then, in a clear, ringing voice, the angel declared “Son of God, come forth; Thy Father calls Thee.”

Jesus Christ stepped out of the grave, proclaiming, “I am the resurrection and the life.” The terrified Roman sentries saw all that had happened.

Fleeing into the city, they told everyone they met about this, the most terrifying experience in their lives. The words could not be kept hidden. They were making their way to Pilate, but the report was quickly carried to the Jewish authorities. Immediately, the Jewish leaders sent word for the guards to report to them immediately. Although fearful of delay in telling Pilate what had happened, yet the guards assented. Soon they were standing before the hurriedly gathered priests.

Trembling with terror, the soldiers told all. Their whitened faces bore mute testimony to the truthfulness of their words. As they spoke, the faces of the priests blanched. They opened their lips, but could not speak. Then the guards turned to go, with the words that they must report to Pilate. “Wait,” hoarsely croaked one priest.

Then the Jewish leaders gave them money—and a lying report: “Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept.” How could they know that had happened—if they were asleep? But worse, for the sentries to give such a testimony would

mean certain death, for they would be saying they had slept at their post of duty. But the priests assured them that they would intercede with Pilate, on behalf of the guards.

When the guards arrived at the fortress Antonia, Pilate was again aroused. He had been trying somehow to rest. Accustomed to ruses and disguises, he quickly drew the truth from the soldiers. They told him all, including the false report given them by the priests. As they spoke, Pilate's face drained of blood.

He would never have another peaceful day the rest of his life. He felt that retribution was coming—for Him as well as for others.

ó PART THREE ó

FROM THE APOSTLES TO BAR-KOCHBA

THE FOUR NEW TESTAMENT EMPERORS

Augustus Caesar (30 B.C.-A.D. 14) had been one of the best rulers the Roman Empire would ever have. After him, according to Tacitus the Roman historian, the empire was ruled successively by “a tyrant, a mad-

man, a fool, and a monster.”

The *tyrant* was Tiberius (A.D. 14-37) who, upon the death of Augustus, ruled from Jesus' 18th year until six years after His crucifixion. The *madman* was Caligula Galus (A.D. 37-41). The *fool* was Claudius (A.D. 41-54). The *monster* was Nero (A.D. 54-68). The last three ruled the Roman Empire during nearly all of Peter and Paul's ministry (both of whom are said to have been martyred about A.D. 65-67).

With that background, it is easier to understand the state of affairs in the empire during the time the young church was beginning to evangelize.

The death of Christ affected all mankind. That event was the hinge of human destiny. Let us now consider what happened to several people—and the entire Jewish nation—in the 40 years that followed the death of Christ.

The New Testament is a marvelous record of historical facts. How thankful we are for it! Yet it does not tell us what later happened to a number of key people mentioned within its pages.

Here is the rest of the story.

1 - WHAT HAPPENED TO THE DISCIPLES?

What happened to the disciples in later years? They took Christianity to areas far from Judea; and, apparently, all but one (John) died a martyr's death. Our information on those later years is somewhat sketchy.

Andrew is said to have spent his last years in Scythia, north of the Black Sea. But a small book, entitled the Acts of Andrew (apparently written by someone 200 years later, in A.D. 260), says he preached primarily in Macedonia and was martyred

at Patras.

Bartholomew (Nathanael) is said to have served as a missionary in India. An ancient Christian writer, known as Venerable Bede, said Nathanael was beheaded by King Astriagis.

James, the son of Alpheus, is said to have preached in Persia, and was crucified there.

James, the son of Zebedee (the brother of the disciple John), was the first of the disciples to be martyred. Herod Agrippa I ordered him to be slain with the sword (Acts 12:2). It is recorded that this occurred in A.D. 44, not long before Herod's death. It is said that, before his death, James was the first Christian missionary to Spain.

John, the "beloved disciple," apparently died a natural death at a very old age. About the year A.D. 95, John wrote his Gospel, three epistles, and the book of Revelation. Thus, he penned more of the New Testament than any other disciple. It is said that John cared for Jesus' mother while he pastored the church in Ephesus, and that she died there. Tertullian says that John was taken to Rome and "plunged into boiling oil, unhurt, and then exiled on an island." That was probably the Island of Patmos, where he wrote the book of Revelation (Rev 1:9-10). It is believed that, when he died, his body was returned to Ephesus for burial.

Judas (not Iscarlot; he was also called Lebbaeus, "whose surname was Thaddaeus" and "Judas, the son of James") was said, by the Christian historian, Eusebius, to have gone to King Abgar of Mesopotamia to pray for his healing. After that he was said to have remained there to preach in several cities of Mesopotamia. Another tradition says that he was slain by magicians in the city of Suanir, in

Persia. It is said they killed him with clubs and stones.

Judas Iscariot means “Judas of Kerioth,” which was a small town near Hebron. John’s Gospel tells us that this Judas was the son of Simon. He was, of course, the one who betrayed Christ, threw down the coins during the first trial before the Sanhedrin, and then went out and hanged himself next to the road taken by Jesus and the soldiers on the way to Calvary.

Matthew had been a tax collector. A publican normally charged a Roman tax of 5 percent of the purchase price of normal trade items and up to 12.5 percent on luxury items. But Matthew gave up that lucrative practice when he became a follower of Christ. John Foxe, in his *Book of Martyrs*, said that Matthew spent his last years preaching in Parthia and Ethiopia, and was martyred in the city of Nadabah in A.D. 60.

Philip the disciple, was not the same as Philip, the evangelist (Acts 21:8). Some early writers say he later preached in France, and others that he preached in southern Russia; stil others in Asia Minor, or even India. So we do not have clarity on Philip’s later journeys. Polycrates of Antioch (A.D. 194), wrote that “Philip, one of the twelve apostles, sleeps at Hierapolis.”

Simon Peter (Cephas) later visited Antioch (Gal 2:11), Corinth, and possibly Rome. Eusebius wrote that Peter was crucified in Rome probably during the reign of Nero. But, frankly there is no real evidence Peter ever went to Rome. However, it does appear that he was crucified upside down. Peter appears to have focused his work on trying to reach unbelieving Jews.

Simon Zelote (Simon, the Canaanite). By one tra-

dition (the Coptic Church), he is said to have preached in Egypt, Africa, Great Britain, and Persia; by another, that he primarily worked in the British Isles. A third source, Nicephorus, of Constantinople, wrote this: "Simeon born in Cana of Galilee who . . . was surnamed Zelotes, having received the Holy Ghost from above, traveled through Egypt and Africa, then Mauretanea and Libya, preaching the Gospel. And the same doctrine he taught in the Occidental Sea and the Isles, called Britannia."

Thomas (Didymus) was a twin (both Thomas in Aramaic, and Didymus in Greek, mean "twin"). It is said that Thomas eventually became a missionary in India; he was martyred and buried in Mylapore, now a suburb of Madras.

2 - WHAT HAPPENED TO PILATE?

In order to save his position, Pilate permitted Jesus to be scourged and crucified. But that fatal decision would cost Pilate his job, his life, his soul.

Four years after the trial and crucifixion of Jesus, in A.D. 35 when Pilate massacred many Samaritans who were holding meetings, they complained to Vitellius, the legate of Syria. Vitellius was Pilate's immediate superior, and he ordered Pilate to go to Rome and justify his conduct before the emperor.

While Pilate was journeying there by ship, Vitellius appointed a new procurator, Marcellus, to serve in his place. But, when Pilate arrived in Rome—he discovered that Emperor Tiberius, his only friend at the capital (Tiberius was his wife's stepfather), had recently died (in March, A.D. 37).

Although his wife, Claudia's, grandfather had been Augustus Caesar, and her father had been Tiberius,—they were gone now!

The new emperor, Caligula, banished Pilate to Vienne, on the Rhone River, in the south of Gaul (modern France). Not long after, he committed suicide.

3 - WHAT HAPPENED TO ANNAS?

Annas was 63 years old when Christ was brought before him for trial. For nearly 20 years, Annas had kept one or another of his relatives in office. Eventually, Annas had all five of his sons successively made high priest. Annas had a very long life and died at about the time of the great rebellion which broke out in A.D. 66. It is believed that he died during the initial fighting.

4 - WHAT HAPPENED TO CAIAPHAS?

Because Caiaphas married one of Annas' daughters, on Annas' recommendation he was made high priest in A.D. 18, and continued in that office throughout the ministry of John the Baptist, Jesus, and the early years of the Christian church (Lk 3:2; Jn 18:13, 24; Acts 4:6).

After the death of Christ, Caiaphas, fully hardened, tried to kill Peter and John (Acts 4:6-21).

Caiaphas retained the office for 18 years, until Lucius Vitellius, legate of Syria, deposed him in A.D. 36—five years after he condemned Christ to death.

After Caiaphas, three more of Annas' sons became high priests. The dynasty of Annas continued on down to just before the siege and destruction of Jerusalem.

From the best we can tell, most of Annas' sons—including Caiaphas—were alive and suffered through the siege and destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 66-70).

5 - WHAT HAPPENED

TO HEROD ANTIPAS AND HERODIAS?

In the second will of his father, Herod the Great, Herod Antipas had been designated successor to the throne. But, in its final form, he only received rulership of Galilee and Perea. His official title was "Herod the Tetrarch," but historians generally referred to him as "Herod Antipas"; and New Testament writers usually called him "king," or "Herod."

Herod Antipas had married the daughter of Aretas, king of the Nabataeans, whose capital was Petra, south of the Dead Sea. But, in A.D. 31, he abandoned her, when he took Herodias, his brother's wife.

A few years after the death of John and the crucifixion of Jesus, in A.D. 37, in retaliation for abandoning his wife (and Aretas' daughter), as soon as Tiberius died, Aretas waged war against Antipas. King Aretas, the father of Herod's rightful queen—who earlier had to flee to avoid being slain by her adulterous husband,—fought Herod in battle and succeeded in taking some of his transjordan territories. Vitellius, the governor of Syria, was forced to intervene. Because Tiberius was dead, Aretas was able to keep what he had won.

But, prior to his death, Emperor Tiberius had become angry with Antipas for stirring up trouble among the eastern rulers, by abandoning Aretas' daughter. He felt that it was Herod's job to keep the peace and not to enrage other rulers, so that they made war against him.

The next year Tiberius died (A.D. 37), and the half-mad Caligula ascended the throne (A.D. 37-41). Emperor Caligula decided to make Herod Agrippa (a grandson of Herod the Great) the king of Judea, Idumaea, and Samaria. This lowered Herod Antipas'

rank to that of Tetrarch.

Antipas ought to have known enough to be quiet, yet he could not withstand the overarching pride and jealousy of his wife, Herodias. Now Antipas only had the title of “Tetrarch,” while one of his brothers had been made “king”! She had had her way in the slaying of John the Baptist, and now she wanted her way again. She gave Antipas no peace, until he journeyed with her to Rome to ask Caligula to make him king instead of Agrippa.

But upon learning that Herodias wanted to get him deposed, Antipas’ brother-in-law, Agrippa, sent letters to Rome, accusing Antipas of treasonable activities. After considering the matter, Caligula banished Antipas in A.D. 39 to Gaul (modern France) or Spain. Broken in spirit, Herodias, the killer of John, went with Antipas into banishment. His territory was added to that already controlled by Agrippa. They died lonely, forsaken, and impoverished.

6 - WHAT HAPPENED TO SALOME?

Salome was the daughter of Herodias, about 18 at the time, who danced before Herod that terrible evening—and, at her mother’s demand, asked for the head of John the Baptist on a plate.

Salome eventually married her great-uncle, Philip the tetrarch (who was about 30 years older). After his death, she married one of her cousins, Aristobulus. We have no further historical records about her thereafter.

7 - WHAT HAPPENED TO AGRIPPA I?

Agrippa I (“Herod Agrippa” or ‘Agrippa” in the New Testament) was the ruler which had his men slay James (the brother of John) with the sword and then

imprisoned Peter, intending to also kill him (Acts 12: I-3). But an angel was sent to touch Peter—releasing him from his chains—and then leading him out of prison.

Twice in Acts 12, an angel touched men. Not long after the release of Peter, an angel also touched Agrippa during his blasphemous speech at his capital, Caesarea,—immediately causing him intense agony, followed soon after by death. He died in A.D. 44 (*Josephus, Antiquities, 19, 8.2*).

8 - WHAT HAPPENED TO AGRIPPA II?

There were two “Agrippas” in New Testament times. Agrippa II was the “Agrippa” who heard Paul. This Agrippa II was the son of Agrippa I, and was only 17 when his father died. Later, In A.D. 50, he was given a territory to govern: the rulership of the northeast portion of Palestine, including Galilee and Perea. It was after that appointment that he and his wife, Bernice, at the time of a courtesy visit to Festus in Caesarea, heard Paul.

Agrippa was convinced of Paul’s innocence, and was strongly convicted that he, himself, should become a Christian. Apparently, Agrippa was not as evil as many of the other Palestinian rulers of the time. Although he heard Paul, he had no jurisdiction over the case. He believed Paul should be freed. From the best we can tell, Agrippa II lived a full life and later died in c.A.D. 93 or c.100.

9 - WHAT HAPPENED TO FELIX?

Marcus Antonius Felix was a Roman procurator of Judea and Samaria from c.A.D. 52 to c.60. He was given that assignment because he was the brother of a close friend of Emperor Claudius. Felix was not

qualified for his office, and the Roman historian, Tacitus, said he practiced every kind of cruelty and lust, “wielding the power of a king with all the instincts of a slave” (*History*, 5.9). He suppressed several rebellions of the Jews against his despotic rule.

Eventually, the Apostle Paul was brought before Felix and his Jewish wife, Drusilla. Felix trembled at Paul’s words, but was only willing to release him if Paul would pay bribe money. Several years later, accusations against Felix were carried by the Jews to Rome, and he had to journey there to answer serious charges.

10 - WHAT HAPPENED TO DRUSILLA?

Drusilla was Felix’s wife, and she also heard Paul. She was a daughter of King Herod Agrippa I. Born in A.D. 38, she was only 6 years old when her father died. The records indicate that she was not a good woman. She left her husband, King Azizus of Emesa, shortly after marrying him—in order to unite with Felix. While Paul was a prisoner, he spoke to Felix and Drusilla about righteousness, temperance, and the coming judgment (Acts 24:24-25). It is clear that they rejected what he had to say.

In later years, Drusilla and her son (also named Agrippa) were at Pompey when Mount Vesuvius erupted in A.D. 79. Both died in the rain of ash.

11 - WHAT HAPPENED TO FESTUS?

Porcius Festus was procurator of Judea from c.A.D. 60 to c.62. Festus had more integrity than Felix, whom he succeeded in office. He believed Paul to be innocent, but thought he should be tried in Jerusalem—which, if done, would have brought the apostle certain death. When Paul appealed to the emperor, he

was sent to Rome.

Festus, already quite elderly when he took office, died soon after Paul's departure.

TENTATIVE CHRONOLOGY OF ACTS

A.D. 31 - Crucifixion, Ascension, Pentecost / A.D. 34 - Stephen stoned; church persecuted; gospel carried to Samaria / A.D. 35 - Paul converted / A.D. 35-38 - Paul at Damascus and in Arabia / A.D. 38 - Paul escapes from Damascus during reign of Aretas; visits Jerusalem "after three years" (Gal. 1:18); goes to Tarsus / A.D. 44 - James the brother of John martyred; Peter imprisoned at Passover time; Agrippa I dies / A.D. 44-45 - Barnabas brings Paul to Antioch; Paul remains there "a whole year" (Acts 11:26) / A.D. 45 - Barnabas and Paul take famine relief to Jerusalem / A.D. 45-47 - Paul's First Missionary Journey; on return Paul remains at Antioch "no little time" (Acts 14:28) / A.D. 49 - Jerusalem Council, "fourteen years after" (Gal. 2:1) / A.D. 49 - Paul begins Second Missionary Journey; preaches in Phrygia, Galatia, and enters Europe / A.D. 51 - Paul arrives at Corinth, staying one and one-half years / A.D. 52 - End of Second Missionary Journey; Paul "some time" at Antioch (Acts 18:23) / A.D. 53-58 - Paul's Third Missionary Journey; travels through Asia Minor, stays three years at Ephesus; travels through Macedonia, stays three months at Corinth / A.D. 58-60 - Paul imprisoned at Caesarea "two years" (Acts 24:27); leaves in autumn / A.D. 60-61 - Paul's journey to Rome, arriving in spring / A.D. 61-63 Paul a prisoner in Rome "two whole years" (Acts 28:30) / A.D. 63-66 - Paul travels in Crete, Asia Minor, Macedonia / A.D. 67 - Death of Paul in Rome by beheading.

TENTATIVE CHRONOLOGY OF PAUL'S BOOKS

1 Thessalonians - A.D. 51, written shortly after Paul's arrival in Corinth / *2 Thessalonians* - Last months of A.D. 51, or early 52, written in Corinth / *1 Corinthians* - During Third Missionary Journey, from Ephesus / *2 Corinthians* - Shortly after leaving Ephesus in A.D. 57 / *Galatians and Romans* - Written at Corinth either during first visit to Corinth, when wrote to Thessalonians; or during three-month stay there on Third Missionary Journey, about A.D. 58 / *Prison Epistles (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon)* - spring of 61 to 63, while imprisoned in Rome. It appears that *Philippians* was written last, therefore in A.D. 63 / *Hebrews* (Due to certain textual evidence, we take the position that Paul wrote this book) - written from Rome (Heb 13:24) in A.D. 67, near end of Paul's life, prior to destruction of Jerusalem / *Pastoral Epistles (Timothy and Titus)* - A.D. 63-66, apparently during last journeys, after his first Roman imprisonment. *1 Timothy* about A.D. 64, *Titus* about A.D. 65, and *2 Timothy*, his last book, shortly before his death in A.D. 67.

The epistles of Paul cover a period of about 15 years, from A.D. 51 to 66.

JERUSALEM FROM A.D. 37 TO 66

Christ's prediction of the siege and destruction of Jerusalem will be found in Matthew 23:33-24:20, Mark 13:1-2, and Luke 21:5-6.

Shortly before His death, Jesus predicted that Jerusalem would be destroyed, and that not one of the gigantic stones of the Temple would remain upon another. He told this to His astonished disciples as they sat on the Mount of Olives, overlooking the

Temple area. Tragically, millions of Jews who rejected Christ were to die or be sold into slavery as a result of that later rebellion.

Here, briefly, is the story of what happened:

Brutal procurators—For decades, the Roman rulers had become steadily more brutal. At the same time, the Jewish leaders became more and more hardened and fanatical as, year after year, they persecuted the followers of the One they had crucified. The two elements finally produced a situation of such extreme desperation that it was fanned into open flame.

After the reign of Herod the Great (37-34 B.C.), *Archelaus* ruled over Judea as ethnarch (4 B.C.-A.D. 6). He was followed by seven procurators (also called proconsuls): Coponius (A.D. 6-10), Marcus Ambivius (A.D. 10-13), Annius Rufus (A.D. 13-15), Valerius Gratus (A.D. 15-26), Pontius Pilate (A.D. 26-35), Marcellus (A.D. 35-38), and Marullus (A.D. 38-44).

Agrippa I then ruled Judea for a short interim (A.D. 44), followed by seven more procurators between A.D. 44-66. These were Cuspius Fadus, Tiberius Alexander, Ventidius Cumanus, Antonius Felix, Porcius Festus, Albinus, Gessius Florus, and Florus. The last several of them were the worst.

When *Florus* was appointed, he seemed to work as hard as he could to push the Jews into open, massive rebellion. When he took 17 talents (\$100,000) from the Temple treasury, the Jews rebelled. Florus responded by having his soldiers kill 3,600 of them (*Josephus, Wars of the Jews, 1, 14*).

According to Josephus, Florus' "plan was to have a war kindled." And that is exactly what happened. (All quotations in this section, unless otherwise credited, are from Josephus' writings.)

Jerusalem was the Roman capital of the country during the rule of Herod the Great, who ruled over Judea, Idumaea, Samaria, Galilee, and Perea. After his death, the territories were split and placed under two more rulers. The first two of these (Archelaus, and Agrippa I) made Jerusalem their capital.

But during the rule of the fourteen procurators (A.D. 6-44, 44-66), who only controlled Judea and Idumaea; they made Caesarea their capital. (This was partly because offshore breezes gave it cooler summers.

The procurator was only in Jerusalem during important feasts, in case trouble developed. Thus, only a small contingent of Roman soldiers were ordinarily stationed in Jerusalem for 12 years before hostilities began in A.D. 66. Therefore, when the war broke out that year, the Roman leaders were caught off guard—and the Jews quickly took control of the entire city.

JERUSALEM FROM A.D. 66 TO 70

The crisis begins: August A.D. 66—Yet, even though Jerusalem had been taken over by the Jews, the crisis could still have been averted. As Florus approached the city with two cohorts of reinforcements from Caesarea, in an effort to stave off war, a delegation of moderate Temple dignitaries went out to meet them. But Florus told his men to attack the unarmed religious leaders. Historians believe that Florus was goading the Jews into rebellion, in the hope of obtaining Temple treasures for himself.

When his forces unexpectedly attacked the priests in the ensuing panic, the soldiers attempted to storm the fortress of Antonia. The Antonia was located on

the north side of the Temple mount, and passageways connected them both. But as Florus' troops entered Antonia, Jews in the Temple wrecked those passageways, foiling the attempts of the soldiers to enter the Temple precincts.

Florus retired to Caesarea, and the Jews appealed to King Agrippa II for help. (The rule of his predecessor, Agrippa I, had ended in A.D. 44.)

Agrippa II was ruler of Galilee, Perea, and the northeast, and happened to be in Jerusalem at the time. This was the same man who, several years before, had told Paul, 'Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian' (Acts 26:28). Trying to be helpful to the Jews, Agrippa told them that the Roman authorities would surely take their side; but that, until a successor should be sent, they should submit to Florus, who was their duly appointed ruler. This so angered the Jews that they began to throw stones at Agrippa! *That marked the turning point.* They no longer had Agrippa to intercede for them.

Furious, Agrippa, their last mediator, immediately left town. It was August of A.D. 66. For the next four years, Jerusalem was to know no peace. Ironically, throughout those years, the Jews fought one another harder than they fought the Romans. After killing Christ, it seemed that so many had no way to control themselves.

Anti-Roman laws enacted—The spark that ignited the internecine blaze originated as a suggestion by Eleazar, son of Ananias, the high priest. Against the counsel of all moderates, the Sanhedrin suddenly enacted an embargo on all gifts and sacrifices by foreigners. No longer could any god but the God of the Israelites be worshiped in Jerusalem, and only Jews could render that worship. In addition, no

longer could sacrifices to Jehovah be made on behalf of the emperor (a requirement Rome made of every subject nation). Such a decree by the Jews meant certain war with Rome.

Agrippa's forces repelled—In a last effort to avert warfare, the moderates sent an appeal to Agrippa to intervene. In response, he sent 3,000 cavalry to their aid. With these, the moderate priests and other Jews who wanted to avoid war seized the upper city. The more rebellious moved into the lower city and the Temple. Fighting continued for a week, and ended with the Romans being driven from the city by Eleazar's forces. After capturing the Antonia and slaughtering every Roman in it, Eleazar's forces headed for Herod's palace.

Masada captured—At the beginning of this crisis, a contingent of Jews under Menahem marched south and captured the massive fortress of Masada on the east side of the Dead Sea, which Herod the Great had earlier built. Taking it by surprise, his men plundered it, seizing all the weapons and distributing them. The Jews would hold that fortress until a year after the fall of Jerusalem. Aside from two palaces and 38 towers, it contained massive storehouses of grain and an immense water reservoir.

High priest slain—When Menahem and his men returned to Jerusalem, he arrived just as Eleazar's men were besieging Herod's palace. Immediately, Eleazar relinquished leadership to him. The remnant of Agrippa's troops in the palace pleaded to safely leave. But Menahem was on a killing spree, and slew all but those able to escape into the three towers of the palace. The next day he slew Ananias, the high priest, and the high priest's brother. Within a few

days, Menahem was assassinated, and Eleazar, who was Ananias' son, took his place.

But Eleazar quickly revealed himself to be as evil and cruel as Menahem, the one he had eliminated. After being promised freedom if they surrendered, the Roman troops in the towers were murdered as they came out—and this was done on the Sabbath day. Only their general, Metilius, managed to save his life by promising to convert to Judaism.

War spreads throughout the nation—As soon as news of this massacre reached Florus, over on the coast at Caesarea, he had his soldiers, in one day, slay 20,000 Jews living in and near that city. In reaction, Jews throughout Palestine arose and slew Roman citizens. They raided armories and carried off food and weapons.

The failure of Cestius—At last Cestius Gallus, always slow to do anything, decided to act. Cestius was the legate of Syria, however, his indecision and fear at crucial times greatly aided in inflaming the Jews. Marching south at the head of 30,000 troops, he destroyed the coastal city of Joppa with fire and subdued most of Galilee. Then, heading further south toward Jerusalem, he wavered and stopped for three days at Scopus.

Deciding to continue on, he arrived at Jerusalem—*at the only time he could have taken it and ended the war!* He began by waging an assault on the northern portion of the Temple, which failed. Once again he paused, uncertain what to do next.

Unknown to him, inside the city the moderates were working feverishly to hand the city over to him and stop the war.

But, as they were about to do so, “Cestius retired

without any reason in the world.” As Josephus explained, he just had his men pack up and walk away from the city. Immediately hostile Jews from inside the city went after the retreating army—and fell on their rear so violently, that they almost destroyed Cestius’ forces. Only nightfall saved the Roman army. In the panic, Cestius abandoned a large quantity of equipment, siege machines, and weapons. He also lost nearly 6,000 of his troops who were slain.

All Christians flee to safety—Jesus had predicted that His followers should leave the land before the destruction of the city—and that they should look for a sign that told them when to go (Matt 24:15-20). This was given when the idolatrous standards of Rome were brought before Jerusalem by Cestius, close to the holy place. When Cestius and his forces retreated, the Jews rushed out of the gates and chased them for miles.

The entire countryside was temporarily emptied of warriors; all were engaged in the battle taking place north of Jerusalem. Immediately every Christian left Judea and fled to Pella, in the land of Perea, east of the Jordan River. In answer to prayer, God had sent help. As Jesus had earlier commanded, the flight was not on the Sabbath day, nor was it in the winter (Matt 24:20). Because of this, we are told that no Christian perished in the later destruction of the Jerusalem.

October A.D. 66: Made stubborn by victory—This unexpected victory assured the Jews that they could do the same to any other Roman army which ever appeared over the horizon. “Running and singing,” they returned to the city. It was October of A.D. 66 and the twelfth year of Nero’s reign.

By September 66, the revolutionaries had won

Jerusalem and nearly all of palestine. The peace party decided to join with the those in revolt (*Durant, Caesar and Christ, 544*).

War council held in Jerusalem—Utter misery lay ahead of them all. The doleful prediction, that not one stone of the Temple would remain upon another, was to be fulfilled. The die was cast: a great war was inevitable. Immediately, a major council was held within the precincts of the Temple. Priests, generals, and administrators were appointed to manage the war throughout the country.

Among them was a young 30-year-old man by the name of *Flavius Josephus*. This was the Josephus who would later become the most important secular Jewish historian of all time. Josephus was given the governorship of Galilee, and entrusted with strengthening the fortifications in the cities of Gamala, Jotapata, Bersabee, Selamis, and Taricheae. Josephus was a capable leader, and soon raised an army of 100,000 young men. Soon everyone had been assigned old weapons which had been scrapped together, and they were busily repairing them. For several months, Josephus' forces had to contend with a wandering Jewish bandit, John of Gischala. But then John left. He would later enter Jerusalem and become a key player in its closing scenes.

Vespasian takes command—In February of A.D. 67, Nero appointed the only man he considered capable enough to manage what was obviously going to be an immense war: *Titus Flavius Vespasian*. (Do not confuse him with his son, also called Titus. More on him later.) Vespasian had earlier commanded a legion in Germany and Britain with outstanding success. At this time, he was 58 years old. Vespasian

steamrollered through the countryside, taking everything before him.

Jotapata captured—When he came to Jotapata, he laid the city under siege. Inside this formidable stronghold was an army under the command of that Jew, Flavius Josephus, who would later become such an important Jewish historian.

Next to Jerusalem itself, Jotapata was the most impregnable city in the land. For 47 days, siege machines threw stones, darts, and javelins into the city. At the same time, battering rams were hurled against its walls. According to Josephus' own description (and, being on the receiving end, he should know), these were "vast beams of wood like the masts of ships, with thick pieces of iron at the forepart." They pounded away, day after day, at the walls of the city.

Then a deserter told Vespasian that the last watch each night had the habit of falling asleep. Vespasian learned that information on the very day that his earthen banks had been raised higher than the city walls. Early the next morning, his forces entered the city and slew 40,000 Jews.

Josephus captured—But Josephus and 40 men had hid themselves. His associates wanted the group to commit suicide. So Josephus let the others go first. When only he and one other man remained, Josephus talked him into surrendering with him. When brought before Vespasian, he held up his hand and in a solemn voice said, I come to you "as a messenger with great tidings: Thou, O Vespasian, art Caesar and Emperor. Thou and thy son [Titus] with thee." That sounded pretty good, and it was enough to save Josephus' life. He was held a prisoner.

Gradually, Vespasian conquered one city after an-

other. A few cities surrendered without a fight: but, most of the time, large numbers of Jews were either slain or committed suicide when conquered by Roman forces.

When the small town of Gischala was taken, John of Gischala fled with most of his men to Jerusalem. Arriving there, he added to the reign of terror already progressing inside its walls.

May A.D. 68: Most of the nation conquered—

By May of A.D. 68, Vespasian had conquered Galilee, Samaria, Perea, and Transjordan. Then he headed south and captured the fortress of Machaerus. From there Vespasian went to the Qumran community and destroyed it. (That was where the Dead Sea Scrolls had earlier been made and stored.) Then he returned to his headquarters in Caesarea.

Vespasian's wise plan—Vespasian learned of the maddened fighting that was taking place inside the gates of Jerusalem. But he told his soldiers to stay back, watch, and wait; for, “while their enemies were destroying one another with their own hands, it was best to sit still as spectators.”

Perhaps unknown to Vespasian at that time, the fortress of Masada, on the eastern side of the Dead Sea, was still held by the Jews. When he did learn about the massacre and takeover, he wisely decided that Jerusalem must be taken first. The conquest of Masada would not be easy, and would have to be postponed until later.

Consistently, ever since he first arrived in Palestine in A.D. 67, Vespasian had followed the plan of taking control of the countryside—and staying away from Jerusalem. All the while, the internecine fighting within the city continued to rage. But now, the

time had finally come to march his troops to Jerusalem. With the exception of Masada, everything else had been mopped up.

June A.D. 68: Roman forces stop fighting—Yet before arriving there, on June 9, A.D. 68, Vespasian received word that Nero had committed suicide outside Rome, as mobs from the city were coming to kill him. Immediately, the war in Palestine came to a halt; and, for the next 18 months, there was disorder throughout the empire as various leaders jockeyed for positions of power. Three rulers in a row followed one another as emperors. More time was thus mercifully given to Jerusalem, which it squandered.

Galba ruled for seven months, until January A.D. 69, when he was slain in a Roman marketplace. Ortho took the throne, and then committed suicide three months later. His forces had been defeated by Aulus Vitellius, who in turn was crushed in a battle near Cremona by the legions of Vespasian.

October A.D. 69: Vespasian enthroned—It was October of A.D. 69, and Vespasian was, at last, the new emperor. He would rule until his death in A.D. 79. The city of Rome went wild with enthusiasm; *Vivat Caesar* (“Long live Caesar!”) was the cry. After gaining the throne, Vespasian remembered Josephus, who had predicted his rulership, and freed him. Josephus immediately joined Vespasian’s son, Titus, as a trusted counselor. It was time for young Titus, placed in charge of the Roman army, to turn his attention to Jerusalem.

Eighteen months of horror—But we need to return to those 18 months between Nero and Vespasian. What happened in Jerusalem during that time?

Jesus had told those following Him to the cross

to “weep for yourselves and your children” (Lk 23:28). Josephus said it differently: “A deep silence and a kind of deadly night had seized upon the city.” The enemy from without the city walls and the enemy within would seemingly work together in a conspiracy to destroy the city and its people.

Those who were not dying at the hands of rival factions in the city were starving to death by the thousands. The war had been in progress three years; and, with the passing of time, there had been a tremendous influx of people into Jerusalem. They had come from all over Palestine.

When John of Gischala arrived in the city with his band of fugitives, he was just another problem. Men who “omitted no kind of barbarity” were there to greet him on his arrival. But John soon became one of the leaders in the atrocities.

By the time Titus later arrived at the city to besiege it, “the state of the city was already that of a place doomed to destruction.” Thus spake Josephus, the man who later learned from eye-witnesses exactly what occurred within the doomed city. Against such desperadoes, the high priest rallied the support of the law-abiding citizens; and several armed battles occurred.

Attacked by Edomites—Then John of Gischala got an idea. He persuaded his fellow fanatics to let the Idumaens into the city, so they could help destroy the moderates! Messengers were sent, and soon 20,000 Idumaens, in battle array under four commanders, were at the gates of Jerusalem—demanding entrance. The gates were shut, but these men from without acted as if they would try to tear down the walls to get in. Going to the top of the wall, a deputy high priest boldly called down to them, Why

“had they come to protect a sink of wicked wretches [John’s men], the offscouring of the whole country and each one deserving ten thousand deaths?”

High priest and moderates slain—The rage of the Idumaens knew no bounds. They were determined to get in. That night, a powerful storm arose and the wind and rain beat down. In the darkness of the night, John of Gischala’s men managed to saw through the bars of one of the gates—and opened it to the horde outside! A reign of terror ensued, as 20,000 maddened men rushed in. The high priest and 8,000 moderates were quickly slain.

Simon Bar Giora arrives—When their work of destruction was ended, the Idumaens suddenly left the city. It was as if devils had been sent in to work great destruction, and then depart as quickly as they came. But now Simon Bar Giora arrived at the gates of the city!

Simon Bar Giora was originally from Gerasa (Jerash), one of the cities on the eastern side of Galilee (the district of the Decapolis). An unusually fierce fighter, he had earlier led that successful attack on the rear of Cestius’ army. Since then, he had roved across the countryside, pillaging, seizing property, slaying Jews and Romans indiscriminately. When threatened by Roman forces, he quickly retired into the fortress of Masada. “Proclaiming liberty to all those in slavery and getting together a set of wicked men from all quarters,” he ere long had a marauding army of 25,000.

To the people of the countryside, disoriented and confused by the warfare, he was as a god to be followed. For he seemed to have a purpose at a time when few Jews knew what to do. When Simon Bar

Giora arrived at the gates of Jerusalem with 12,000 men, he also demanded to be admitted. The long 18-month wait, while the emperorship of Rome was still in transition, was nearing its end. It was almost time for Vespasian to depart for Italy and for his son to march to Jerusalem.

Astoundingly, the forces of Simon Bar Giora were permitted to enter the city! One disoriented group within the fated city had somehow decided that Simon's army might eliminate John's! The city was in jeopardy because of John's depredations; in desperation, the gates were opened to Simon's forces. But this was "a remedy that was to prove worse than the disease." Matthias, the most recent high priest, went out to welcome them in. Havoc reigned throughout the city.

THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM

May A.D. 70: Titus arrives at Jerusalem— Vespasian had, by this time, been declared emperor of the Roman Empire. It was October, A.D. 69. He gave the control of the army into the hand of his son, Titus. The young man had planned battles and fought by the side of his father; and, like him, he was organized, self-controlled, and knew what he was doing.

It was May 10, A.D. 70, that Titus and his army arrived outside the walls of Jerusalem. He was 30 years old, and the commander of all the combined Roman forces in the East.

In mercy, abundant time had been given the people of that city. Cestius Gallus had an excellent opportunity to take the city in October of A.D. 67. Instead he walked away. Vespasian was about to lay it under siege a year later, but then he stopped hostilities dur-

ing the 18 months of political uncertainty. But now the time had come. There would be no more reprieves. The prediction given 36 years earlier (Matt 24:1-2) was to be fulfilled.

Jesus had earlier wept over the city which rejected Him. It was to experience all the horrors of famine, disease, and warfare. Yet the greater part of it would be caused by those within the walls of the doomed city. Those who were not dying at the hands of rival factions in the city were starving to death.

The arrival of Titus meant that those in the city could no longer safely leave. Simon's forces, John's army, and all the rest were now locked inside a city from which they could not escape. As Titus made the noose tight (by constructing a second wall around the first, described in more detail shortly), those inside the city spent their time living with ever-increasing famine and mutual destruction.

Three factions inside—The sedition in Jerusalem had now taken the form of “a wild beast grown mad.” Three factions were preoccupied with destroying one another. It was “a great body torn to pieces.”

Eleazar, the one who had started it all, was still alive. He was in charge of one band of some 2,000 Zealots, and was in the inner court of the Temple. *John of Gischala* had 6,000 men, and he was in the outer court of the Temple. *Simon Bar Giora*, by this time, had 10,000 under his command. In addition, he was allied with 5,000 *Idumeans* who had remained behind when their fellow countrymen left.

While Titus tightened the siege, those inside seemed to agree on nothing, except “to kill those that were innocent; and the Temple was defiled everywhere with murders.” There had been enough food stored in the city to last for years. But, already, large amounts

of grain and other foodstuffs had been seized and destroyed by rival parties. Now, as conquest by Titus neared, John and Simon destroyed by fire most of the final reserves of corn and other provisions.

But, now, back to Titus.

Titus' army outside the city—Upon arriving outside the gates of the city, Titus initially pitched his camp about four miles from the walls. Shortly afterward, he rode around the city to look over the terrain he would have to work with. Suddenly, he and 600 horsemen were suddenly ambushed, and very nearly lost their lives.

The next day, his four legions began arriving, each with over 16,000 men. He now had the fifth, tenth, twelfth, and fifteenth legions of the Roman army, along with a host of auxiliaries. This was an army of 65,000 men under his command. Nevertheless, it took him 139 days to conquer the city.

As Titus began putting the siege machines in place, the warring factions within the city fully came to their senses, and began giving some attention to fighting the forces outside.

As the tenth legion moved into position on the Mount of Olives, Jews from inside the city sallied forth to do battle. The Romans were startled at the maddened frenzy of those men. The battle had begun—at the very place (on the Mount of Olives side of the city) where Christ made the prediction nearly 40 years before, that the city and its Temple would be destroyed.

A second wall erected—Outside the outer walls of the city, Titus had his men erect a second wall—to prevent anyone from escaping. Then he set to work to penetrate the city's own outer walls, yet it took 25

days to take them. This was done with earthen banks, battering rams, and machines which hurled immense stones, darts, and javelins nearly 500 yards. Towers which were 75-foot tall were constructed and pushed up next to the walls. In this way, the two outer walls on the south, west, and north sides of the city were taken.

At the walls of Antonia and the Temple—Having secured these, the next step was to penetrate the last wall. This was the one surrounding the fortress of Antonia and the Temple just south of it, and the old city south of that. “The Temple was a fortress that guarded the city, as was the tower of Antonia a guard to the Temple.”

It was obvious that the penetration of the Antonia and the Temple would be most difficult. So Titus called all his men back, and spent four days parading the entire enemy forces in all their war equipment around the city. Surely, it must have awed the defenders on the walls, but they gave no indication that they were willing to surrender. Repeatedly, he asked them to surrender. But those within the city would not do so.

Josephus, their last intercessor—Titus then called Josephus to his aid, and asked him to plead with the people. Standing behind protective barriers, so their projectiles could not reach him, Josephus, the former Jewish general of Jotapata, called out to the people in their language, pleading with them to surrender. Josephus called to them from a position “out of reach of their darts and yet within their hearing.” He told them it was foolish to leave “the city empty of inhabitants and the country a desert; on which account Caesar did now offer them his right

hand for their security.” Cries of hatred and showers of darts were the only reply from the walls.

So Josephus approached still closer to the wall in such a way that he could not be seen, but could be heard. Having once been a Jewish rabbi and one of their military commanders, Josephus knew how to speak so they could understand, whether or not they assented to what he had to say.

He told them that if they were doing right, then God would avenge them—as He had always done in earlier centuries. But, Josephus said, He was not helping them because they had done wrong and profanely denied Him by their actions.

Josephus told them it was not the Romans they were fighting, but the God of heaven. Surely, he said, if God could slay the army of Sennacherib, He could slay the entire Roman army—if they were in the right. But they were not. They were doing wrong. Josephus said if God could restore the city and Temple to His people as He did in old times through Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes, surely He would have done it now if they were right in what they were doing. But they were doing evil. They were robbing and murdering one another, and had been doing it for four years.

Josephus told them that, just as God helped the king of Babylon burn down the city and the Temple in ancient times, so He would let the forces of Titus do it again—if they did not surrender.

Horrors inside—Jeers and curses were all that Josephus received in reply. John and Simon became only the bolder in their determination to resist to the end, and slay all inside the city who refused to help them do so. With the passing of time—

“. . . girdles and shoes and the very leather from shields were chewed. Children and young men wandered about

the marketplace like shadows, some even searching the common sewers and old dunghills of cattle for something to eat. Terrible methods of torment were invented by robbers to discover where food was hidden . . . and everyone died with his eyes fixed upon the Temple.”

Trees made into crosses—Titus ordered that every tree for miles around be cut down. Crosses were erected, and every Jew caught was crucified in full sight of those in the city. Because many would sneak out at night, in search of weeds to eat, as many as 50 were crucified daily. There were no trees within a 12-mile radius around the city. (Do not, today, try to find olive trees from the time of Christ in Gethsemane; its garden was totally destroyed. Every tree in Bethlehem and Bethany was also cut down.)

Theft, murder, and destruction—Conditions within the city continued to worsen. For years, factions within the city had been warring against one another. They would steal food—and even destroy it. It seemed as if madness reigned everywhere. As predicted over 1,500 years before, people in the siege killed and ate one another (Deut 28:49-57).

Ramps thrown down—Seventeen days were then spent in constructing ramps to aid the soldiers in climbing to the top of the walls of Antonia. But John had cleverly dug from beneath and weakened the ground beneath the ramps. At the moment of attack, the base of the ramps gave way—as John’s men set on fire the cross ties from above. So far, Titus was prevented from entering the city.

July A.D. 70: Nearing the end—Yet it was plain that the famine inside the city was worsening. Surely, the end was approaching. Titus decided to throw up four new banks against the walls of Antonia. He knew

that, once that was taken, the rest of the city would inevitably fall to him. In 21 days, the four banks were completed—and the attack was made.

Antonia captured—Intense fighting occurred, and the Roman troops succeeded in taking Antonia. It was now nearly the end of July of A.D. 70. But there still remained the Temple and the city beyond.

The fortress Antonia was next to the north wall of the Temple Mount. Titus next tried to storm over into the Temple. Fierce fighting took place, but Titus' men failed to penetrate. They were driven back into Antonia.

Throughout all this time, the daily morning and evening sacrifices had continued to be offered on the great brazen altar in the court of the Temple. But, on August 7, it stopped "for want of men to offer it."

Titus amazed at splendor of the Temple—Looking down upon it from the heights of Olivet, Titus was amazed at the splendor of the Temple, and he determined to spare it. He appealed to the Jews to leave the Temple area and fight with him anywhere else. In this way, he said, the great Temple of the Jews could be saved from possible destruction. But, faithful to his maddened determination to continue destroying everything, John of Gischala laughed him to scorn and replied by setting his artillery on the gates of the sanctuary itself. Titus had little option but to let his soldiers penetrate the walls—and enter this holy place of the Jews.

Antonia destroyed—Titus now set to work demolishing the fortress of Antonia. Everything but the southeast tower was torn down, so he could move his war engines and embankments closer to the outer wall of the Temple court. Earthen banks were raised

at various places around the cloistered walls. But, in the process of doing this, too many troops were being slain by those on the walls.

Outer gates set on fire—So Titus stopped work on the banks and gave orders to set the outer gates of the Temple complex on fire. This was done, and it appeared that within a short time his men would be able to enter through those gates.

Titus orders that Temple be spared—General Titus then issued strict orders that no fire be permitted near the actual Temple building itself. (Keep in mind that the central Temple building was inside an encircling courtyard complex, which, itself, was inside the cloistered outer walls.) At all costs, Titus ordered that the beautiful Temple must be spared.

But a greater than Titus had declared that it would be destroyed, and that not one stone would be left on another.

Soldiers enter outer Temple courts—By now the outer entrance gates had burned down. But, fortunately, the fire had not spread elsewhere. Titus' men began rushing through the smoldering gates into the courtyard. Inside, they found hundreds of half-crazed people, fighting with insane fury. Angered to feverish intensity by this, the soldiers butchered everyone they found. By now it was dark, but the fighting continued on into the night.

Porticoes set on fire—Then, in the excitement, a firebrand was flung by a soldier into one of those porticoes of the outer wall of the courtyard of the Temple. Immediately, the fire in that cedar-lined chamber began spreading to other porticoes along the outer wall.

Josephus described the scene:

“At which time one of the soldiers, without staying for any orders (to do so), being hurried on by a certain divine fury and being lifted up by another soldier, set fire to a [tightly shuttered] golden window, through which there was a passage to the rooms that were about the holy house on the north side of it.”

Another writer described it this way:

“The blind obstinacy of the Jewish leaders, and the detestable crimes perpetrated within the besieged city, excited the horror and indignation of the Romans, and Titus at last decided to take the temple by storm. He determined, however, that if possible it should be saved from destruction. But his commands were disregarded. After he had retired to his tent at night, the Jews, sallying from the temple, attacked the soldiers without. In the struggle, a firebrand was flung by a soldier through an opening in the porch, and immediately the cedar-lined chambers about the holy house were in a blaze. Titus rushed to the place, followed by his generals and legionaries, and commanded the soldiers to quench the flames. His words were unheeded. In their fury the soldiers hurled blazing brands into the chambers adjoining the temple, and then with their swords they slaughtered in great numbers those who had found shelter there. Blood flowed down the temple steps like water. Thousands upon thousands of Jews perished. Above the sound of battle, voices were heard shouting: ‘Ichabod!’—the glory is departed.”—*Great Controversy*, 33.

Learning of this fire in the outer court porticoes, Titus arose and ran to the Temple, shouting orders for the men to put out the flames. The main building was still untouched. Somehow, he cried, it must be preserved! But the shouting and mayhem continued; and the soldiers drew closer to the main building, housing the first and second apartments of the sanctuary.

Titus well-knew that if the central sanctuary was protected from harm, the fanatics would use it as a

fortress and keep fighting. *Yet Titus was determined to save that sanctuary!* It was too glorious to be destroyed. Yet the few soldiers who did try to put out the fire were attacked by the “defenders of the sanctuary.”

In response, the soldiers, furious at the fanaticism, ignored the fire in the porticoes around the holy building—and fought the Jews instead.

Titus enters the Temple—Meanwhile, Titus entered the holy building with his officers and gazed about them. In the light from the flames outside, the wondrous beauty inside was breathtaking. It contained a first apartment and a second with gold-plated walls, divided by an immense curtain of blue, purple, and scarlet material with embroidered figures of cherubim. The first apartment had three beautiful solid gold furnishings in it. Titus was determined that this building must be saved.

Titus pled with his men. He told them to give their attention to putting out the fire. His centurion, Liberalis, tried to enforce obedience, but all to no effect. The soldiers were becoming as maddened as the Jewish defenders. Gradually, as the fighting continued, the soldiers neared the actual Temple building itself.

Lighted torch thrust into Temple—By now the soldiers had arrived at the spectacular building. Entering the outer part of the building, in the wild light of the flames the soldiers saw gold glistening all about them. Surely, there must be incalculable riches in here! Angered by the fanatical Jews, and thinking that fire might bring them all some of those riches, one soldier thrust a lighted torch between the hinges of the door leading into the inner sanctuary. Instantly,

the building was in flames.

Once again, Titus rushed forward, but the smoke and heat were intense. The inner cedar walls of the building were on fire. Nothing could be done to save it. The Temple was burning to the ground!

“The fatal day had come; it was the 10th day of the month of Ab—the same day upon which it was formerly burnt by the king of Babylon.”

Temple totally destroyed—One after another, towering sections of the main sanctuary tottered and fell into the flames. As one writer said, “The whole summit of the hill which commanded the city blazed like a volcano.” The heat was intense, and everyone was driven back. Soon, there was nothing to do but stand and watch it burn to the ground. For a time, the fighting stopped; and all that could be heard was the crackling of the flames and the periodic crash of more sections into the maelstrom of fire below. The walls and roofs of cedar, the pinnacles, and gate towers—all were a blazing inferno.

The light of the flames could be seen on every face, and reflected off the slopes of nearby Gethsemane. Indeed, thousands of faces were watching it, for both Romans and Jews stood entranced by the sight. From locations all over the lower city, at every building, window, and roof, Jews stared in horrified silence as their Temple was being destroyed.

Soon the fighting in and around the courtyard resumed as projectiles were hurled by Jews at the Romans. They were met with slashing swords. Amid the tempest of the roaring fire, the crash of buildings, the thunder of falling timbers, the screams of perishing Jews and shouts of running soldiers echoed from the walls, houses, and the slopes of Olivet and reechoed from the surrounding hills. What a ca-

tastrophe; what a terrible end!

“And thus was the holy house burnt down, without Caesar’s approbation [approval] . . . 1,300 years, seven months, and 15 days after the laying of its first foundation by King Solomon.”

Not one stone left upon another—With the Temple in ashes, the entire city soon fell into the hands of the Romans. Inaccessible battlements were deserted; impregnable towers were forsaken. But there still were pockets of resistance. As a result, the lower city was burned—as far as the pool of Siloam. The upper city was also destroyed and, along with everything else in the entire city, razed to the ground.

Some statistics—It took 139 days for Titus’ army of 65,000 men to gain control of the whole city. More than 100,000 Jews died within the city between early May and late July. In August, the Temple was burned to the ground; and, in September, the southern half of the city fell. Over 1 million Jews lost their lives in the siege. Another 97,000 were taken captive to foreign lands. Josephus put the final casualty figures for the siege alone at 1,197,000 (*Josephus, ix, 3*). Tacitus calculated them at 600,000 (*Tacitus, v, 12*). Even during the sorting out of slaves, 1,100 died for want of food, either because the Romans did not give them enough or because they refused to eat.

September A.D. 70: End of the war—September 2, A.D. 70, saw the end of this, one of the most terrible sieges in history. Titus returned to Rome the following year. His father was still emperor. The city went wild with excitement and a new title was coined for Titus: “*Imperator Designatus*.” (“The one designated to be the next emperor.”) Special coins were minted in honor of what he had done, and the most

famous of Roman arches—the *Arch of Titus*—was erected several years later in his honor. It can be seen in Rome today. On it, in relief, are to be seen pictures of Jews being taken captive to Rome. Utensils from the Temple (including the seven-branched lampstand) are shown.

The city that put the Saviour to death had virtually destroyed itself. As Josephus described it:

“This was the end which Jerusalem came to by the madness of those that were eager for innovations, a city otherwise of great magnificence and of mighty fame among all mankind.”

“Sedition destroyed the city, and the Romans destroyed the sedition, which it was a much harder thing to do than to destroy the walls; so that we may justly ascribe our misfortune to our own people, and the just vengeance taken on them by the Romans . . . For this internal sedition did not cease even when the Romans were encamped near their very walls. But although they had grown wiser at the first onset the Romans made upon them, this lasted but a while.

“For they returned to their former madness, and separated one from another, and fought it out and did everything that the besiegers could desire them to do; for they never suffered anything that was worse from the Romans than they made each other suffer.”—*Josephus, War of the Jews, v, 13-14.*

What happened to Josephus?—After the fall of Jerusalem, Josephus sailed to Rome with Titus, and accompanied the conqueror of his people in a triumphal procession through the streets of the city. Emperor Vespasian gave him Roman citizenship, a pension, an apartment in his palace, and profitable lands in Judea (*Josephus, Life of Flavius Josephus, 540*). In return, Josephus took Vespasian’s family name Flavius, and spent the rest of his life writing history

books (primarily *The Wars of the Jews and the Antiquities of the Jews*).

MYSTERY OF THE COLOSSEUM SOLVED

When we think of Rome, we think of the Vatican and St. Peter's Basilica. But the history of the city extends back centuries before they came into existence.

The immense Colosseum—The most imposing ancient structure in the city of Rome is the Colosseum. Like its name, *colossal*, it is mammoth: the largest ancient stadium ever built.

It was 165 feet high, 600 feet long, 500 feet wide, a third of a mile around, with some 80 entrances. Not only did it have a seating capacity of about 50,000, but also an overhead canopy to protect spectators from sun and rain. This massive arena was so well-planned that the design of Harvard Stadium was based on it.

Yet how did the Romans get the money to build this immense structure? Until recently, historians had made educated guesses. But at last we know.

Originally called the *Amphitheatrum Flavium*, it was the first major amphitheater in Rome, built entirely of stone. Constructing it was a fabulous engineering feat. The structure was erected on a dry lake bed, formerly used by Nero as his private recreational lake. Because the soil was clay and unstable, a concrete ring had to be sunk into the former lake bottom for support. The overall cost was tremendous.

Most of the Colosseum was erected during the reign of Vespasian (A.D. 69-79) and that of his son, Titus (79-81). Titus' brother, Domitian (81-96), and a couple later emperors added the finishing touches,

including a final tier of seats.

It was in the Colosseum that the famous gladiatorial fights were staged. It was here that Christians were thrown to the lions—as sport for the enjoyment of the rabble of the city. The Colosseum was used until A.D. 407, a century after Constantine made peace with the Christians and entered into a league with the bishop of Rome.

In later centuries, the stones of the Colosseum were repeatedly plundered by wealthy citizens. It provided stonework for several palaces and part of St. Peter's.

What paid for the Colosseum?—This vast edifice was the greatest and most costly structure in Rome, until St. Peter's Cathedral was erected in the sixteenth century. But St. Peter's was built with “dispensation” money from all over Europe. What paid for the Colosseum?

This has been a mystery for centuries.

Within a year after Vespasian came to power in 69, he began making urgently needed public works and repairs. He endowed schools and paid teachers. The people loved him. Money was poured out on useful projects.

When he learned that Emperor Augustus (27 B.C.-A.D. 14) had wanted to build a gigantic amphitheater in the center of Rome, Vespasian began work on an immense one. Massive amounts of money were poured into the project. During his reign, he constructed its foundations and built three tiers of seats.

Vespasian had somehow gotten the money to do all this from somewhere.

On the death of Vespasian in 79, his son, Titus, ascended to the throne and continued spending money.

The famous *Arch of Titus* was erected, which showed his triumphant conquest of Jerusalem in 70. He also added two more tiers of seats to the Colosseum. An outside view of the mammoth structure is shown on several of Titus' coins. He was quite proud of the immense building which he and his father had erected.

The spectacles in the Colosseum included animal hunts, gladiatorial fights, mock sea battles,—and the killing of Christians.

Yet where did those two rulers get the money to build this immense structure?

Unraveling the mystery—If you travel to Rome and decide to visit the Colosseum, be sure to enter it by the present main entrance on the west. If you know what to look for, as you are walking in, you will see a large marble block inscribed with four lines of Latin text. It is lying on the ground on the right-hand side of the passageway.

On that stone is the answer to the uncertainty.

That stone must have originally served as an *architrave*, leading into the Colosseum. (An *architrave* was a wide top stone—we would call it a lintel—over a Greek or Roman stone entrance.) We know that this is true, because on the bottom surface of that particular stone are inscribed flowers and leaves. Those approaching the entranceway could look up and read the inscription; and, as they passed underneath the stone, they would see the decorations on the bottom.

In 1986, two Italian scholars (Dinca and Morelli) published an accurate diagram of the inscription. Additional research was done by Theodosius and Valentianus. In 1995, Géza Alföldy of the University of Heidelberg published a concluding decipherment.

The key word on the inscription is “*manubiis*.” It means “booty”! “*Manubiis* is the word that solves the mystery. The Colosseum was built with money from the spoils of a war! What war? —The war that had just ended in A.D. 70, a few months before work on the Colosseum began.

The Temple a treasure storehouse—The Colosseum was built with treasures from the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem, which Titus captured in A.D. 70. During the preceding four-year struggle, all the private and public wealth of the entire Jewish nation was brought to Jerusalem and stored in treasure chambers adjoining it. Discovering it, Titus carried it all off to Rome—and despoiled the land of Israel of hoarded its silver, gold, and treasures.

Much of it, according to Josephus the Jewish historian, was there deposited in the Temple of Peace and used for the public good (*Josephus, Wars of the Jews, 7.161-162*). Josephus added that, by the time he was writing his history, a couple decades later, nothing remained of that treasure; it had all been used up.

Josephus, in his *Wars of the Jews (6.387-391)*, speaks of treasures delivered over to the victorious Romans by the priests. These included lampstands, tables, bowls and platters, all made of solid gold and very massive, as well as many other treasures and sacred ornaments. Josephus also said that the altar and lampstand, both made of gold, weighed no less than two talents (about 66 pounds) (*Against Apion, 1.198*).

Before the Temple was razed the Romans probably emptied out the vast wealth stored in the treasure chambers,

“. . . in which lay infinite [*apeiron*, ‘boundless’] sums of

money, infinite [again *apeiroi*] piles of raiment, and other valuables; for this, in short was the general repository of Jewish wealth, to which the rich had consigned the contents of their dismantled houses.”—*Josephus, Wars of the Jews, 6.282.*

Many people had earlier donated houses and fields to the Temple, which were then sold and the proceeds deposited in the Temple treasury (*Tosefta, Sheqalim 2:15*). Do you see the irony in this? The cruel practice of “*corban*” (Mark 7:11) had met a terrible retribution. As you will recall, *corban* was the money given to the priests, so the parents could be disinherited and not cared for in their old age by their children. (The word, “*corban*,” is *korbanas* in the Greek and comes from the Hebrew. It means “a votive offering,” or “consecrated present.”)

Money from slaves—Another source of income was the sale of Jewish slaves. According to Josephus, over 97,000 were carried captive and sold (*Josephus, Wars of the Jews, 6.420*).

“The spoils in general were borne in promiscuous heaps; but conspicuous above all stood out those captured in the Temple at Jerusalem.”—*Josephus, Wars of the Jews, 7.148.*

The vast wealth accumulated by generations of Jewish officials and priests, hoarded in the Temple at Jerusalem, had been taken to Rome. There it was used to build the most massive ancient amphitheater in history.

In that gigantic sports arena, Christians were slaughtered for hundreds of years. The money that built their place of torment came from the Temple at Jerusalem.—*That is the discovery, which only recently, was clearly made certain.*

THE FALL OF MASADA

Jerusalem had fallen, but one last conquest yet needed to be made: The Jewish forces holed up at the gigantic fortress east of the Dead Sea—Masada.

That immense fortification had been built by Herod the Great about a hundred years earlier. After being captured by Jewish forces in A.D. 66 at the very beginning of the war, Zealots later took possession of it during the four-year war.

Who were the Zealots?—Of the Jews, the Zealots had for years been the most determined to throw off the Roman rule. During the time Felix served as procurator of Judea (A.D. 52-60), the Zealots formed a super-fanatical group, calling themselves the *Sicarii*. The name means “dagger people.” Prior to each Jewish feast, the *Sicarii* would prepare their hit lists. Then, during the feasts, they would quietly circulate among the crowds in Jerusalem. Walking up to Jews known to be Roman sympathizers, they would stab them to death, using daggers concealed in their clothing. As the victim crumpled, the Zealot would draw back into the crowd (*Graetz, History of the Jews, Vol. 2, p. 239*).

Before the siege, some of the *Sicarii* also fled from Jerusalem and, with their families, fled to Masada.

Siege of Masada begins—After Titus’ destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, Masada had become a refuge for these and other Zealots fleeing from the Roman armies. So Titus sent Flavius Silva to take it. Under his command, ten thousand legionnaires marched southward. They carried weapons, supplies, and siege equipment through the trackless wastes of the Dead Sea desert to the base of that massive fort. Remains of their camp, a three-mile wall encircling

the fortress, and a massive earthen ramp can still be seen today.

Setting high atop a steep mountain, the stones of the walls and buildings of Masada had, for maximum strength, been cut and fitted before being erected. That was the same building technique Herod the Great had used in constructing the Temple. He had started the construction on top of Masada in 37 B.C. Its fairly level summit was half a mile long and 220 yards wide. Here Herod had built a winter palace, huge storehouses, and an enormous water reservoir.

At the northern end of the fortress, a second palace had been constructed on three levels, with Corinthian columns and mosaic floors. The whole area was surrounded by an 18-foot wall with 38 watch-towers. The weapons that Herod had stockpiled fell into the hands of the Jewish insurrectionists a hundred years later, in A.D. 66. From that wide-spreading fortress mountain, the entire country-side, the “*Sea of Lot*” (the Arab name for the Dead Sea), and its far side (where the *Qumran* community and Dead Sea scrolls were located) could be seen.

The attack begins—Finally, the Roman preparations were completed, and they marched up the ramp they had made—and were met by a rain of darts from within. Then, just as Titus had successfully done in penetrating the Temple area, Flavius Silva ordered his men to set fire to the great entrance gate.

On both sides, everyone watched to see what would happen next. At first the wind blew the fire away from the gate, and those inside rejoiced with shouting. Then, suddenly, the wind changed—and blew steadily southward. Soon the gate was blazing.

Immediately, the defenders ran to the top of the mountain and counseled together. They knew their

time was limited, and that the next morning the Romans would come up that road—the only entrance and exit into Masada. At the urging of Eleazar ben Yair, their leader, they agreed on a suicide pact. Two men would slay all the rest, and then one would kill the other. Finally the last one would commit suicide. Lots were distributed to determine the order of the slayings, and the work of self-extermination gradually went forward.

The next morning, the Roman troops cautiously advanced past the burned-out gates on up the steep entrance path. Yet no defenders were to be seen. They knew a terrible battle was ahead, and the losses would be heavy.

Only silence—Arriving at the top, they searched here and then there. Except for one heating fire in the palace, there was only silence. Josephus said, “There was a terrible solitude on every side and a fire within the palace.” Where could the defenders be? There was only one entrance to the tableland on top of the mountain.

Then a sound was heard, and two older women and five children emerged from an underground cave, and walked toward them. They had hid themselves as the suicide pact was carried out by 960 men, women, and children.

The date was April 15, A.D. 73. The nation of the Jews was gone, and those that remained were scattered here and there throughout the empire.

In choosing Barabbas over Christ, they had rejected God, their ruler, and put themselves outside of His protection. By choosing Barabbas, they chose the one he represented, that is, Satan.

“His blood be upon us and upon our children.” How God wanted to spare them! Yet His every effort

to recover them had been rejected!

What a warning that is for us today. We, too, can go too far in rejecting God's provisions for our salvation until His protection is removed from us and we are left to the master that we have chosen!

Prior to the Jewish rebellion of A.D. 66-70, the Jewish religion was well-known and admired throughout the civilized world. Jews were very industrious and lived very healthfully. Josephus made this interesting statement, a couple decades after the New Testament was completed:

“There is not one city, Greek or barbarian, nor a single nation, to which our custom of abstaining from work on the seventh day has not spread.”—*Josephus, Contra Apionem, 2, 39.*

THE BAR-KOCHBA REBELLION

Gradual rebuilding after A.D. 70—With their characteristic resilience, the Jews gradually rebuilt their economic and cultural life in Palestine. A special instructional school was established at Jamnia, near the Mediterranean coast where a new Sanhedrin (composed not of rich men, but only Pharisees and rabbis) was set up after the fall of Jerusalem. It was called the *Bet Din* (“council”).

The final Jewish rebellion—In A.D. 130, Hadrian, announced his plan to raise a shrine to Jupiter on the site of the Temple at Jerusalem. the next year, he issued a decree forbidding circumcision and public instruction in the Jewish Law (*Baron, Social and Religious History of the Jews, Vol. 1, p. 191*).

The final Jewish rebellion—Shortly after that, a fanatical Jew, Simon Bar-Kochba (“Simon, Son of the Star”), declared himself to be the Messiah. See-

ing in him their last hope, the older, most reliable leaders gave him their full support. Once again, there was a Jewish rebellion in Palestine. Large numbers of Christians were slain by the infuriated Jews. The Jews made their last effort in antiquity to throw off the yoke of foreign overlords.

In A.D. 132, Simon seized Jerusalem. But, in a fierce battle, the Romans retook the city and quashed the rebellion in A.D. 135.

In retaliation, the Romans desecrated the city and the surrounding land. They tortured, slew, and sold Jews into slavery. The site of the Temple was plowed like a field.

“For three years, the rebels fought valiantly; finally they were beaten by lack of food and supplies. The Romans destroyed 985 towns in Palestine, and slew 350,000 men; a still larger number, we are told, perished through starvation, disease, and fire; naerly all Judea was laid waste . . . So many Jews were sold as slaves that their price fell to that of a horse.”—*Durant, Story of Civilization, Vol. 3, p. 548 (Also see Dio Cassius, lxi, 12-13).*

the emperor of Rome, had the ruins of the Temple removed and the site sown with salt. Then he erected a temple to Jupiter over, what is today called, the *Dome of the Rock*—the place where Abraham had nearly sacrificed Isaac and where the altar of the Temple had been located.

The suppression of the insurrection was followed by a loss of privileges by the Jews throughout the Empire. Prior to A.D. 66, the Jews had been influential in cities throughout the Empire, and their complaints about Christians were carefully considered. But after A.D. 70 and 135, the Jews tended to go into hiding.

Jerusalem in 1967—Henceforth, for 1,832 years,

Jerusalem was not under Jewish rule. Then, in 1967, the Jews gained control of the entire Old City *for just one day!* That fact is not well known.

The Israelis, themselves, are well aware of the fact that they will not have truly returned to Jerusalem—until three things happen: First, they must control the Temple Mount. Second, they are able to rebuild the Temple on the Temple Mount. Third, they can resume the ancient animal sacrifices on the altar at the Temple. Not until that happens, can it be said that the Jews have “returned to Jerusalem.”

Ask any rabbi why the Jews do not offer sacrifices today, and he will tell you that they have not been offered since A.D. 70—and will not be offered until the Israelis regain control of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple on top of it.

In 1967, the day after the Six-Day War ended, with the Jews victoriously in control of the entire city of Jerusalem,—*an executive order was immediately issued, giving the Palestinians full legal control of the Temple Mount*, as well as the Arab Quarter of the Old City. So the Israeli government only controls three-quarters of the Old City, and the Western Wall at the base of the Temple Mount.

That was done because the Jews feared that if they did not do so, Muslims throughout the Near East would unite in war to retake the Temple Mount. Muslims venerate the Temple mount as the second most sacred place in Islam, and it would be utter sacrilege to them for a Jewish Temple to be erected there.

The problem is that Mohammed wrote that, on a visit he made to Jerusalem, he went to heaven on horse and then returned. The place from which he ascended was the site of the Al Aska Mosque on the south end of the Temple Mount.

Yet there are devout Jews today who declare that the original Temples of Solomon, Ezra, and Herod were built over that spot.

Scripture predicted that the rulership would be taken from the Jews, and never returned. Instead, it would be given to Christ.

“And thou, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end. Thus saith the Lord God; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him.”—*Ezekiel 21:25-27*.

We today need not look to earthly buildings and places as the site of coming events. —The second coming of Christ, to take us home to heaven, must be our goal.

LOCATION AND DATING OF REVELATION

There is only one more event which concerns us in the first century A.D. That is the book of Revelation—the last book of the Bible.

The location of Patmos—During the later years of his life, the Apostle John was in charge of the churches in the Roman province of Asia Minor, with headquarters at Ephesus.

When he was arrested during the reign of Domitian (A.D. 81-96), it was decided to end his life by plunging him in a vat of boiling oil. But, like Daniel’s three friends in the fiery furnace, John received no harm. Thoroughly shaken, he was instead banished to the island of Patmos.

Patmos is a small island in the Aegean Sea, about 50 miles southwest of Ephesus. It is actually two small islands connected near the middle, about 10

miles north and south by about 6 miles east and west, at its widest point. It is a rocky, barren island with little vegetation. But it had the distinct advantage of being a quiet, peaceful home for John. His captors quickly recognized his godly character, and treated him very well.

It is believed that John may have been released when Nerva became emperor in A.D. 96. and resided at Ephesus until his death during the reign of Trajan (A.D. 98-117).

Dating the book of Revelation—It is generally believed that John wrote his Gospel, the three epistles, and the book of Revelation about A.D. 95.

This is an extremely important date! For it marks the completion of the Bible! We cannot look to the Christians which followed, nor to their counsels or bishops for guidance—if it contradicts the words of Scripture!

The vision given to John, which he wrote down as the Book of Revelation, was a momentous one! You and I know that its contents are of extreme importance to God's people, not only in later centuries but also to us today. It provided God's people with warnings of persecution and apostasies which would come upon God's faithful ones. It warns us today of immense crises not far off.

Let us now turn our attention to a brief survey of the next two centuries. Major changes occurred in the Christian Church—which radically affected it—down to our own time! The developments were indeed shocking, but only as we individually learn what took place back then, can we find our way back to the pure teachings of Scripture.

ó PART FOUR ó

CHRISTIANITY

FROM A.D. 100 TO 300

OVERVIEW

Between A.D. 100 and 300, several trends developed side by side:

- Faithful Christians steadily worked to share their faith, win converts to the faith, copy Bible manuscripts, travel to far countries as missionaries, and make Bible translations.

- Sporadically, Roman emperors would persecute Christians within the large imperial realm. Although some were intensive, each period of persecution was rather brief.

- In addition to solid converts, for various reasons, half-converted pagans also entered the church. During each period of persecution, the faithful would be persecuted, banished, or slain; while the compromisers would quickly recant and burn incense to pagan gods.

- As soon as the persecution was over, the half-

converted would return to the church. This would result in strong protests from the faithful who had remained true.

- Gradually, an increasing number of half-converted entered the church. But they were primarily to be found in the large city cities, and primarily in and around the cities of Alexandria and Rome. The smaller churches, the eastern churches, and the rural areas primarily consisted of faithful Christians.

- While the faithful were busy carrying on missionary work, some of the half-converted would write letters and articles encouraging church members to adopt some of the pagan teachings.

- In the latter part of the second century, a so-called “Christian” seminary (theology school) was started in Alexandria, Egypt, the very worldly, cultural center of the Empire. Its objective was to interweave pagan customs and practices into the church.

- Beginning about the middle of the second century, the bishop of the church at Rome began urging the other churches in the Empire to adopt various unBiblical innovations. This urging intensified, especially after Constantine became emperor in the fourth century.

- The Roman bishop (afterward called the “pope”) had learned that by getting other churches to adopt new teachings and practices, it made them subservient to his leadership and enhanced his authority over Christendom.

A.D. 100 TO 300: PERSECUTION AND COMPROMISE

Christians disliked by pagans—In the Roman Empire, Christianity was a *religion illicita*. It was official policy to tolerate the religions of conquered

peoples, as long as they did not try to win converts to their beliefs. Christianity was a *collegia* (group) which was contrary to law.

“Separately let no one have gods, nor may they worship privately new or foreign gods unless they have been publicly recognized.”—*Cicero, De Legibus, Bk. II, Chap. 8.*

With the Romans, the State was the chief thing. Religion was to be promoted only in so far as it served the interests of the State.

As we shall learn below, from time to time there were brief, heavy persecutions, in which Christians were demanded to offer sacrifice to the gods, or experience severe penalties, banishment, or death. The refusal of Christians to take part in idolatrous rites, go to pagan temples, or have symbols of idolatry—caused them to be classed with “atheists,” those who were opposed to the public gods.

In addition, it was noted that Christians were very kind to one another, and that they ate special, secret suppers together. This was twisted into the standing charge that they were not only atheistic, but also licentious and cannibals. (See the “*Apologies*” of Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Tertullian, and Origen, which stated and refuted such charges.)

Although there was a decided amount of persecution of Christians, actually, after the time of Nero (A.D. 54-68), relatively little of it came from sweeping orders issued by the Roman emperors.

Antoninus Pius (138-161) did not persecute Christians, but because during his reign various public calamities occurred (famine, flooding of the Tiber river, earthquakes, and fires in Rome, Antioch, and Carthage), the populous blamed the Christians and persecuted them.

It was at this time that Justin Martyr and Polycarp (a close friend of the Apostle John) died at the hands of angry mobs.

Marcus Aurelius—This was the first emperor, after Nero, who definitely encouraged persecution of Christians was Marcus Aurelius (A.D. 161-180). By the time of his reign, Christians had become an important element in society. Many people, including some wealthy ones, had converted.

Aurelius issued a decree against Christians, and encouraged inquisitorial proceedings—including torture.

However, this persecution was brief enough that it tended to advertize Christianity, and attract the sympathies of many people. The fortitude with which the martyrs suffered, caused the religion to have a growth spurt throughout the empire.

It is of special interest that Marcus Aurelius built a temple to the Sun just across the Tiber river from Rome on a little-used hill called *Vaticanus*.

“Marcus Aurelius . . . [was] a devotee of Sun worship. According to H.A. Fisher, ‘Marcus Aurelius instituted a temple to Mithra on the Vatican Hill’ (*History of Europe*, p. 90). Memorials of Mithra worship have been found in the very place where the Vatican now stands.”—R.L. Odom, *Sunday in Roman Paganism*,

In view of all that would follow, it is intriguing that one of the first major building projects on *Mons Vaticanus* was a temple dedicated to the Sun god.

Septimus Severus—The next major persecution of Christians occurred about 202-210 during the reign of Septimus Severus (193-211).

“At Carthage, two young women, Perpetua and Felicitas, resolutely refused to yield to the entreaties of parents and friends or to the promptings of maternal affection,

to save their lives by denying the faith, and cheerfully confronted the maddened beasts.”—*Newman, Church History, Vol. 1, 160-161.*

Decius—The Decian persecution, under Emperor Decius (240-251) was the worst since Nero. In 250 was issued the first imperial edict aimed at universally blotting out Christianity. Christians everywhere were required to conform to the State religion by participating in its ceremonies. In each official district, all Christians were required to appear before the magistrates within a certain time and offer sacrifices to the gods. However, although they were permitted to flee, all their property was confiscated and, if they returned, they would be slain.

By the time Decius issued his edict against Christians, large numbers of people had entered the church who were only half converted. Especially in the larger cities, there was great worldliness among both pastors and church members. Cyprian wrote about the eager willingness of these Christians to step forward and deny their faith:

“They indeed did not wait to be apprehended or interrogated. Many were conquered before the battle, prostrated before the attack. Nor did they even leave it to be said for them that they seemed to sacrifice to idols unwillingly. They ran to the market place of their own accord [in order to sacrifice to idols and thereby abandon their faith].”—*Cyprian, De Lapsis, Chap. 8.*

The *lapsi* were those who denied their faith, and the *libellatici* were those who bribed officials to sign that they had denied their faith when they had not.

But the faithful who would neither flee nor sacrifice suffered the most terrible tortures, died in prison, or were at last cruelly executed.

After a few months of this, Decius was called away by a fresh Gothic invasion and was slain in 251, but

not until he had spread desolation throughout the Christian churches.

Valerian—His successor, Valerian (253-260), treated the Christians kindly until 257, when one of his generals (Macrianus) poisoned his mind against them. That year, Valerian ordered the Christians to conform to the State religion or be banished. All Christian meetings were closed. Many Christian leaders were martyred, and many church buildings demolished.

Gallienus (260-268) completely reversed that government policy, let the Christians worship, and restored church properties. There was no further persecution of Christians until Diocletian (284-316) became emperor. By this time, Christians had become far more numerous and influential than ever before. Lacking persecution, large numbers of worldlings entered the Christian church, especially in the larger cities. They and their pastors grew in wealth, church organization, and worldliness.

Pagans flowed into the churches, taking with them many of their pagan habits of life and thought, so that by the time of Diocletian the church was more corrupt and worldly than ever before.

Diocletian—A Dalmatian soldier, who had pushed his way up through the ranks, Diocletian was strongly influenced by his son-in-law, Galerius, to rid the Empire of Christians. When a fire started at an imperial palace at Nicomedia in 303, Christians were charged with setting the blaze. Royal edicts were issued everywhere, commanding that churches be leveled to the ground, Scriptures be burned, pastors be imprisoned, and all who persisted in remaining Christians be made slaves.

According to Eusebius (*Church History, Bk 8, Chap. 5*), the first decree was issued in February 303, and was followed by several more. Just as in the Decian persecution, half a century earlier, multitudes of Christians quickly apostatized from the faith.

A momentous change was about to occur to the Christian Church—*which would affect it for all time to come*. But first, we must pause and provide you with some background which will help explain what was about to happen.

TWO CLASSES OF CHRISTIANS: FAITHFUL AND COMPROMISING

The conservative Christians—These were the faithful believers in Christ who, for over a thousand years, were distinguished by four special qualities. *Mark them well, for each is very important:*

(1) *They refused to compromise or deny their faith*, even in the face of the severest persecution.

(2) *They refused to accept any authority for their faith, other than the Bible writings*. This meant that they refused to accept the pagan teachings of the heathen living around them, or the half-pagan theories of liberal Christian teachers.

(3) *They focused their attention on sharing their faith* and winning converts.

(4) *They tried to preserve copies of the original Bible manuscripts*. They made handwritten copies of Bible manuscripts, and their missionaries translated the New Testament into other languages.

Many of their Bible manuscripts were confiscated and destroyed. But we have copies of their translations into foreign languages. It is of the highest significance that those translations agree with our King James Bible, instead of with the Codexes produced

in the liberal Christian seminary at Alexandria in the fourth century, by order of Emperor Constantine. More on this later.

The compromising Christians—Prior to A.D. 70 and 135, the Jews were influential, both in the Roman world and among Christians. While they incited local communities to persecute Christians, they encouraged local Christian churches to “Judaize;” that is, to continue practicing the ceremonial laws of sacrifice, and the multitude of unScriptural Pharisaic speculations.

But after A.D. 135, the Jews faded into the background. From that time onward, that which increasingly attracted compromising Christians were not Jewish rituals,—but the pagan customs of the peoples around them.

It was believed that, by adopting these practices and beliefs, they could be better accepted. It was hoped that this would make it easier for the pagans to come into the church, and it did—but the results were disastrous to the church!

Each heavy persecution would tend to be brief, during which the faithful would be persecuted or slain, while the majority of Christians would compromise their faith.

This would be followed by an extended period of relative peace, during which the compromisers would crowd back into the church, and add still more half-converted pagans to its ranks.

In reaction, the faithful Christians, some of which were called *Montanists* because of their protests, declared that the compromisers were not converted, and objected to the flood of worldlings which were entering the church. Increasingly, the faithful Christians drew apart from the compromisers, and wor-

shipped separately.

Gradually, the Christian church divided into (1) pockets of faithful believers, primarily located in the rural areas, and smaller towns; and (2) wealthy, compromising, worldly professors, especially situated in the larger cities—*with the most compromising ones in two cities: Alexandria and Rome*. Why these two cities? They were the two largest, wealthiest, and most cosmopolitan cities in the Empire.

Alexandria, Egypt—Alexandria had previously had the largest library in the Western world and, because of this, was the intellectual center of worldly knowledge. Every type of god and goddess, and pagan practice was happily accepted here.

By A.D. 202, it had also become the home to the largest Christian seminary—which became the “new theology” capital of Christendom! The religious leaders of the church and seminary in Alexandria prided themselves on their ability to absorb every possible pagan concept and activity, and interweave it into Christian teachings. Half-converted Christians throughout the Empire looked to Alexandria as the source of refreshingly new concepts to “enrich” their faith, and help bridge the gulf between Christianity and their pagan neighbors.

That paganizing Christian seminary at Alexandria, Egypt, was the source through which pagan beliefs and practices poured into the Christian church. The seminary intermingled them with Christian concepts, and then passed them on to the head pastor of the church at Rome, the other extremely liberal Christian church.

All the most important early Christian defenders of pagan names and practices lived in or near that seminary. Later, by order of Constantine, the large

Codex Sinaiticus and *Codex Vaticanus* versions of the Bible, which were different in a number of ways from other Bible manuscripts, were prepared there.

It is an odd querk of personality, that the people living in Alexandria (both Christians and pagans) were speculative and inventive, to the highest degree. Whereas those who lived in Rome (both its rulers and Christian bishops) had the strongly-developed trait of liking to order people around, and getting them to obey. Whereas the Christian leaders in Alexandria loved to invent new, half-pagan theories and practices, church leaders in Rome focused on trying to enforce them throughout all the churches.

Clement of Alexandria—In A.D. 190, Clement of Alexandria followed Pantaenus as head of the seminary, and Origen followed him. Clement, along with the other two, developed a special *neo-Platonic* form of Christianity. He also thought highly of *Gnosticism*, a non-Christian philosophy which taught that everything has double or triple meanings. The Christian philosophers at Alexandria interpreted this to mean that each word in the Bible meant something different! As a result, for over a hundred years, immense amounts of pagan thought and practice were brought into the Christian Church.

“Christian Gnosticism had its origins in trends of thought already present in pagan religious circles. In Christianity, the movement appeared at first in a school within the Church . . . The systems of teaching . . . are wild amalgams of mythoolgy and magical rites drawn from all quarters, with the most slender admixture of Christian elements.”—*Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 573.

“Greek, Gnostic, and Christian literature he [Clement] had not only read, but mastered . . . We find in his writings much that is fantastic and purerile. It is in Clem-

ent that we see most clearly the influence of Greek philosophy upon Christian thought. His aims and aspirations were very similar to those of the great Gnostic leaders . . . ‘There is one river of Truth,’ he says, ‘but many streams fall into it on this side and that.’ . . . Clement regarded star-worship as a divinely given stepping-stone to a purer religion.”—*Newman, Manual of Church History, Vol. 1, 274-275.*

Plato, whom Clement idealized, was a pagan Greek philosopher who lived several centuries earlier (428-327 B.C.), and had taught that ideas are the only genuine reality. Apart from ideas and theories, everything else is imaginary.

Clement, who lived over a hundred years after John wrote the last book of the Bible, was *the first leading Christian* who championed Sunday observance in the Christian church. Here is an example of his bewildering teachings:

“He [God] gave the sun, and the moon, and the stars to be worshiped; ‘which God’ made for the nations, that they might not become altogether atheistical, and so utterly perish . . . For this was the way given to the nations to rise up to God, by means of the worship of the heavenly bodies.”—*Clement of Alexandria, The Stromata, in Anti-Nicene Fathers, Book 6, Chap. 14, Vol. 2, p. 505.*

Clement believed that eliminating the Bible Sabbath, commanded by God at Creation and in the Ten Commandments, and in its place providing Christians with the Sun day as a day on which to worship both God and the rising sun, would greatly strengthen their spirituality.

One of his “proofs” that Sunday, the first day, should be the sacred day of Christians, was the Gnostic concept that numbers should be changed (i.e., seven should become six, and eight should become seven). Therefore, he declared, according to the Gnostics and Plato, Sunday is now the seventh day

of the week! Here is the reasoning he used to prove the Sun day, which Clement called “the Lord’s day,” was really the seventh day commanded in the Fourth Commandment:

“And the Lord’s day [Sunday] Plato prophetically speaks of in the tenth book of the *Republic*, in these words: ‘And when seven days have passed to each of them in the meadow, on the eighth day they are to set out and arrive in four days.’

“By the meadow is to be understood the fixed sphere [of planets], as a delightful and quiet place, and the seven days as the movements of the seven planets, and the whole busy mechanism as speeding on to the end of rest. But finally after the wandering orbs [are passed] the journey leads on to heaven, that is, to the eighth movement and day.”—*Clement, Ibid., Book 5, Chap. 14,*

Clement used such concepts as a framework to bring in all sorts of pagan customs, concepts, and practices into the Christian Church.

Origen—Later, Origen (185-254) a brilliant half-converted Christian writer, introduced still more theories into the church. He took charge of the Alexandrian seminary when Clement left.

“Alexandria at the beginning of the Christian era was the most cosmopolitan city in the world. Oriental and Occidental culture met and blended there as nowhere else . . . Nowhere was a new religion or philosophy so sure of a hospitable hearing.”—*Newman, Vol. 1, 271.*

These compromising Christians used a special wrong method of Scripture interpretation: *the allegorical method*. One thing could be said to mean something entirely different! They tried to combine pagan practices, Greek philosophy, Babylonian star worship, and Christian teachings. The result was a hodge-podge of confusion—yet half-converted Christians loved it, and the chief pastor in Rome saw that,

by demanding that the churches accept those teachings, it would promote his own authority.

Origen's method was to spiritualize away Bible teachings—even more, if possible, than Clement! Origen decided that, instead of transferring Sabbath to Sunday,—the Sabbath should be ignored entirely, and not kept until we get to heaven!

“Therefore he [Origen] generally emphasizes what he deems to be ‘the hidden meaning’ of the Scriptures by means of his allegorical interpretation of them. In doing so, he manifests a determined opposition to any literal observance of the seventh day.”—*R.L. Odom, Sabbath and Sunday in Early Christianity, p. 202.*

Yet it was Clement's theory about the Lord's day meaning the Sun day, instead of Origen's elimination of a day of worship entirely, that was most widely accepted by half-converted Christians.

Rome—What made Rome so special was the fact that it was the capital of the Empire. From the time of Anicetus (155) and Victor (A.D. 195), onward, the head pastors in the city of Rome felt that this fact gave them pre-eminent authority over all the other churches. They imagined that God had given them authority to issue theological decisions—which all the other churches must obey! There was, of course, a lot of conceit in such thinking, but, in spite of protests from faithful believers elsewhere, church leaders in Rome felt they should be in charge of everything in Christendom.

Keep in mind that the Greek mind prevailed at Alexandria; they were always preoccupied with inventing new theology. But the Roman mind was concerned about governing and control. The pastor of the Roman church was only concerned about using the new theologies as springboards for gaining for

himself greater control over the local churches throughout the empire.

(Historically, the bishop of Rome *was not called "pope" until A.D. 603*, when Emperor Phocas first called Boniface III by that name. The title means he is the spiritual father, and forgiver of sins of all those who submit to his religious authority. Yet, to avoid confusion, from this point onward, we will frequently refer to the head of the Roman church as "pope." But, in reality, he was never anything more than the head pastor of a local church, with no Biblical right to special authority over other churches.)

Anicetus—About A.D. 154, the chief pastor of the Christian church in the city of Rome, "Pope" Anicetus, urged his followers as well as neighboring churches to keep the first day, Sunday, instead of the Seventh.

At the risk of his life, the aged Polycarp, who had been a close friend of the Apostle John before his death about A.D. 100, traveled to Rome about the year 155, and strongly protested this action on the part of Anicetus. That Roman bishop refused to yield to Scripture in this matter. Polycarp returned to Smyrna and was martyred the next year.

Victor I—The next test case occurred in A.D. 195, also about Sunday. A special feast, called "Easter," had been started because some Christians wanted a spring feast like that of the one to Ishtar, the goddess of spring and fertility.

"Pope" Victor (c.189-199), the chief pastor of the church at Rome, demanded that this new Christian holiday be celebrated, not on the passover (the 15th of Nisan, on whatever day of the week on which it might occur), but on the first Sunday after the vernal full moon.

The local churches were furious that Victor would dare to command them as to what they could and could not do! Although the matter was not settled at this time, it is of interest that the very first two instances in which the church at Rome tried to command obedience from all the other churches—was over the observance of Sunday.

It was not until 130 years later, that the other churches began observing the spring festival on Sunday, thus heightening the reputation of the Roman church which had first urged it.

“Victor, Bishop of Rome in the last decade of the second century, sought to enforce uniformity by breaking off communion with the dissenting bishops and churches. Irenaeus expostulated with Victor on the ground that the differences in practice had long existed without causing a breach in unity.

“Ultimately the observance of Easter on Sunday prevailed and the prestige of Rome was thereby enhanced.”—*Kenneth Scott Latourette, History of Christianity, 137.*

By that date, A.D. 195, nearly all the churches, primarily with the exception of the ones at Alexandria and Rome, were still faithfully observing the Bible Sabbath. Only Rome and Alexander had switched over to the leading holy day of the pagans: the day on which they worshiped the sun god, Mithra.

“Although almost all churches throughout the world celebrate the sacred mysteries on the Sabbath every week, yet the Christians of Alexandria and at Rome, on account of some ancient tradition, have ceased to do this.”—*Socrates Scholasticus, quoted in Ecclesiastical History, Book 5, chap. 22 [written shortly after A.D. 439].*

Victor recognized that his championing of Sunday was an opportunity for him to gain authority over the other churches. In a daring action, he “excommunicated” all other Christian churches which dared to

disobey him! At that time, all the churches were equal to one another and submissive only to the authority of God and His Word, the Bible.

“Thereupon Victor, who presided over the church at Rome, immediately attempted to cut off from the common unity the parishes of all Asia [the eastern part of the Empire], with the churches that agreed with them, as heterodox [apostate]; and he wrote letters and declared all the brethren there wholly excommunicated. But this did not please all the bishops. And they besought him to consider the things of peace, and of neighborly unity and love. Wordds of theirs are extant, sharply rebuking Victor.”—*Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, Book 5, Chap. 23, Secs. 9-10.*

According to Polycrates, “a great multitude” of church leaders “gave their consent” to the letter that Polycrates wrote in protest to Victor (*Ibid.*). In it, Polycrates said this:

“I have met with the brethren throughout the world, and have gone through every Holy Scripture, and am not affrighted by terrifying words. For those greater than I have said ‘We ought to obey God rather than men [Acts 5:29].’ ”—*Ibid., secs. 3-8.*

Other Roman bishops—The Roman church pastors which followed Victor were little better. Albert Henry Newman, a noted church historian, tells us a little about these “popes” of the church at Rome:

“Zephyrinus (199-219), a man of little moral or intellectual weight, permitted the flock to be led astray by all sorts of false teachers. Under Callistus, permitted various moral delinquencies to have place in the church. Callistus, a slave, had been entrusted with a large sum of money, and embezzled it . . . Returning to Rome, he succeeded Zephyrinus as chief pastor in 219.”—*Newman, Church History, Vol. 1, 255.*

Zephyrinus demanded obedience to the Noetian heresy, which taught that God the Father and Christ

are the same person. Callistus, the next Roman pastor taught the same error. He also “taught that if a bishop should be guilty even of a mortal sin, he could not be deposed” (Newman, *ibid.*).

Such were the pastors of the church at Rome: Mere erring mortals like the rest of us, yet, like those who followed, they demanded obedience from the other churches of Christendom.

In order to properly understand all that was taking place—and would continue to occur in the years to follow—we need to pause and look more closely at a few of the pagan customs and ideas which flowed into the compromising part of the Christian church back then. When we have finished doing that, we shall return to the next part of the story—which are the astounding events when Constantine became Emperor.

PAGAN ERRORS ENTER THE CHURCH - 1

Can anyone count all the errors which were brought into the compromising part of the Christian Church in those dark centuries after the Bible ended? Here are some of them. The following list will include not only errors adopted by compromising Christian groups prior to the time of Constantine, but also those brought in later.

The list below will not include those errors which were not permanently adopted (such as the error that Christ was only a phantasm, and not a real person).

It is crucial that we understand that *the basic issue here* is whether Christian doctrines and practices must only be those clearly stated in the Bible;—or whether the theories of men and the practices of pagans can also be adopted. This is a matter that

each of us must decide for ourselves.

Here is a *partial list* of these unfortunate errors introduced into the church after the Bible was completed.

The special influence of Egypt—For centuries, pagan superstitions, errors, and gods had found their way into the Roman Empire. But, in addition to welcoming these, the Christian church at Rome was heavily influenced by the Christian seminary and writers at Alexandria, Egypt. It seems as if men were eager to incorporate every vestige of paganism into their beliefs and worship procedures.

Because of this, the influence of Egyptian paganism was especially strong. Every aspect of the Egyptian worship services was adopted by the Christian seminary, and given Christian names. Certain that these heathen customs would heighten their standing with worldlings, and bring more people more quickly into the church, the Roman church eagerly brought these theories and customs into their own worship services.

Here are two quotations which powerfully demonstrate this fact. There are aspects in both passages which appear to be describing a Catholic church service, yet both are descriptions of a pagan Egyptian church service honoring the “Queen of Heaven,” Isis, and her infant god-child, Horus:

”The daily ritual of Isis, which seems to have been as regular and complicated as that of the Catholic Church, produced an immense effect on the Roman mind. Every day there were two solemn offices, at which white-robed, tonsured priests, with acolytes and assistants of every degree, officiated. The morning litany and sacrifice was an impressive service. The crowd of worshippers thronged the space before the chapel at the early dawn.

The priest ascending by a hidden stairs, drew apart the veil of the sanctuary, and offered the holy image to their adoration. He then made the round of the altars, reciting the litany [mystic words in an unknown tongue], and sprinkling the holy water from the secret spring.”—*Samuel, Dill, “Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius.” page 577-578. (2 Tim 2:15-16, Ex 20:3-5.)*

Egypt was a special source from which Rome borrowed. How many pagan ideas, later incorporated into papal religion can you find in the following paragraph:

Profound too was the; myth of Isis, the Great Mother [goddess] . . . The Egyptians worshiped her with especial fondness and piety, and raised up jeweled images to her as the Mother of God. Her tonsured priests praised her in sonorous *matins* and *vespers*. In the midwinter of each year, coincident with the annual rebirth of the sun towards the end of our December, the temples of her divine child, Horus, god of the sun, showed her in holy effigy [statuary], nursing the babe that she had miraculously conceived. These poetic-philosophic legends and symbols profoundly affected Christian ritual and theology.”—*Will Durant, Our Oriental Heritage, 201.*

The Mother and Child—Mother and child gods have been worshiped since ancient times. The child of Venus was Jupiter, the child of Devaki was Crishna. In Egypt, the mother was Isis and her child Horus. Statues of tiny Horus seated on the lap of his mother, Isis were common in Egypt.

“The ancient portrait of Isis and the child Horus was ultimately accepted not only in popular opinion, but by formal episcopal sanction, as the portrait of the Virgin and her child.”—*Man and His Gods, p. 216.*

Much of the basis of later Roman Catholic liturgy originated at this time, with the direct copying by the Alexandrian and Roman Christian churches of the Egyptian worship of Isis, the “Queen of Heaven” (Jer

7:18; 44:17-19,25).

When the “Queen of Heaven” concept came into the Christian church through the local church at Rome in the fourth century, it really shook up the church. It arrived as a result of strong urging of Egyptian church leaders who declared Mary to be “the Mother of God.” This caused a split in the church and the banishing of Nestorius, a Christian who tried to oppose it. Images (statues) of Isis nursing Horus at her side had already been accepted by pagans all over the empire, for she was the avowed patron goddess of sailors from Italy.

But then in the fifth century A.D. a very significant thing happened: The names “Isis and Horus” totally disappeared, and in their place appeared the worship of “the Virgin Mary and her Child. “ [Mark 3:31-35, Luke 11:27-28, Matt 10:37]

It is interesting to note that the very same thing happened to Mithra. Just as soon as the essential aspects of Mithraism had been officially brought into the church, Mithra the greatest pagan god of his time—disappeared within a century! Satan no longer needed it for his purposes for he had already brought both him and his worship day into the Church. And actually Mithraites no longer needed it either. They flocked into the church, because it had all the essential aspects of Mithra worship.Christianity.

Soon the church was reaching out to still other lands for ideas to make its rituals and teachings more varied and imposing.

The Mother of God—This name was very early applied by the Alexandrian seminary to Mary (*The Paganism in Our Christianity*, p. 130). The mother of God was Nana to the Sumerians, Ceres or Aphrodite to the Greeks, Venus or Fortuna to early Rome, Isi or

Devaki in India, and Cybele in Asia, Diana in Ephesus. (*Alexander Hislop, The Two Babylons, p. 20*).

“Regardless of her name or place, she was the wife of Baal, the virgin queen of heaven, who bore fruit although she never conceived.”—*Strange Sects and Curious Cults, p. 12*.

One of the names of the Babylonian mother goddess was “My Lady,” which was later translated into Latin as *Mea Domina*, and later into Italian as *Madonna*. Another name for Astarte was “Queen of Heaven.”

“The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven.”—*Jeremiah 7:18-20*.

Even in modern times, the women of Paphos in Cyprus, make offerings to Mary, the queen of heaven, in the ruins of the ancient Temple of Astarte (*Paganism in our Christianity, p. 133*).

Portraits of Mary standing on the crescent moon, can be seen in many Catholic churches. The symbolism came from wall paintings of Isis in Egypt.

Statues of the mother goddess were venerated (worshiped) in many ancient religions. Statues of Mary are venerated today.

“From ancient Babylon came the cult of the virgin goddess, who was worshiped as the highest of gods.”—*S.H. Langdon, Semitic Mythology*.

In ancient paganism, the mother goddess was always worshiped more than her child god. So it is today. Commenting on this, Durant tells us:

“Essentially it was the same myth as that of Isis and Osiris in Egypt, Tammuz and Ishtar in Babylonia, Astarte and Adonis in Syria, Cybele and Attis in Phrygia. The cult of motherhood survived through classical times to take new life in the worship of Mary the Mother of God.”—*Will Durant, The Life of Greece, p. 178*.

The worship of Mary—Langdon tells us that Mary worship came from ancient Babylon where the virgin mother-goddess was worshiped under the name “Ishtar.” Elsewhere in the Near East, the mother goddess was called “Astarte, Ashtoreth, Persephone, Artemis [Diana] of Ephesus, Venus, and Isis.” This goddess; considered to be greater than any god, was by the heathen called the “virgin mother, merciful mother, Queen of Heaven, and my lady” [which is what “*Madonna*” means in Italian].

Langdon says she was often sculptured in mother-and-infant images, or as a “*mater dolorosa*” [sorrowful mother] interceding for men with a wrathful god. He says that, in this way, ancient paganism was brought into the churches and lives of Christians. (See S H. Langdon, *Semitic Mythology*, 1911 edition, pp. 12-14, 108-111. 141-144.)

“Urek worshiped especially the virgin earth-goddess Innini, known to the Semites of Akkad as Ishtar—the Aphrodite—Demeter of the Near East. Kish and Lagash worshiped a *Mater Dolorosa*, the sorrowful mother-goddess Ninkarsag, who, grieved with the unhappiness of men, interceded for them with sterner deities.”—*Durant, Story of Civilization, Vol. 1, p. 127.*

The rosary—This is a chain with 15 sets of small beads, each bead marked off by one large bead. The ends of the chain are connected by a medal bearing the imprint of Mary. From the end of this hangs a short chain ending in a crucifix. The beads are used for counting prayers to Mary, which are repeated over and over.

A rosary was used in Citium, Cyprus, colonized by the Phoenicians. It was a circle of beads, and used in offering prayers about 800 B.C. to Astarte, the mother god of the Phoenicians (*Cross in Tradition*,

History, and Art, p. 21). This same rosary is seen on some early Phoenician coins.

The Brahmans of India used rosaries with 108 beads, which they and their families used in prayer to Vishnu. A similar rosary is used today by Buddhists throughout Asia (*Encyclopedia of Religions, Vol. 3, p. 203*). The Muslim fingers the Tasbih rosary with 99 beads for the 99 names of Allah (*Ibid., p. 205*). Shiva, another god of India, is worshiped with a rosary which is used to recite all of his names (*Ibid., p. 203*).

The Egyptian sold various amulets and beads to the people, so they could recite prayers over them. It is not character-changing, or life-changing to just say certain words over and over again.

“Egyptian religion had little to say about morality. The priests were busier selling charms, mumbling incantations [in a foreign language], and performing magic rites than inculcating ethical precepts. Even the *Book of the Dead* teaches the faithful that charms blessed by the clergy will overcome all the obstacles that the deceased soul may encounter on its way to salvation; and the emphasis is rather on reciting the prayers than on living the good life . . . Amulets and incantations were designed and sold to cover a multitude of sins.”—*Will Durant, Our Oriental Heritage, 204*.

The recitation of the rosary in Catholic lands includes praying in worship to Mary 53 times, but praying the Lord’s Prayer to God only 6 times.

“But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.”—*Matthew 6:7-8*.

Praying to dead people—According to the Bible, “saints” are living people (Eph 1:1, Phil 1:1, Rom

1:7, etc.). Never in the Bible are we told to pray to dead people. Trying to make contact with dead people is a form of spiritualism (Isa 8:19-20). Yet many recite the so-called "Apostles Creed," which says:

" 'We believe . . . in the communion of saints,' and believe that such has reference not only to the living, but to the 'departed' as well—a mutual sharing in help, satisfaction, prayer, and other good works, a mutual communication."—*New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 4, p. 41.

The Babylonian system had 5,000 gods. They believed that their gods had at one time been living heroes on earth, but were now on a higher plane (*Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol. 2, p. 78). Their chief god was Shamash, the sun god (*Durant, Oriental Heritage*, p. 234).

"The Buddhists of China worship various deities, as the goddess of sailors, the god of war, the gods of special neighborhoods or occupations."—*Story of the World's Worship*, p. 621.

When Rome conquered the world, this vast system of foreign gods was absorbed into the religion of pagan Rome. Clement and his associates at Alexandria collected still more—and the whole thing was taken directly into the papal church. Even pagan statues were christened. The pagan gods and goddesses were called "saints," and it was said that they used to be Christians who had died. The Church of Rome today has vast numbers of saints for its adherents to pray to, each one presiding over a different occupation, or physical disease.

There are saints to which over every possible kind of workmen should pray: For example: *Plasterers* - St. Bartholomew - August 24; *Comedians* - St. Vitus - June 15; *Stenographers* - St. Genesius - August 25; *Butchers* - St. Hadrian - September 28.

There are also saints to whom you should pray if you have a special difficulty. There is a saint for over a hundred different diseases and problematic situations: For example, if you experience deafness, pray to St. Cadoc; if the problem is gall stones, pray to St. Liberius. If you want to obtain a wife, pray to St. Anne. The church directs you, not to God or Christ, but to dead men and women as the ones who can best help solve your difficulties. (Because this is such an important matter, a more extensive listing will be given later under “*Patron Saints.*”)

“This method of substituting ‘saints’ in the place of the pagan ‘gods’ became so popular that by the 10th century, 25,000 ‘saints’ had been canonized by the Roman Catholic Church.”—*Babylon, Mystery Religion*, p. 34.

Dionysus became St. Dionysus, Apollo became St. Apollinaris, and Mars became St. Martine. The inscription over the Pantheon in Rome had read “Jove and all the Gods.” Later, Pope Boniface IV rededicated it to “The Mother of God and all the Saints.”

The worship of the dead—The idea of, not only praying to dead people—but worshiping them;—the worship of dead people as departed spirit-gods was a heritage from ancient paganism.

“Most human gods, however, seem to have been, in the beginning, merely idealized dead men . . . Among several primitive peoples the word for god actually meant ‘a dead man.’ . . . The Greeks invoked their dead precisely as the Christians were to invoke the saints.”—*Will Durant, Story of Civilization, Vol. 1, p. 63.*

Shrines and statues—Pagan shrines have been dedicated to Christian “saints.” Brigit was a pagan goddess who held a child in her arms. The heathen came and fell down before that statue, worshiped,

and gave money. In pagan days, her temple at Kildare was served by vestal virgins who tended the sacred fires to her. When the church took over the place, it renamed her "Saint Bridget," and made her temple a convent and her vestals nuns! One of their duties was to continue to tend the ritual fires, dedicated to the pagan goddess, but now they were called "St. Bridget's Fire" (*Festivals, Holy Days, and Saints Days*, p. 26).

Throughout the centuries, more and more statues have been made and venerated, until today there are churches in Europe that contain thousands of statues! (*Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, art. "Images and Idols"). Large numbers of people who have died are, for practical purposes, worshiped.

"Beneath and above everything in Egypt was religion. We find it there in every stage and form . . . Only in Rome and India shall we find so plentiful a pantheon [so many different gods which are worshiped]."—*Will Durant, Our Oriental Heritage*, 197.

Patron saints—In the ancient pagan religions, there were patron gods for every possible type of circumstance and activity. The pagan priests taught the people to pray to one or another of them for special help and protection in whatever activity they were engaged. Durant (*Life of Greece*, 186) mentions a dozen or so. India and Egypt were also filled with special gods to which the people could pray in time of need.

Praying to dead saints was later taught by the Church to its adherents. The faithful were taught that praying to them could provide better answers than praying to God. Indeed, the more they were "venerated" by the supplement, the more likely their prayers would be answered.

“Patron Saints—Those saints who are specially designated by the Church as intercessors for occupations, countries, and places are called patron Saints. These are very numerous . . . The Church . . . encourages the paraliturgical devotion to such saints as a means of bringing a greater spiritual depth to the association of veneration and occupation.”—Catholic Encyclopedia, art. “Patron Saint.”

That quotation is followed by a three-page listing of a sampling of over 300 patron saints. Here are some of patron saints to which, instead of to God, prayer can be offered in time of need: *actors*, St. Genesius; *advertisers*, St. Bernardine of Siena; *Boy scouts*, St. George; *butchers*, St. Anthony and St. Luke; *comedians*, St. Vitus; *headache sufferers*, St. Teresa of Avila; *motorcyclists*, Our Lady of Grace; *old maids*, St. Andrew; *nail makers*, St. Cloud; *paratroopers*, St. Michael; *pawnbrokers*, St. Nicholas; *searchers for lost articles*, St. Anthony of Padua; *swordsmiths*, St. Maurice; *television*, St. Clare of Assisi; *throat sufferers*, St. Blase; *travel hostesses*, St. Bona; *wine merchants*, St. Amand; *women’s army corps*, St. Genevieve.

Solar disk—Even as the pagans placed a circle (*aureole*) around the heads of their god’s in paintings, so the compromising Christian church did the same. Some statues of Buddha have a metal ring around his head. The solar disk represented the Sun god as bestowing his blessing of pure holiness upon the one represented in the painting or statue.

“The Middle Ages kept a relic of sun-worship in the halo pictures around the heads of saints.”—*Will Durant, Our Oriental Heritage, 59.*

“[The Sumerian god] Sin, was represented in human form with a thin crescent about his head, presaging the halos of medieval saints.”—*Ibid., p. 128.*

Beams from the head—This was another device in paintings to indicate the purity of the Sun god in paintings of the pagan gods.

The obelisk—Many ancient pagan symbols had hidden meanings, and were worshiped in order to claim the power of those hidden meanings. One example was the obelisk. This tall pointed statue represented the virility of the male member. Diodorus says that Queen Semiramis erected an obelisk at Babylon which was 130 feet in height (*Encyclopedia of Religions, Vol. 3, p. 264*). Several of those which were in Egypt, were later hauled to Rome and set up. The phallus was worshiped as a symbol of life, which points to the sun, the great source of life.

The Bible forbids “standing images,” that is, obelisks. The Hebrew word is *matzebah*, and is found in 1 Kgs 14:23; 2 Kgs 18:4; 23:14; Jer 43:13; Micah 5:13. “Sun images” (*hammanim*) are condemned in Isaiah 17:8 and 27:9. Ezek 8:5 may also refer to an obelisk. Commenting on this chapter, the Scofield Bible says that these people were “given over to phallic cults.”

An obelisk is today in the middle of Vatican Square! It was taken from Egypt, by order of Pope Sixtus V in 1586, and set up in the exact center of Vatican Square. Many movers refused to set it up, because the pope declared that it is so worshipful that anyone who dropped and broke it would die. It is 83 feet high (132 with its foundation) and weighs 320 tons. When it was set up on September 10, 1586, the idol was dedicated “to the cross,” mass was said, and the pope pronounced a blessing on the workmen and their horses.

It might be mentioned that, in ancient Rome, there was a location, just across the Tiber River from the

city, which no one lived in ancient times. This was because it was used for divinations (*vaticinia*). The name came from the god of divination, *Vaticanus*, whose temple used to be on that hill. Centuries later, it was selected as the site for St. Peter's Basilica, which was built on the spot where the ancient temple of prayer to departed spirits once had been.

Relics—The priestesses of the ancient pagan temples would display, what they called *relics* to the worshipers, who would fall down and worship them. These were said to be body parts of the gods, or some of their clothing. Gullible devotees came to worship and paid money for the experience of being near their gods.

The "Tabernacle of Mary Magdalene" claims to have the towel Jesus used to wipe the disciples feet, the napkin that covered his face in the tomb, Mary's veil, some of her clothes, as well as a bottle of the virgin's milk! (*The Other Side of Rome*, p. 53). Some of Mary's milk is also supposed to have colored the walls of the place called the "Milk Grotto" at Bethlehem, and pieces of the chalk rock are sold as relic-charms, since it contains her milk.

Although no one knows who Mary's mother was, when hundreds of years later the church named her "St. Anne," soon many churches throughout Europe claimed to have her body as a relic! One of her complete bodies is in Apte, France. Another is in Lyons. In addition, her head is at Treir, another at Turen, and still another at Turinge! (*Ibid.*).

In Spain, a cathedral displayed what was said to be part of a wing of the angel Gabriel when he visited Mary. Upon closer examination, it turns out to be a magnificent ostrich feather (*Roman Catholicism*, p. 290).

By order of the Seventh Ecumencial Council of Nicaea (A.D. 787), it was forbidden for a building to henceforth be dedicated by a bishop if no relics were present. This is because placement of a relic in a chapel or cathedral is supposed to “consecrate” the ground and building (*Medieval Italy*, p. 71).

“The belief in witchcraft began early in human history, and has never quite disappeared. Fetishism (from the Portuguese word, *feitico*, ‘fabricated’ or ‘factitious’)—the worship of idols or other objects as having magic power is still more ancient and indestructible. Since many amulets are limited to a special power, some peoples are heavily laden with a variety of them, so that they may be ready for any emergency. Relics are a later and contemporary example of fetishes possessing magic powers. Half the population of Europe wear some pendant or amulet which gives them supernatural protection or aid.”—*Will Durant, Our Oriental Heritage*, p. 67.

Indulgences—One of the inconsistencies of those who sold indulgences was that they were generally more sinful than those whose sins they were remitting.

About 1450, Ghomas Gascoigne, Chancellor of Oxford University, said that the indulgence peddlers would wander over the land and issue a letter of pardon for the payment of two pence, a glass of beer, or the hire of a harlot (*Story of Civilization*, Vol. 4, p. 23).

On the side of the money box that Tetzal carried around (which caused Luther to write the *95 theses* which started the Reformation), were these words:

“Sobald der Pfenning im Kasten Klingt, Die seel aus dem Fegfeuer springt.”

Ridiculous though it is, this is its translation: “Soon as the money in the casket rings, the troubled soul from purgatory springs!”

Little wonder that Luther was upset.

The sacrifice of the mass—It is claimed that every mass is a fresh sacrifice of Christ! Yet the Bible says that He need only die once in order to provide salvation (Heb 9:25-26, 28).

“The Sacrifice of the Mass is really the holy and living representation and at the same time the unbloody and efficacious oblation of the Lord’s passion and that blood-stained sacrifice which was offered for us on the cross.”—*Catholic Encyclopedia*, 375.

Yet it costs money to obtain the benefits of this earthly “sacrifice of Christ.” High mass may cost as much as \$1,000, or more, depending on the flowers, candles, and number of priests taking part. It is sung in a loud voice. In contrast, a low mass costs little—and only six candles are used and it is repeated in a low voice. The Irish have a saying: “High money, high mass; low money, low mass; no money, no mass.” Yet our merciful God tells us,

“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.”—*Isaiah 55:1*.

It is God who pays the price! (1 Cor 6:20; 7:23).

The Bible says it can be difficult for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven (Matt 19:23-24). But the compromising church says that if a man has enough money to pay for lots of masses, he will be escorted to heaven.

“They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him.”—*Psalms 49:6-7*.

“But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.”—*Acts 8:20*.

Transubstantiation—The bread and grape juice do not become the actual body and blood of Christ! Our Lord, even after He had blessed the juice, still called it "the fruit of the vine"—not His literal blood (Matt 26:29). If the elements of the communion become the actual flesh and blood of Christ, how could we take it "in remembrance . . . until He comes," if He thus becomes present in it? If the juice becomes His blood, then to drink it would be forbidden by the Scriptures (Acts 15:20, etc.)

No soul of you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger that sojourneth among you eat blood."—*Leviticus 17:12.*

"Ye shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh: for the life of all flesh is the blood thereof: whosoever eateth it shall be cut off.—*Leviticus 17:14.*

Worshipers hearing the priest say, "*Hoc est corpus meus*" ("This is My body"), and learning it magically changed things, started saying "*hocus-pocus*" when they wanted to begin a magical incantation. That is where that phrase came from.

"Since early man believed that he acquired the powers of whatever organism he consumed, he came naturally to the conception of eating the god. In many cases he ate the flesh and drank the blood of the human god whom he deified . . . [Later] the priest turned the image [bread, etc.] into the god by the power of magic formulas."—*Will Durant, Story of Civilization, Vol. 1, p. 67 (cf. Frazer, Golden Bough, 489).*

"I believe in my heart and openly profess that the bread and wine placed upon the altar are, by the mystery of the sacred prayer and the words, substantially changed into the true and life-giving flesh and blood of Jesus Christ . . . They are present in the very reality and truth of their nature and substance."—*Catholic Catechism, 461.*

By the eleventh century, the command of Christ for His followers to drink the cup at communion—

was stopped! It was said that someone might spill the blood of Christ, so henceforth only the priests could drink the juice. (In 1415, the Council of Constance officially denied the cup to laymen.) Yet Christ had told His followers to drink the juice.

“Drink ye all of it.”—*Matthew 26:27*. “This do ye, as oft as ye drink it.”—*1 Corinthians 11:25*.

Transubstantiation, as practiced in the Roman Catholic Church is “one of the oldest ceremonies of primitive religion” (*Story of Civilization*, p. 741).

In Hasting’s *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, are many pages devoted to the pagan practice of “eating the god.” Abundant evidence is given of the practice in many nations, tribes, and religions. In Egypt, for example, when a cake was consecrated by a priest in the temple, in front of the worshipers, it was supposed to become the flesh of Osiris. The priest then ate it, along with fermented wine.

“*Wine, altar*. The fermented juice of the grape that is used in the celebration of Mass and which is changed by the words of consecration into the Blood of Christ.”—*Maryknoll Catholic Dictionary*, 605.

Christ never drank fermented wine, nor gave it to His disciples, nor told us to drink it! It is forbidden in the Bible (Prov 21:1; Hab 2:15; 1 Cor 5:11; 6:9-10; Eph 5:18; Prov 31:4-5; 23:20-21, 29-30; Eccl 10:17; Dan 1:8; Judg 13:4; Rev 21:27; Isa 28:7; Gal 5:19-22). We are only to use pure grape juice.

Purgatory—According to church legend, adopted from paganism, “purgatory” is a place where people burn for a while, in order to fit them to go to heaven; but payment of money, by those still living, is said to immensely shorten that period of suffering.

“In every system, therefore, except that of the Bible, the doctrine of purgatory after death, and prayers for

the dead, has always been found to occupy a place.”—*Two Babylons*, p. 167.

The Egyptian *Book of the Dead* taught the people what they should do to shorten the sufferings of their friends who had died,—and Durant explains that such indulgences were even sold in pagan Greece over 1900 years before the time of Luther!

“The punishment in Hades might be ended through penances performed in advance by the individual, or, after his death, by his friends. In this way a doctrine of purgatory and indulgences arose; and Plato complained, with almost the anger of a Luther, about the peddling of such indulgences in the Athens of the fourth century B.C.”—*Will Durant, Life of Greece*, p. 191.

The Bible teaches that only Christ can forgive and put away sin, yet the church teaches that burning people for awhile can also do it.

“*Purgatory*: The state or condition in which those who have died with some attachment to sin, suffer for a time before they are admitted to the glory and happiness of heaven. In this state of suffering, they are purified of unrepented venial sins.”—*Catholic Almanac*, 1979 ed., p. 379.

The concept of a purgatory to which humans must go, in order to be purified for heaven, was, according to Durant, an important teaching of Mithrism (*Story of Civilization*, 371).

Kissing an idol—The practice of kissing a statue of Baal, or the statue of another pagan god was an ancient custom in the Near East. In some religions, the idolators were required to do this, in order to show their subservience to the idol.

In the midst of a massive apostasy in Israel, God told Elijah:

“Yet I have left Me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth

which hath not kissed him.”—*I Kings 19:18*.

You might want to read that again! Bowing before an idol and kissing *its foot* is always part of the worship of pagans. (When a person kisses a living person's foot, is he not also engaged in an act of worship?)

“When Ephraim spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died. And now they sin more and more, and have made them molten images of their silver, and idols according to their own understanding, all of it the work of the craftsmen: they say of them, Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves. Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passeth away, as the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney.”—*Hosea 13:1-3*.

Idol processions—Part of pagan religious services on special occasions, included parading down the main street, carrying the statue of the pagan god. In ancient Babylon, the goddess Ishtar (Semiramis) was carried with great pomp and ceremony. Such idol processions were practiced in Greece, Egypt, Ethiopia, and Asia. The fervor of the devotees would be stirred up by this, and they would give more offerings.

“They lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the balance, and hire a goldsmith; and he maketh it a god: they fall down, yea, they worship. They bear him upon the shoulder, they carry him, and set him in his place, and he standeth; from his place shall he not remove: yea, one shall cry unto him, yet can he not answer, nor save him out of his trouble.”—*Isaiah 46:6-7*.

These idols would lavishly clothed and bedecked with gold and silver. But, because they were powerless to walk by themselves, they had to be carried!

“Liturgical processions are held on Candlemas day when candles are carried, on Palm Sunday when the newly blessed palms are carried, on Rogation days, and

on the feast of Corpus Christi when the Blessed Sacrament is carried on the procession.

“The Roman Ritual prescribes the order to be followed and the attendant ceremony . . . A plenary indulgence is gained by those who take part in a eucharistic procession, with confession, reception of Communion, and prayer for the intention of the pope. (S.P. September 5, 1933).”—*Catholic Encyclopedia*, art. “Processions,” 495.

In these processions, the pagan priest would also be carried, seated on a *palanquin*, a covered liter carried on the shoulders of four men who are holding horizontal poles.

Hieroglyphs on the walls of Egyptian temples, show the priest being carried in a covered palanquin. At other times, he was seated on a *sedia*, an engraved chair, supported by shorter poles and carried by four men.

“When going to solemn ceremonies, the pope is carried on the *sedia*, a portable chair of red velvet with a high back, and escorted by two *fabelli* of feathers.”—*Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. 22, art. “Pope,” p. 81.

“*Sedia gestatoria* (Italian: portable chair). The portable throne set on a platform on which the pope is borne in procession. The platform is carried by six men wearing red damask who are known as *sediarii*.”—*Maryknoll Catholic Dictionary*, 519.

The Egyptians also used the *fabellum*. This was an immense fan made of gorgeous ostrich feathers, which was carried close to the seated priest. It was called “*the mystic fan of Bacchus*.”

In Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Athens, the people carried images of their gods in processions (*Durant, Life of Greece*, 185).

“The candidates for initiation into the mysteries . . . walked in grave but happy pilgrimage along the Sacred Way to Eleusis, bearing at their head the image of the

chthonian deity Iachus. The procession arrived at Eleusis under torchlight, and solemnly placed the image in the temple; after which the day was ended with sacred dances and songs.”—*Ibid.*, 188.

Pontifex Maximus—*Supreme Pontiff* or *Pontifex Maximus* were titles of each pagan emperor of Rome. They meant that he was the supreme high priest of the pagan State Church of the Empire, and head of all the paganism which had been incorporated into the Imperial religion. This heathen title was later adopted by the Roman bishop.

Pater patrum—In the pagan mysteries of Mithra, the head priest was called the *Pater Patrum*; that is, the “father of the fathers.” Borrowing directly from this title was another title, used both by pagan priests and by the compromising Christian church: the *papa*, or pope. Christ commanded His followers that, in a spiritual sense, they were to “call no man your father upon the earth” (Matt 23:9).

Unmarried priests—The priests of Babylon did not marry. They were members of the higher orders of the priesthood of Queen Semiramis who bound them to a life of celibacy, yet she herself was well known to be a very immoral woman.

“Strange as it may seem, yet the voice of antiquity assigns to the abandoned queen, the invention of clerical celibacy, and that in its most stringent form.”—*Two Babylons*, 219.

What does the Bible teach about this?

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry . . . which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and

know the truth.”—*1 Timothy 4:1-3*.

From Babylon, the spread of this teaching of unmarried priests is shown by the celibate priests of Tibet, China, Japan, and other countries.

When the celibate pagan priests of Cybele came to ancient Rome, the sexual excesses they committed were so bad that the Roman Senate expelled them from the Empire. It is never good for priests to be forbidden to marry. Serious problems occur when that rule is imposed.

According to the Bible, the apostles were married men (Mark 1:30; 1 Cor 9:5). “The bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife” (1 Tim 3:2).

“When Pope Paul V (1605-1621) sought the suppression of the licensed brothels in the ‘Holy City,’ the Roman Senate petitioned against his carrying his design into effect, on the ground that the existence of such places was the only means of hindering the priests from seducing their wives and daughters.”—*Two Babylons*, 220.

For more on this, see *Durant, History of Civilization*, Vol. 6., p. 21; *Flick, Decline of the Medieval Church*, p. 295, and *D’ Aubigne, History of the Reformation*, p. 11. The results of celibacy, on the priesthood, are too horrible to discuss here.

The confessional—Men and women should confess their sins to God, not to men! The book, *The Priest, Women, and Confessional*, by the ex-priest Emmett McLoughlin explains the problem in detail. This pagan practice came from Babylon. Queen Semiramis started it as part of the “mysteries.” Secret confession to a priest was required before complete initiation was granted.

When Judas sinned, he confessed his sins to the priests and then committed suicide (Matt 26:75; 27:1-5).

The tonsure—This is a shaved or clipped bald spot on the top of the head. Guatama Buddha, who lived in the sixth century B.C., shaved his head in obedience to a supposed divine command. The priests of Bacchus, at their ordination, had the tops of their heads shaved. The tonsure was also practiced by priests in India, China, and pagan Rome. In Persia, it was done in honor of the solar disk, the sun god. The priests of Mithra “in their tonsure imitated the solar disk” (*Hislop, Two Babylons, p. 222*).

The Council of Toledo (A.D. 633) made it a strict rule that all priests must receive the circular tonsure on the crown of the head.

The Bible forbade this practice! “They shall not make baldness upon their head” (Lev 21:5; cf. Deut 14:11). That this “baldness” was the rounded tonsure is shown in Leviticus 19:27: “Ye shall not round the corners of your heads.”

Because pagan priests cut a circular bald spot on top of their heads in honor of the solar disc, Christian leaders of Alexandria and Rome eventually copied the tonsure. It is still used by certain monastic orders to this day.

The pope’s crown—The hat which the pope wears signifies that he is king over the heavens, the earth, and hell.

“The pope is of such lofty and supreme dignity that, properly speaking, he has not been established in any rank of dignity, but rather has been placed upon the very summit of all ranks of dignities . . . He is likewise the divine monarch and supreme emperor and king of kings.

“Hence the pope is crowned with a triple crown, as king of heaven and of earth and of the lower regions.” *Lucius Ferraris, Prompta Bibliotheca, Vol. VI, pp. 438, 442 [R.C. sourcebook]*.

Holy water—Rather early, the Christian church began using so-called “holy water” for baptism, which itself soon degenerated into a mere sprinkling instead of immersion. (Ac 8:35-38; Rom 6:3-5). The idea of “holy water” sprinklings came from Egyptian temple worship.

The spring Ishtar festival—Ishtar (also called Astarte) was worshiped every spring, and the name of her feast became known as “Easter.” She was an immoral Babylonian goddess, and her devotees worshiped her each spring with riotous orgies.

It is questionable whether we should observe a holiday which comes directly from paganism. Ishtar was called “the Queen of Heaven,” and the Romans called her Venus. Our words “venereal” and “venereal disease” come from her name. She was a sexual goddess, and worshiped in that way.

The six-week “fast” before Easter, called “Lent,” also came from Babylon, which was the preparation for the Ishtar feast, which occurred in the spring in April or May.

There was no spring holy day in the early Christian church *in Bible times*. You will recall that the Passover (which the Jews kept at about the same time as the pagan Ishtar festival) foreshadowed the death of Christ, and so, for Christians, was “nailed to the cross” (that is, abolished at His death). It was never again to be kept by faithful followers of Jesus after His death. To do so would be to crucify Christ twice (Heb 9:25-26, 28).

It is true that the word “Easter” is in the Bible, but it is a mistranslation. The Greek word in Acts 12:4 is “*pasca*,” which is “Passover,” and should be translated by that word.

Although Easter is celebrated today in honor of

Christ's resurrection, prior to His death, Jesus gave us, not Passover nor Easter Sunday as the way we are to commemorate both His death and resurrection—but baptism.

“We are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.”—*Romans 6:4-5*.

The wafer and IHS—During the mass, the priest holds up a small, round piece of bread, with “IHS” stamped on it. This piece of bread is called a “host.” By canon law, its shape *must be round* (*Handbook of Catholic Practice*, 231).

In the memorial supper instituted by our Lord, He took bread and broke it. Certainly unleavened bread does not break into round pieces! The Bible explains that the breaking of the bread represents our Lord's body which was broken for us. But in the Catholic mass, the bread is not broken! Because the round disk is served completely whole, it spoils the symbol which Jesus gave to represent His broken body.

Since the round wafer is contrary to Scripture, why then is it round? It is another ancient symbol of the sun, which Babylonian priests placed in the mouths of sun-worshippers so they could eat their god and supposedly gain strength.

“The thin, round cake occurs on all alters of Egypt.”—*Wilkinson, Egyptians*, Vol. 5, p. 353.

“The wafer is itself only another symbol of the sun.”—*Two Babylons*, 163.

Why is “IHS” stamped on the wafer, and on some priestly robes? We are told that these letters mean

Jesus Hominum Salvator, which is Latin for “Jesus the Saviour of Men.”

During the days of the Roman emperors, there were many worshipers of the Egyptian goddess, Isis. Those worshipers regularly saw IHS on the garments of their priests and priestesses. The letters stood for “*Isis, Horus, Seb.*” In other words, “the mother, the child, and the father of the gods.” When Christian priests in Egypt and at Rome placed these letters on their robes, it increased pagan attendance at their services.

The Sun-ray image—During the recitation of the mass, after the bread (the small, round wafer cake made of flour) has supposedly been changed into a “Christ” by the priest, it is placed on a *monstrance*. This is a metallic object in the shape of a cross, supported vertically on a stand, with a hollow center in the “consecrated” piece of bread is placed. Surrounding it is metallic sunburst (outward radiating) design. Before this monstrance, faithful Catholics must bow and worship the little wafer as god. Kneeling before the priest, he places the little wafer in their mouths—which they are taught to believe has become “Christ.”

“The image of the sun above, or on the altar, was one of the recognized symbols of those who worshipped Baal, the Sun. And here . . . a brilliant plate of silver, “in the form of a Sun,” is so placed on the altar, that everyone who adores at that altar must bow down in lowly reverence before that image of the “Sun’ . . . This came from the ancient sun-worship, the worship of Baal.”—*Two Babylons*, 163.

Burning of waxed candles—In ancient paganism, the burning of candles in worship services symbolized devotion the sun god.

“Lighted candles should form part of the worship, . . .

for so, according to the established rites of Zoroaster, was the sun-god worshiped.”—*Two Babylons*, 191.

In pagan Rome, the same practice was observed. Eusebius tells us that Licinius, the pagan emperor, before attacking Constantine, his rival, called a council of his friends in a thick forest, and there offered sacrifices to his gods, lighting up wax-tapers before them. He then told the gods that if they did not give him the victory, he would light no more candles before them to their honor. (*Eusebius, Vita Constantini, lib. ii. 5, p. 183*).

Here is a description of how pagan Roman priests would lead the devotees of their gods in a procession, carrying their god, as well as burning candles in his honor. This is a description of a pagan, not a Catholic procession:

At these solemnities, the chief magistrate used frequently to assist, in robes of ceremony, attended by the priests in *surplices*, with wax candles in their hands, carrying upon a pageant or *thensa*, the images of their gods, dressed out in their best clothes. These were usually followed by the principle youth of the place, in white linen vestments or surplices, singing hymns in honor of the gods whos festivals they were celebrating, accompanied by crowds of all sorts that were initiated in the same religion, all with *flambeaux*—wax candles, in their hands.”—*Middleton’s Letter from Rome, p. 189 (also see Apuleius, Vol. 1, cap. ix, pp. 1014-1016)*.

“Twenty or thirty persons having assembled, they summon the *Nito*, whilst two or more of the company light up wax tapers, and pronounce several mysterious words, which they consider as able to conjure him up.”—*Rites and Ceremonies, p. 91*.

The wearing of cross images—That which is now called the Christian cross was originally the mystic *Tau* of the Chaldeans and Egyptians—the true original form of the letter T, which was the initial of

Tammuz (*Kitto, Biblical Cyclopaedia, Vol. 1, p. 495*). That mystic Tau was marked on the foreheads of those initiated into the mysteries, and was used in every variety of manner as a most sacred symbol.

“The vestal virgins [temple prostitutes] of pagan Rome wore a metal image of it suspended from their necklaces as the nuns do now.”—*Pere Lafitan, Ancient Pagan Antiquities, Vol. 1, p. 442*.

In order to identify Tammuz with the sun, a circle or sunburst was placed on the cross, where the two crosspieces met. The archaeologist, Layard, found the cross an express symbol of the sun (*Layard, Nineveh and Babylon, p. 211; Nineveh and its Remains, Vol. 2, p. 446*). At other times, especially in Egypt, the circular sun was placed on top of the cross.

“Veneration of the Cross is the honor paid to a relic of the true cross. As a relic it may be carried under a canopy in procession, is genuflected to when on exposition, and is kissed as a mark of respect.”—*Catholic Encyclopedia, art. “Cross, relics of.”*

“In frequent appearance in Egyptian symbolism, is the *crux ansata*—a cross with a handle, as a sign of sexual union and vigorous life.”—*Will Durant, Our Oriental Heritage, 199*.

The Sign of the Cross—Tertullian, one of the few authenticated Christian writers before A.D. 300 who advocated Sundaykeeping (active 196-220), provided careful instructions for keeping Sunday holy, in place of the Bible Sabbath, and then added to it another “new idea,” copied from paganism, for Christians to follow: the “sign of the cross.”

“At every forward step and movement, at every going in and out, when we put on our clothes and shoes, when we bathe, when we sit at table, when we light the lamps, on couch, on seat, in all the ordinary actions of daily life, we trace upon the forehead the sign of the cross.”—

Tertullian.

Hermits and ascetics—From India and other lands came ascetics who lived alone in the desert or on top of pillars, and monastic hermits who separated themselves from mankind so they could be “holy.” It seemed that there was so much in Scripture which was being ignored, and being replaced by pagan superstitions and errors.

The only channel of grace—In many ancient religions, goddesses were the ones to pray to and in whom alone redemption could be found.

“The Great Mother . . . is often the precipitate [result] of primitive or unconscious beliefs . . . Ishtar and Cybele, Demeter and Ceres, Aphrodite and Venus and Freya—these are comparatively late forms of the ancient goddesses of the earth . . . Most early gods were of the gentler sex.”—*Will Durant, Story of Civilizations, Vol. 1, pp. 60-61.*

Unfortunately, that concept eventually entered the Christian Church.

“[Mary is] the first steward in the dispensing of all graces.”—*Pius X, quoted in F.J. Sheed, Theology for Beginners, p. 132.*

“Christ has taken His seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high . . . and Mary as Queen stands at His right hand.”—*Pope Pius X, Mary Mediatrix, in Encyclical: Ad Diem Illum.*

Alphonsus de Liguori wrote two books about the Catholic teachings about Mary (*The Glories of Mary; 1750*) and Catholic priests (*The Duties and Dignities of the Priest*). He was rewarded with sainthood. Because he was canonized, his statements are considered infallible:

“With reason does an ancient writer call her ‘the only hope of sinners’; for by her help alone can we hope for the remission of sins.”—*De Liguori, The Glories of Mary*

(ed. Eugene Grimm: *Redemptorist Fathers*, 1931) p. 83.

“‘Many things,’ says Nicephorus, ‘are asked from God, and are not granted; they are asked from Mary, and are obtained.’”—*Ibid.*, p. 137.

“If God is angry with a sinner, and Mary takes him under her protection, she withholds the avenging arm of her Son, and saves him.”—*Ibid.*, p. 124.

“[Prayer of St. Ephram:] ‘O Immaculate Virgin, we are under thy protection . . . we beseech thee to prevent thy beloved Son, who is irritated by our sins, from abandoning us to the power of the devil.’”—*Ibid.*, p. 273.

“‘At the command of Mary all obey—even God.’ St. Bernardine fears not to utter this sentence; meaning indeed, to say that God grants the prayers of Mary as if they were commands . . . Since the Mother, then, should have the same power as the Son, rightly has Jesus, who is omnipotent, made Mary also omnipotent.”—*Ibid.*, p. 82.

A multitude of other additions—Cardinal John H. Newman listed many examples of things which he called of “pagan origin,” which the papacy brought into the church “in order to recommend the new religion to the heathen.”

“The use of temples, and these dedicated to particular saints, and ornamented on occasions with branches of trees; incense, lamps, and candles; holy water; asylums [by this, he meant monasteries, convents, and hermitages]; [pagan] holydays, processions, sacerdotal vestments, the tonsure, the ring in marriage, turning to the East, images . . . and the *Kyrie Eleison*.”—*J.H. Newman, An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, p. 373.

Laing mentions several other aspects by which the mother goddess was worshiped by heathens, which Rome adopted into Christianity: holy water, votive, offerings, elevation of sacred objects [lifting of

the host], the priest's bells, the decking of images, processions, festivals, prayers for the dead, the worship of relics and the statues of saints. (See Gordon L. Laing, *Survivals of Roman Religion*, 1911 edition, pp. 92-95, 121-111, 218-241.)

PAGAN ERRORS ENTER THE CHURCH - 2

While the faithful Christians were clinging to the Scriptures as the only source of divine truth, the compromisers ridiculed their caution, and said that there was divine truth in the pagan religions, in astrology, and many other things. They said the faithful were "Judaizers" by keeping the Bible Sabbath, and refusing to keep the new day, the day of the sun god Mithra.

The compromisers claimed that it was safe to set aside Bible teachings, but the faithful refused to compromise their faith. Here is a thought-provoking comment on this:

"The English Reformers, while renouncing the doctrines of Romanism, had retained many of its forms. Thus though the authority and the creed of Rome were rejected, not a few of her customs and ceremonies were incorporated into the worship of the Church of England. It was claimed that these things were not matters of conscience; that though they were not commanded in Scripture, and hence were nonessential, yet not being forbidden, they were not intrinsically evil. Their observance tended to narrow the gulf which separated the reformed churches from Rome, and it was urged that they would promote the acceptance of the Protestant faith by Romanists.

"To the conservative and compromising, these arguments seemed conclusive. But there was another class that did not so judge. The fact that these customs 'tended to bridge over the chasm between Rome and the Reformation' (*Martyr*, volume 5, page 22), was in their view

a conclusive argument against retaining them. They looked upon them as badges of the slavery from which they had been delivered and to which they had no disposition to return. They reasoned that God has in His word established the regulations governing His worship, and that men are not at liberty to add to these or to detract from them. The very beginning of the great apostasy was in seeking to supplement the authority of God by that of the church. Rome began by enjoining what God had not forbidden, and she ended by forbidding what He had explicitly enjoined.”—*Great Controversy*, 289-290.

Fulfilling objectives—Church leaders at the Christian seminary in Alexandria were anxious to share their religious innovations with the head pastor at Rome. They knew that, because of his position, he was able to influence the other churches better than they could.

For his part, the chief pastor at Rome was determined to use these these latest new theologies as a way to strengthen his position as the most important Christian leader in the Empire. He recognized that it was by promoting new ideas that he would catch everyone’s attention; not in defending the old-fashioned ideas given in Scripture.

Secondly, there was another problem: When people looked to the Bible for their beliefs and practices—they were accepting it as the ultimate authority. But if Rome could successfully provide them with a different set of doctrines and observances, the people would accept the papacy as the highest authority.

Working closely together, and scorning the Bible and its teachings as “Jewish” and antiquated, the Alexandrian theologians and the Roman bishop erected a vast framework of pagan error, intermingled with Christian words and phrases.

They adopted the inventions of every foreign pagan religion of antiquity,—while giving particular attention to what was becoming the most important of them: Mithrism.

The rise of Mithrism—After the middle of the second century, A.D., the official, government-sponsored state religion had fallen into disrepute. The populace wanted something new and different. The new paganism which captured the hearts of many was Mithrism.

“The Undying Fire of the skies, the Sun, was adored as the highest and most characteristic embodiment of Ahura-Mazda or Mithra, quite as Ikhnaton had worshiped it in Egypt. ‘The morning sun,’ said the [Mithric] scriptures, ‘must be revered.’”—*Will Durant, Our Oriental Heritage, 369-370.*

Gradually, by the middle of the third century, there were only two primary contenders for the leading religion of the Empire: *Mithrism and Christianity*.

In order to conquer Mithrism,—the liberals at Alexandria and Rome intentionally decided to include all its essential features into the worship customs of Christianity. This was devilishly smart. Conquer by absorbing.

Why Mithrism was so attractive—Mithrism appealed strongly to the vast population of the Roman Empire, because it presented itself as the religion of the young and the strong. It was militeristic, and the primary religion of the thousands of Roman soldiers.

Each Sunday morning, the officers would bring their men out into a field, and they would say their prayers to Mithra as they, with closed eyes, faced their mighty god of personal strength and warfare: the sun as it rose in the east.

You see, in order to understand this powerful new

religion which was contending for first place in the hearts and churches of the Empire, you have to understand their special day of worship: Sunday. The worship of Mithra and worship on Sunday go hand in hand.

There was only one way the Christian liberals could win the populace away from Mithra worship—and that was by absorbing Mithra's day of worship.

Here is the background of how this happened:

Weekly cycle goes back to Creation—There have been seven days in the week from time immemorial. We can read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation and we will only find Seventh-day Sabbath worship. There is nothing about first-day worship in the entire book. Where then did it come from?

In order to discover the origin and growth of worship on the first day of the week, we must look outside the Bible—into the pagan world of Christ's time. In fact, to locate the origin of the word, "Sunday," we must look to the same source. For first-day sacredness, and the very name "Sunday" come from the same place.

The Planetary Week—God originally named each day of the week. You will find them recorded in Genesis 1:5-2:3. "First day," "second day," onward, but the seventh day was called "the Sabbath."

This pattern of naming the days of the week was followed from Genesis to Revelation.

Just as all the heathen nations received the seven-day weekly cycle from their ancestors back to the time of Noah, so they also used this same method of naming the days of the week.

But eventually, pagan priests began naming the days after the seven known "planets" in the sky, which

it was said were gods: the sun, moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, Saturn.

Before the time of Christ, this new naming pattern, known as the “*planetary week*,” entered the Roman Empire, but was rejected by the Jews and New Testament writers. Non-Christians called them the Day of the Sun, the Day of the Moon, etc., in honor of different heavenly bodies. This was known as the “*planetary week*.”

“The practice of calling the days after the names of the planetary deities was already an established custom among the Romans before the birth of Christ.”—*Robert L. Odom, Sunday in Roman Paganism, 117.*

Each day was ruled over by a different god, but the most important of all gods, the Sun god, was given the rule of the first day of the week, with the idea in mind that the first is always more important than those which follow. All the worship of the week centered on his day.

“‘Each day and month,’ says Herodotus, ‘is assigned to some particular god.’”—*Will Durant, Story of Civilization, Vol. 1, pp. 204-205.*

The paganizing Christian seminary at Alexandria, Egypt, which had no regard for the Creation Sabbath (Gen 2:1-3), was the first to bring the planetary week into the Christian church. Its teachers and writers not only worshiped the sun themselves, but they wanted to copy the Mithric pattern of making the Sun day the central day of worship for Christians.

Now, although those names for the days of the week were relatively new, the Sun god was not, for his worship came from a devotion to that most powerful of natural objects. It was one of the most ancient forms of worship and is represented by solar-disc images found on nearly every continent of our world.

“Sun worship was the earliest idolatry.”—*Fausset, Bible Dictionary, page 666.*

“Sun worship passed down into the pagan faiths of antiquity, and many a later god was only a personification of the sun.”—*Will Durant, Our Oriental Heritage, 59.*

It was not until the end of the third century—300 years after the death of the last Bible writer—that Christians in certain portions of the Roman Empire began using the planetary week labels for the days of the week (“Sunday” instead of “first day,” etc.).

“The early Christians had at first adopted the Biblical seventh-day week with its numbered week days, but by the close of the third century A.D. this began to give way to the planetary week; and in the fourth and fifth centuries the pagan designations became generally accepted in the western half of Christendom.

“The use of planetary names by Christians attests to the growing influence of astrological speculations introduced by converts from paganism . . . During those same centuries Oriental solar [sun] worships, especially that of Mithra [the Persian Sun god], spread in the Roman world, . . . and gradually a pagan institution was engrafted on Christianity.”—*Hutton Webster, Rest Days, pp. 220-221.*

Sun worship in Bible times—The Arabians appear to have worshipped the sun directly without using any statue or symbol (Job 31:26-27). Abraham was called out of all this when he went to the promised land.

The kings of Egypt were regarded as the incarnation of the Sun god, and inscriptions on the obelisks and Sphinx show them to be relics of Egyptian sun worship (*Encyclopedia Britannica, 14th ed, Vol. 2, p. 214*). Ra was the Sun god in Egypt, and On (Heliopolis) was the city of Sun worship (see the He-

brew of Jeremiah 43:13). Entering Canaan under Joshua, the Hebrews again met Sun worship. Baal of the Phoenicians, Molech (Milcom) of the Ammonites, and Hadad of the Syrians, and later the Persian Mithra (also called Mithras). Helios was the sun god of the Greeks.

“Agamemnon prayed to him, and the Spartans sacrificed horses to him to draw his flaming chariot through the skies; and the Rhodians, in Hellenistic days, honored Helios as their chief divinity.”—*Will Durant, Life of Greece, p. 177.*

Shemesh was an especially important Sun god in the middle east, and, later in Egypt, Aton was the god of the Sun Disk.

“The Egyptian city of On was a famous center of Sun worship, being known to the Greeks as Heliopolis (City of the Sun) and to the Hebrews as Beth-shemesh (House of the Sun).”—*Robert L. Odom, Sunday in Roman Paganism, 233.*

It is of interest that a bull, painted yellow in honor of the sun god, was sacrificed at that Egyptian city of On. Some historians believe that, when the Israelites made a golden calf and worshiped it at Mount Sinai (Exodus 32), the ceremony was a form of sun-worship they had observed back in Egypt (*McClintock and Strong, Cyclopedia of Biblical Literature, Vol. 2, p. 27*).

“In Egypt . . . in the official theology, the greatest of the gods was the sun. Sometimes it was worshiped as the supreme deity Ra or Re, the bright father who fertilized Mother Earth with rays of penetrating heat and light . . . Or the sun was the god Horus, taking the graceful form of a falcon, flying majestically across the heavens day after day . . . and becoming one of the recurrent symbols of Egyptian religion and royalty. Always Ra, the sun, was the Creator.”—*Will Durant, Story of Civilization, Vol. 1, p. 198.*

By associating with Sun worshipers, the Israelites frequently practiced it themselves (Lev 26:30, Isa 17:8). King Manasseh practiced direct Sun worship (2 Kg 21:3,5). Josiah destroyed the chariots that were dedicated to the Sun, and also removed the horses consecrated to Sun worship processions (2 Kg 23:5,1112).

Sun altars and incense were burned on the rooftops for the sun (Zeph 1:5) and Ezekiel beheld the “greatest abomination”: direct Sun worship at the entryway, to the temple of the true God. This was done, first thing in the morning, *by facing eastward toward the rising sun.*

“He said also unto me, Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations that they do. Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the Lord’s house which was toward the north; and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz. Then said he unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man? turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations than these. And he brought me into the inner court of the Lord’s house, and, behold, at the door of the temple of the Lord’s, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the Lord, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east. Then he said unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man? Is it a light thing to the house of Judah that they commit the abominations which they commit here?—*Ezekiel 8:13-17.*

Throughout those earlier centuries, there was no particular day of the week that was used by the heathen for their sun worship. Only the Jews worshiped on a certain day of the week, and that was because God at the Creation of the world set it aside (Gen 2:1-3), and later set the command in writing—in the Fourth of the Ten Commandments (Ex 20:8-11).

Frequently, we are told, “They forsook the Lord

and followed Baal” (Judges 2:13; 10:10; 1 Samuel 12:10). It is now known that this Phoenician deity was worshiped as the Sun god.

“He was the principal Phoenician divinity, and was . . . the Sun god.”—*Historians’ History of the World, Vol. 2, p. 350.*

“Baal is the name of the Sun god, the chief of Syrophenician nations.”—*New Standard Encyclopedia, Vol. 2, pp. 303-304.*

“The worshipers of Baal claimed that the treasures of heaven, the dew and the rain, came not from Jehovah, but from the ruling forces of nature, and that it was through the creative energy of the sun that the earth was enriched and made to bring forth abundantly.”—*Prophets and Kings, 120.*

We are told that, in the time of Elijah, Baal was the sun god.

“As they continue their frenzied devotions, the crafty priests are continually trying to devise some means by which they may kindle a fire upon the altar and lead the people to believe that the fire has come direct from Baal. But Elijah watches every movement; and the priests, hoping against hope for some opportunity to deceive, continue to carry on their senseless ceremonies . . .

“At last, their voices hoarse with shouting, their garments stained with blood from self-inflicted wounds, the priests become desperate. With unabated frenzy they now mingle with their pleading terrible cursings of their sun god.”—*Prophets and Kings, 149, 150.*

The temple at Baalbek (“City of Baal”), about forty miles northwest of Damascus in Syria, was dedicated to Sun worship.

In ancient India, it was a common practice to worship toward the rising sun (*New Shaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, Vol. 11, p. 143*). Hirohito, Emperor of Japan, was the 124th ruler of a dynasty beginning with Jimmu, said to be de-

scended from the Sun god. The Japanese flag is a rising sun (*J. Hastings, Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol. 12, p. 88*).

Sunday becomes sacred—But then the first day of the week became sacred, a little before the time of Christ, when pagans dedicated the various days of the week to specific pagan gods—*dies Solis*: the day of the Sun, *dies Lunae*: the day of the Moon, and so on—and declared that the leading god, the Sun god, would have the first day of the week dedicated to him.

The contrast was clear and distinct: The sacred day of the Jews and Christians was the memorial of Creation—the true Sabbath, the seventh day of the weekly cycle, the only Sabbath given in the Bible.

In opposition to this, the sacred day of paganism was the memorial of the Sun god—the first day of the week. Mithra's day was called, "the venerable day of the Sun."

Many have searched the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, in order to find Sunday sacredness in it, but without success. It would require a direct command of God to change the day from the fourth the Ten Commandments was involved. Not even John or Paul would have dared make the change.

Who was Mithra?—Mithra was originally an ancient god of what is now Iran. He had been worshipped as the god of strength and war by the descendants of the Persians. But by the end of the second century A.D., he had been transformed, oddly enough, into the leading Sun god, and the foremost pagan god of any kind, in the western civilized world. The Romans often called him, by a new name, *Sol Invictus*, "the Invincible Sun." During the early cen-

turies of the Christian Era, Mithra was the greatest pagan rival of Christianity.

Halsberghe explains that, although “sun worship was one of the oldest components of the Roman religion” (p. 26), it had a powerful resurgence after the Bible ended.

“As a result of the penetration of Eastern Sun cults, from the early part of the second century A.D., the cult of *Sol Invictus* was dominant in Rome and in other parts of the Empire.”—*Gaston Halsberghe, The Cult of Sol Invictus, p. 44.*

This religion closely approximated in several ways the only true religion in the world—Christianity.

Mithrism had such features as a dying, rising Saviour, special religious suppers, a special holy day on one of the weekly days—the Sun day. Its converts were initially baptized by standing in a pit beneath an iron grating as a bull was slain above them and the blood dropped down on them.

In addition, there were other similarities. It counterfeited the religion of the true God more cleverly than any other religion up to that time in history.

Mithra was considered to be a “dying-rising” saviour, because every winter the sun would drop lower and still lower in the sky, and then, on December 25, for the first time it would seem to start rising higher in the sky. So Mithra’s “birthday” was celebrated yearly amid wild celebrations on December 25. It was only natural that, when Mithra’s Sunday sacredness was taken into the Christian church, his birthday would be also. More on this later.

Gradually, large numbers of non-Christians began observing Sunday as a holy day in honor of Mithra. He was especially liked by the Roman soldiers, for his worship included athletic feats of skill

and “warlike manliness.”

When Augustus Caesar became emperor, just before the birth of Christ, Mithraism was already spreading westward from Asia into Europe, and into the Roman Empire.

Since Roman generals, in times of crisis, frequently took over the emperorship, this also favored the growth of sun worship, because those generals had risen through the ranks of soldiers who venerated Mithra.

(Two centuries later, the Roman generals Constantius Chlorus and his son Constantine were devoted to the Sun god. This would prove very significant, as we shall see later on.)

Attracted to the Sabbath—By the end of the first century, many of the non-Christians in the empire were keeping the Seventh day. They were attracted to the seventh-day Sabbath, because of Jewish, as well as Christian, influence. (By A.D. 200, a hundred years after the death of John the last Apostle, only very few Christians had switched over to Sunday worship.)

Josephus, a historian who wrote in the first decades of the second century, remarked on how widespread throughout the empire was the keeping of the Seventh-day Sabbath at that time.

Anti-Semitic Reaction—But, as mentioned earlier, two important events shattered all this. In A.D. 70, nearly forty years after the death of Christ, and then again in A.D. 135, serious Jewish revolts were put down with much bloodshed. As a result of this, the hatred of the Romans toward anything that savored of Judaism became intense.

The rise of Mithrism in the Empire—We want to briefly overview the essential details of how

Mithrism became such an important religion in the Roman Empire.

Emperor Hadrian (117-138) issued an edict soon after, strictly prohibiting the observance of the Seventh-day Sabbath. But imperial decrees tended to be short-lived, and Christians generally disregarded it.

Second Century Mithraism—By the middle of the second century, Mithraic Sun worship was very popular among the Romans. Emperor Antoninus Pius (138-161 A.D.) erected a temple to Mithra at Ostai, a seaport town a few miles below Rome. Pius' name is also written at the base of the famous temple of the Sun at Baalbek (Heliopolis) in Syria. Justin Martyr, a leading, conservative Christian writer at the time, wrote an open letter to Pius, in which he referred several times to the increasing influence of Mithrism in the Christian Church. By this time, Mithrism was becoming popular among the Christians at the newly-established Christian seminary in Alexandria.

Third century Mithrism—Gradually, the worship of the Invincible Sun became even more popular and widespread among the Roman Empire. Emperor Aurelian (270-275 A.D.), whose mother was a priestess of the Sun, made this solar cult the official religion of the empire. His biographer, Flavius Vopiscus, says that the priests of the Temple of the Sun at Rome were called *pontiffs*. These "pontiffs" were the priests of their dying-rising saviour god, Mithra, and were called *vicegerents* in religious matters next to him.

An important historical source comments on the fact that two dominant elements, brought into Chris-

tianity from paganism by Rome, were sun worship symbols, and the religious practices of ancient Babylon.

“The solar [sun worship] theology of the Chaldeans [Babylonians], had a decisive effect . . . [upon the] final form reached by the religion of the pagan Semites, and following them, by that of the Romans when [the Roman emperor] Aurelian, the conqueror of Palmyra, had raised *Sol Invictus* [“the invincible Sun god”] to the rank of supreme divinity in the Empire.”—*The Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. 11, pp. 643, 646-647.

From Palmyra Aurelian transferred to the new sanctuary the images of Helios [the sun-god] and Bel, the ancient patron god of Babylon. (*See Cumont, The Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism*, 1911 edition, pp. 114-115. 124.)

In order to clarify the progressive changes which occurred back then, we will need to spend a few paragraphs recalling some developments mentioned earlier—but with the addition of additional facts about them.

The Lord’s day—By the middle of the second century, worldly Christians in Alexandria and Rome, in order to be better accepted by their pagan neighbors, began keeping Sunday. In order to excuse their practice, since it was not Scriptural, they called Sunday “*the Lord’s Day*” even though it was obvious to all that Revelation 1:10 said nothing about Sunday.

This idea of calling Sunday the “Lord’s Day” came from the Mithrites. The followers of Mithra referred to his sacred day as “the Day of the Lord,” and they called their god, Mithra, “Lord.”

In recognition of this, Emperor Pius issued an official declaration that the deity, Mithra, was to be

called *Sol Dominus Imperii Romani* (“The Sun, the Lord of the Roman Empire”). This title and the name *Sol Invicto* appeared together on his coinage.

“No ecclesiastical writer before Eusebius of Caesarea in the fourth century even suggested that either Christ or His apostles instituted the observance of the first day of the week.

“These Gentile Christians of Rome and Alexandria began calling the first day of the week ‘the Lord’s day.’ This was not difficult for the pagans of the Roman Empire who were steeped in sun worship to accept, because they [the pagans] referred to their sun-god as their ‘Lord.’”—*E.M. Chalmers, How Sunday Came Into the Christian Church, p. 3.*

It is a remarkable fact that, in those early centuries after the Bible ended, no Christians used Revelation 1:10 to defend their position that Sunday was “the Lord’s day.” They apparently recognized that Revelation 1:10 did not name a certain day, whereas, throughout the Bible, the Seventh-day Sabbath is repeatedly referred to as “the day of the Lord,” or something similar (Ex 16:23, 25; 31:15; 20:10; Deut 5:14; Lev 23:3; Isa 58:13; Matt 12:8; Mk 2:28). It is the only “Lord’s day” in the Bible.

One careful researcher analyzed all the extant literature from A.D. 100 to 340, and concluded:

“Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1-3; and Revelation 1:10 are never cited by the writers of this period in support of Sunday observance.”—*R.L. Odom, Sabbath and Sunday in Early Christianity, p. 303.*

The first two of those Bible references mentions in passing the first day of the week, but bestows no sacredness upon it.

Another researcher, a Baptist Bible scholar, tried to find whatever evidence he could find in the New Testament which would identify Sunday as the Lord’s

day. However, he found none.

“There are in the New Testament no commands, no prescriptions, no rules, no liturgies applying to the Lord’s Day.”—*W.O. Carver, Sabbath Observance, p. 52.*

December 25—Cumont, Olcott and others clearly show that December 25 was the yearly date of the annual birth of Mithra the Sun god—the leading heathen deity of the Empire. On this date, his followers celebrated the fact that the visible orb of the sun was again rising higher in the sky, following the winter solstice. (On December 21, the sun is actually at its lowest, but its rise is not visibly perceptible until four days later.) Emperor Aurelian made Mithra’s December 25 birthday an official holiday throughout the Empire about 273 A.D.

“December 25 was the great pagan festival, that of *Sol Invictus* [the “Invincible Sun”], which celebrated the victory of light over darkness and the lengthening of the sun’s rays at the winter solstice. The assimilation of Christ to the Sun god, as *Sun of Righteousness*, was widespread among Alexandrian and Roman Christians in the fourth century, and was furthered by Constantine’s legislation on Sunday—which is not unrelated to the fact that the Sun god was the titular divinity of his [Constantine’s] family.”—*Williston Walker, A History of the Christian Church, third edition, page 155.*

This mid-winter pagan holiday was eventually declared to be the solemn anniversary of the birth of Christ—and called “the mass of Christ.”

“Solar [sun worship] myths and vegetation rites [the spring fertility rites, named after the goddess Ishtar], and the legend of a god dying and reborn came to apply . . . to the winter death [December] and spring revival [resurrection] of the earth.”—*Will Durant, Our Oriental Heritage, p. 66.*

“The cult of Mithra . . . spread throughout the Roman Empire, and shared in giving Christmas to Christianity .

. Christmas was originally a solar [sun worship] festival, celebrating, at the winter solstice (about December 25), the lengthening of the day and the triumph of the sun over his enemies. It became a Mithraic, and finally a Christian, holy day.”—*Ibid.*, p. 372.

“The Church of Rome, to facilitate the acceptance of the faith by the pagan masses, found it convenient to institute the 25th of December as the fast of the temporal birth of Christ, to divert them from the pagan feast, celebrated on the same day in honor of the *Invincible Sun* Mithra, the conqueror of darkness.”—*Manuel Righetti, Manual of Liturgical Instruction, Vol. 2, p. 67.*

Easter: the Resurrection of Spring—In the time of the apostles there was no Easter service such as we have today. The early church, some Judaizing Christians kept the day of the Biblical passover (*Pascha*), but not Easter, which was a pagan fertility festival in honor of Ishtar (also known as Attis). Now Easter also came in the spring of the year, This spring festival was accompanied by licentious practices. Emperor Claudius, made it an official holiday during his reign.

“Attis awoke from his sleep of death, and the joy created by his resurrection burst out in wild merrymaking, wanton masquerades, and luxurious banquets.”—*Franz Cumont, Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism, pp. 56-57.*

Gradually the Christian church identified with this pagan festival of the Resurrection of the Goddess of Spring and flowering plants, by keeping it in honor of the resurrection of Christ. History reveals that it was a deliberate decree of the bishop of Rome that brought Easter into the church.

About the year 154 A.D., Anticetus, head of the Christian church at Rome, authorized a Sunday festival to correspond with the Attis fertility festival. This

was a combining of Mithra, Attis and Christ and, he thought, would appeal to the heathen and encourage them to start attending his Christian church. Half-converted theologians in Alexandria spent their time digging up pagan philosophy and recommending it in writing to the Christian churches of the Empire, while half-converted church leaders in Rome used those ideas as levers to gain control over the other local churches by pretending that they had the authority to require obedience to them!

First Sunday Coercion—Two years earlier (A.D. 152), Anicetus urged the other churches of Christendom to keep the first day instead of the Seventh—every week.

The aged Polycarp, who had been a close friend of the Apostle John prior to his death about A.D. 100., traveled to Rome about the year 155, and strongly protested this action on the part of Anicetus. But the Roman pastor refused to yield to the authority of Scripture. Failing in his efforts, Polycarp returned to Smyrna with a sad report to the brethren in the eastern churches. The next year he was martyred.

Second Sunday coercion—Then, in A.D. 195, once again the Roman church made major news throughout Christendom, when Victor, chief pastor at Rome, *demand*ed that the other church leaders to keep observe a feast of Christ's resurrection on Sunday. They protested, insisting that if done at all, the Biblical precedent for this was on the fourteenth day of the month *Nisan* (Ex 10,12,14, Lev 23:51).

But Victor would not consider this, and had the boldness to write letters "*excommunicating*" all leaders and churches that refused to do as he said! He declared all the churches of Asia to be apostate be-

cause they would not follow his example in the matter.

Back in those days, some churches were more influential than others, *but none were "over" the others*. What Victor tried to do in 195 A.D. bordered on the fantastic.

The demands by Anicetus and Victor were *the first times in history* that the head of the Christian church in Rome attempted to gain control over all the other churches—and both concerned Sunday worship.

Commenting on it, Dr. Bower, in his *History of the Popes, volume 1, page 18*, calls this “The first essay of papal usurpation.” In simple language, we would call it, “the first attempts at papal takeover.”

A careful study of the historical records reveals that gradually, with the passing of the years, the Roman bishop tended to use his new day, Sunday, as a ploy for political supremacy over the other churches. Victor’s decree was the first ecclesiastical Sunday Law of any kind, in history.

The Easter Controversy continued, with the Eastern churches giving it stiff opposition until the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D., at which time Sunday was declared the official day for Easter observance. Emperor Constantine immediately followed this, the same year, with civil enactments enforcing it among the churches.

Gnostics at Alexandria—The neo-Platonism, taught at the Alexandrian seminary, was also called *gnosticism* (Greek: *gnosis*, or wisdom) It was through the Gnostic Christians of, Alexandria that several serious problems entered the church:

(1) Scripture truth was spiritualized away through the use of allegories. (2) The Old Testament was considered something bad which Christians should

avoid. (3) Images and image worship was introduced into Christian worship for the first time. (4) Greek philosophic speculations were brought into the church. (5) Sunday as the only weekly day of worship was introduced. (6) Egyptian pagan rituals were integrated into church worship. (7) Those wealthy—by very worldly Christians—started the first Christian half-pagan seminary for the training of ministers. That school continued for centuries, with great success in spreading its errors.

Only liberals opposed Sabbathkeeping—Only the church at Rome gave full support and backing to the marvelous innovations being made at Alexandria, and it is a striking fact that *all the Christians, outside of Rome, for the first two centuries after Christ and the Apostles, whose writings' have been authenticated beyond question, and who opposed the Creation Sabbath and favored Sunday observance, were men who (1) were sympathetic with Gnosticism, had anti-Jewish prejudice, and (2) came from or who received their training in Alexandria or Rome.*

The only so-called “early church fathers” who, prior the time of Constantine and living away from Rome advocated Sundaykeeping, were these men: Justin, Clement of Alexandria, and Origin. All three were gnostic Christian philosophers. In addition, there was Tertullian, who lived west of Alexandria and received his training from a pagan skeptic (instead of gnostic) philosopher, before professing Christianity.

The only other significant and authenticated Christian writers who, in their decrees and writings, taught Sunday keeping before A.D. 300 were the leaders of the church at Rome.

Alexandrian foolishness—Now, unless you have actually read their writings you cannot imagine what kind of thinking went through the minds of these “Christian philosophy” men of Alexandria. It is nearly unbelievable: the mystical, dreamy applications they put on Scripture and on everything else. And yet these are the men who began the Sundaykeeping idea in the Christian church, and then passed it on to the politically oriented, but liberal, minds of the leaders at Rome.

For example, Clement of Alexandria was head teacher at the Alexandrian theological school for several years (about A.D. 200). *He has the distinction of being the first Christian in recorded history to apply the term “Lord’s day” to the first day of the week.* Here one of his most important passages on the importance of Sundaykeeping. In it, he is trying to show the “first day” of the week has magically changed into the “seventh day”:

And the fourth word [in the Ten Commandments] is that which intimates that the world was created by God, and that He gave us the seventh day as a rest, on account of the trouble that there is in life . . . The seventh day, therefore, is proclaimed a rest—abstraction from ills preparing for the primal day, our true rest; which, in truth, is the first creation of light, in which all things are viewed and possessed . . . The eighth may possibly turn out to be properly the seventh, and the seventh a day of work. For the creation of the world was concluded in six days . . . The Pythagoreans, as I think, reckon six the perfect number . . . As marriage generates from male and female, so six is generated from the odd number three, which is called the masculine number, and the even number two, which is considered feminine. For twice three is six.”—*Clement, Miscellanies, book 6, chapter 16.*

Such is Clement’s Scriptureless reasoning on the Sabbath question.

As did several Sundaykeeping “Christian” philosophers of the Alexandrian school, Clement not only spiritualized away Scripture, but he also symbolically extracted from Plato’s *Republic*, bits and pieces he could use for “new” Christian teachings! (Plato was an earlier heathen Greek writer [428-327 B.C.] who wrote a book called *The Republic*)

The first Christian statement ever penned, which called Sunday the “the Lord’s day”—was written by Clement. Here is that passage:

“And the Lord’s day [Sunday] Plato prophetically speaks of in the tenth book of the *Republic*, in these words, ‘And when seven days have passed to each of them in the meadow, on the eighth day they are to set out and arrive in four days.’—*Clement, Miscellanies, book 5, chapter 14.* (Col 2:6-8, 1 Tim 6:20)

Clement says he got the idea from Plato! Because of his very early statements about Sundaykeeping, Clement was considered very important later on to the leaders at Rome, so he was eventually canonized—and declared to be a saint!

So much for Clement—the man first who invented the idea that the “Lord’s Day” in Revelation 1:10 means Sunday. Can you find Sunday in Revelation 1:10?

Praying toward the sun—Clement was one of several teachers at the Alexandria theology school who practiced praying toward the sun during worship whenever possible, and urged other Christians to do it also. He tells us that he got the idea from the pagan Mithraites. (But read Ezekiel 8:16-17.)

Tertullian, an early Christian writer who lived near Alexandria at about the time of Clement and Origen, wrote this in defense of the fact that he and fellow Christians in and near Alexandria had copied the

Mithric practice of praying in the morning toward the rising sun:

“Others [pagans] more cultured, think that the sun is the god of the Christians, because it is known that we pray toward the east [where the sun rises from] and make a festivity on the day of the Sun.”—*Tertullian. Ad Nationes, Book 1, chap. 13.*

Tertullian explained that he and fellow Christians of his time regularly faced the east when they prayed to Christ. He mentioned that in an essay in which he advocated Sundaykeeping, and rebuked other Christians because they were refraining from work on the Seventh day.

It had been the custom of the Egyptians and Persians to worship the sun in the morning, and Tacitus (a Roman historian) told of this practice in Emperor Vespasian’s Roman army in the first century.

As mentioned earlier, the few Christians advocating Sundaykeeping prior to A.D. 400—were the very ones who were introducing pagan heresies into the church.

Offerings for the Dead—About the same time that all these other changes were coming into the church in the third century, Tertullian—one of the few other early “Christians” advocating Sundaykeeping—tells us of something else the Christians in Alexandria were doing:

“As often as the anniversary [Easter] comes round, we make offerings for the dead as birthday honors.”—*Tertullian. (Ps 106:28-29)*

Veneration of the saints and the burning of candles for the dead were not far distant.

Sun images and light beams—But, unfortunately, there were those in the church that were doing their best to have the world think that Christ was

but another name for Mithra. Cumont tells us that they purposely compared the two as closely as they could so that pagans would be drawn into the church.

The dazzling orb of sunlight, he tells us, was exalted as the great symbol of Christ. Christians in certain places had sun-symbols in their churches to help the pagans adjust to the new surroundings. (Deut 4:16-19)

Not long after, the idea originated of having light beams coming from the heads of Christ and Mary and the saints.

Based on Tradition, not the Bible—Jesus warned us against “tradition”

“Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? . . . well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”—*Matthew 15:3, 7-9.*

The Church of Rome openly admits that its teachings are based on tradition (the speculations of popes and councils), instead of the Bible.

“Like two sacred rivers flowing from paradise, the Bible and divine Tradition contain the Word of God, the precious gems of revealed truth. Though these two divine streams are in themselves, on account of their divine origin, of equal sacredness, and are both full of revealed truths, still, of the two, Tradition [the sayings of popes and councils] is to us more clear and safe.”—*Di Bruno, Catholic Belief, p. 33.*

Tradition is man-made inventions that have no warrant in Scripture. In later centuries, tradition reshaped, indeed misshaped, Christianity. Tradition could produce unity, but not of right doctrine. Christianity, had so conformed to worldly customs that

Faustus, a non-Christian Manichaeon living about 400 A.D. was able to make against the Christian church a serious charge. Here is what he said:

“You [Christians] appease the shades of the departed with wine and food. You keep the same holidays as the Gentiles . . . In your way of living you have made no change. Plainly you are a mere schism [offshoot of worldlings]; for the only difference from the original is that you meet separately.”—*Quoted by Augustine, in “Reply to Faustus the Manichaeon,” book 20, paragraph 4.*

Two Contenders—All this time, the influence of Sun worship was rapidly increasing in the Roman Empire. Over the centuries the official religion of the empire had been emperor worship, but, gradually, it had died out and two strong contenders for popular favor were taking its place. This was Mithra the Sun god, and Christ of Christianity. And, frankly, as the third century neared its close, it was difficult in some of the wealthier cities of Egypt and the Italian peninsula to see much difference between the two religions.

But there those who refused to depart from the plain words of Scripture. In the rural areas and in the eastern part of the Empire, there were many who had not bowed the knee to Baal, and who would not do so for several centuries to come, in spite of persecution from their own brethren.

Along about this time, a youngster was growing up who was destined to powerfully affect the Christian world for all time to come—a boy named Constantine.

ó PART FIVE ó

THE ERA OF CONSTANTINE

EVENTS DURING CONSTANTINE'S LIFE

Three persecutions—You will recall that three major persecutions of Christians occurred from A.D. 202 onward. The first was by *Septimus Severus* (202-210), the second by *Decius* (250-251), and the third by *Diocletian* (303). Each period of persecution was worse than the previous one, while between them there was a total of 92 years of peace, during which liberal Christians kept taking the church farther and farther into apostasy.

Diocletian's persecution—*Diocletian* became emperor in 284, and the next year he appointed three men to help him manage the government: *Maximian*, *Galerius*, and *Constantius Chlorus*. Each of the other three was placed in charge of an outlying part of the Empire.

In February, 303, *Diocletian* began an intense persecution of Christians (*Eusebius, Church History, Bk 8, Chap. 5*). Four edicts followed one another in quick succession, each more severe than the one preceding it. He commanded that churches throughout the Empire be torn down, pastors imprisoned, and copies of the Scriptures seized and burned. Those who re-

sisted were to be enslaved. The fourth edict, in 304, ordered all Christians to offer sacrifice to the pagan gods or be slain. *Constantius Chlorus* was the only one of Diocletian's commanders that did little to persecute Christians in his territory of Gaul (modern France) and Britain.

Just as in the Decian persecution, half a century earlier, multitudes of Christians quickly renounced their faith and accepted the pagan faith.

As you might expect, by the end of Diocletian's persecution, Christians were anxious for an Emperor who could bring them peace!

—And then came a dramatic change—one which would radically affect the Christian Church all the way down to our own time. Christianity was about to walk into the halls of kings, and the religion would become a State Church!

Four co-rulers—Diocletian retired in 305, due to poor health, and Maximian abdicated from his position. This left *Constantius Chlorus*, *Galerius*, and two new co-rulers (*Maxentius*, and *Licinus*) as the leaders of the empire. *Constantius Chlorus* died in 306, and his son, *Constantine* took his place. A bitter fight between rival claimants for the throne began. Its outcome would determine the new master of the Roman Empire.

Fighting continued on and off from 305 till 323. But out of it *Constantine* emerged as the sole ruler of the vast Roman Empire. The crucial battle occurred just north of Rome in October 312, following which by the *Edict of Milan*, *Constantine* gave Christianity full legal equality with every other religion in the empire—something it had never legally had before. More favors to the church soon followed. *Here is how it happened:*

Battle of Mulvian Bridge—On April, 311, an edict of toleration was extended to the Christians by Constantine and Galerius. Galerius died the next month. Fighting for the throne continued. The crucial military engagement took place on October 28, 312 in, what is generally considered to be, one of the decisive battles that would affect later history: the *Battle of Mulvian Bridge*.

A rapid march southward, and several successful battles in northern Italy, brought Constantine to Sara Rubra, a small town north of Rome. Just south of him, on the north side of the Tiber River, was the encampment of Maxentius. Near it was the Mulvian bridge that spanned the large river. In the battle which followed, Maxentius was slain.

Edict of Milan—Was Constantine a Christian at that time? There is no doubt that he was tolerant to Christians, but heathen emblems continued to be used on his armor and coins, and he retained the pagan title of *Pontifex Maximus*.

Early in 313, Constantine and Licinius met at Milan and agreed to permit—not merely toleration—but full freedom to the Christians. Their decision is known as the *Edict of Milan*. Christianity was now, for the first time, legally equal to that of any religion of the empire. All confiscated church property was ordered to be restored.

(Licinius, co-ruler of the empire, later began persecuting Christians in the eastern third of the empire, but he was defeated by Constantine in 323.)

Was Constantine a Christian?—The mother of Constantine, Helena, had converted to Christianity shortly after her husband, Constantius (Constantine's father) divorced her. But Constantine never clearly

became a Christian until, perhaps, as he neared his own death. Constantine used all of his contacts with Christianity as a political springboard.

In his court, Constantine consulted with pagan philosophers and scholars, as well as Christian ones. In regard to Christian doctrine, Constantine always favored only those policies which church leaders (primarily Sylvester and his counselor, Eusebius) wanted—which would ensure political unity in the Empire.

Yet, through it all and afterward, Constantine continued to be a pagan.

“He continued to use vague monotheistic language that any pagan could accept. During the earlier years of his supremacy he carried out patiently the ceremonial required of him as *Pontifex Maximus* of the traditional [pagan] cult; he restored pagan temples, and ordered the taking of the *auspices* [by examining livers of freshly-killed animals]. He used pagan as well as Christian rites in dedicating Constantinople. He used pagan magic formulas to protect crops and heal disease.”—*Will Durant, Caesar and Christ, page 656.*

Yet, in spite of this mixing of Christianity and paganism in the mind of Constantine,— *he became the most influential determinant of Christianity for more than a thousand years!* For it was through his political support that the apostate local Christian church at Rome, together with several other major city churches, were able to grasp control of Christendom—and impose their pagan practices upon Christians scattered in cities and villages throughout the vast Roman Empire. The changes that took place then, have continued on down to our own time! How very important it is that we understand what those changes were.

Pope Sylvester (314-337) and his counselor,

Eusebius, recognized that the key to control by the Roman pastor—over all the other churches of the Empire—depended on requiring Sunday worship. This would solidify the pagan innovations which the Roman church had been trying to establish everywhere for decades.

It was by their direct request that Constantine enacted his Sunday laws. He was very willing to do this, for he saw in it a way to unify the Empire under a single religion, believing that religious unity would help the Empire resist the increasing attacks from the barbarian hoards in the north. The wording was carefully selected, so that both Mithrites and Christians could come together.

Sylvester and Eusebius—Sylvester was the head of the church at Rome throughout the latter part of Constantine's reign. He recognized the freedom accorded to Christians, through the Edict of Milan in 313, as a glorious opportunity to further the status of his local church at Rome. Here is his official entry in Vatican pope lists:

“St. Sylvester I, the 33rd pope, ascended the papal throne on January 31, 314, and died December 31, 335.”—*Catholic Encyclopedia*, art. “Popes.”

Eusebius (c.260-c.340), bishop of Caesarea, worked as a trusted counselor to Sylvester, in planning civil and church legislation which would strengthen the power of the Roman church. Eusebius also wrote a lengthy *Ecclesiastical History*, in which he slanted everything in favor of Roman orthodoxy. He also wrote a *Life of Constantine*.

The influence of both men was extremely important. Constantine knew essentially nothing about Christianity, its beliefs or its controversies, and he consistently followed the recommendations of these

two men. They suggested the ongoing civil legislation to be enacted, and the church council to be convened (which he attended).

“Sylvester . . . decreed that the rest of the Sabbath should be transferred rather to the Lord’s day, in order that on that day we should rest from worldly works.”—*Rabanus Maurus, De Clericorum Institutione (Concerning the Instruction of the Clergymen), Book 2, Chap. 46.*

First National Sunday Law—On March 7, 321, was issued the first national Sunday Law in history. This was the first “blue law” to be issued by a civil government. Here is the text of Constantine’s first Sunday Law Decree:

“Let all judges and townspeople and occupations of all trades rest on the Venerable Day of the Sun [Sunday]; nevertheless, let those who are situated in the rural districts freely and with full liberty attend to the cultivation of the fields, because it frequently happens that no other day may be so fitting for ploughing grains or trenching vineyards, lest at the time the advantage of the moment granted by the provision of heaven be lost. Given on the *Nones* [seventh] of March, Crispus and Constantine being consuls, each of them, for the second time.”—*As recorded in the later compiled Code of Justinian, Book 111, title 12, law 3.*

Five additional Sundays Laws were to be issued by Constantine within a very few years to buttress this, his basic one.

Yet in the same year that he enacted this first law, Constantine was embellishing the *Temple of the Sun* in Rome, and he made several decrees maintaining pagan practices. The old Roman priests in these superstitious performances decided the most important governmental questions by watching the flight of birds, by examining the quivering entrails (small intestines) of freshly-killed chickens, or by similar su-

perstitutions.

The very next day after giving the Sunday Law of March 7, 321, quoted above, Constantine made another law favoring pagan soothsayers, to the intent that whenever lightning should strike the imperial palace or any other public building, the heathen priests should be consulted as to what it might mean. This they did by looking at the entrails of beasts that had been slaughtered in sacrifice to the gods (*quoted in Code of Theodosius, Bk XVI, title 10, law 1*).

He tolerated all religions, believing that by focusing attention on unity in Sunday worship, would have the effect of bringing all the faiths together into one.

It is an historical fact that when Constantine issued this first imperial Sunday edict of 321, enforcing the observance of Sunday by the people of the Roman Empire, he was still a worshiper of *Sol Invictus*—"the Invincible Sun," as well as being the *Pontifex Maximus* (supreme pagan pontiff or priest) of Roman heathen worship as the state religion.

Franz Cumont explains that *Sol Invictus* (Mithra) was the family god of both Constantine's father as well as himself.

"With [Constantine's father] Constantius Chlorus (A.D. 305) there ascended the throne [of the Roman Empire] a solar dynasty which . . . professed to have *Sol Invictus* [the sun god] as its special protector and ancestor. Even the Christian emperors, Constantine and Constantius, did not altogether forget the pretensions which they could derive from so illustrious a descent"—*Franz F. V.M. Cumont, Astrology and Religion Among the Greeks and Romans, p. 55.*

Religious harmony through mutual compromise—It is to be observed that Constantine's Sunday law was just that—a Sunday law—and nothing more. For Sunday was the great day of the Sun wor-

ship cults as well as of compromising Christians. In that law, Christianity is not mentioned. In that edict, the day was called “the Venerable Day of the Sun.” (*venarabili die solis*). This was the mystical Mithric name for the Day of the Sun god. Both the heathen and the Christians well knew this.

The objective of Constantine and high Christian Church officials was to bring peace through mutual compromise. It was on the doctrine of Sunday that the religions of the empire could best unite. Sunday sacredness was common both to the Sun-worshippers and to compromising Christians. Making that day the sacred day of Christendom could bring the heathen into the Church. And so it happened.

“How such a law would further the designs of Constantine it is not difficult to discover. It would confer a special honor upon the festivals of the Christian church, and it would grant a slight boon to the pagans themselves. In fact, there is nothing in this edict which might not have been written by a pagan. The law does honor to the pagan deity whom Constantine had adopted as his special patron god, Mithra the Sun. The very name of the day lent itself to this ambiguity. The term *dies Solis* [day of the sun] was in use among Christians as well as heathen.”—*J. Westbury-Jones, Roman and Christian Imperialism, p. 210.*

Philip Shaff, a well-known 19th century historian clarifies this still further.

“The Sunday law of Constantine . . . forbade the public desecration of Sunday, not under the name of *Sabbatum* [Sabbath] or *dies Domini* [Lord’s day], but under its old astrological and heathen title, *dies Solis* [the day of the Sun], familiar to all his subjects, so that the law was as applicable to the worshippers of Mithra as to the Christians. There is no reference in his law either to the fourth commandment or to the resurrection of Christ.”—*Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, Vol. 3, chap. 7,*

p. 380.

“The retention of the old pagan name of *dies Solis* or ‘Sunday,’ for the weekly Christian festival, is in great measure owing to the union of pagan and Christian sentiment with which the first day of the week was recommended by Constantine to his subjects, pagan and Christian alike, as the ‘*venerable day of the Sun.*’ His decree regulating its observance has been justly called a new era in the history of the Lord’s day. It was his mode of harmonizing the discordant elements of the empire under one common institution.”—*A.P. Stanley, History of the Eastern Church, p. 184.*

In another of his six Sunday laws, he gave the order that all of the heathen troops of his army be marched out on the drill field each Sunday in order to recite a prayer composed by the emperor for this purpose. It was worded in such a way that it could be addressed to any god adored by mankind. The soldiers were required by this Sunday law to recite this prayer while facing the sun.

Victor Duruy, a French historian, explains:

“He [Constantine] sent to the legions, to be recited upon that day [Sunday], a form of prayer which could have been employed by a worshiper of Mithra, of Serapis, or of Apollo, quite as well as by a Christian believer. This was the official sanction of the old custom of addressing a prayer to the rising sun.”—*Victor Duruy, History of Rome, volume 7, page 489.*

Constantine’s one objective was to unite the people of the empire in one religion, yet he himself remained an unconverted man.

“Besides the murder of his son Crispus, he [Constantine] is said to have had his wife, the boy’s mother, suffocated by steam in a bath. It is certain that, against his plighted word to his own sister, he caused his seventy-year-old brother-in-law, Licinius, to be put to death in 324, and a little later had the younger Licinius, his nephew, murdered. These crimes were com-

mitted after the promulgation of the Sunday laws in 321.”—*R.L. Odom, Sunday in Roman Paganism, 191.*

However, after the death of the elder Licinius, his colleague in the imperial office, Constantine openly professed Christianity, though he intentionally postponed baptism until a few days before his death in 337, for he considered baptism as something of a supernatural power to take away sin, and he avoided doing it any sooner than necessary.

“In the early part of the fourth century the emperor Constantine issued a decree making Sunday a public festival throughout the Roman Empire. (See Appendix.) The day of the sun was revered by his pagan subjects and was honored by Christians; it was the emperor’s policy to unite the conflicting interests of heathenism and Christianity. He was urged to do this by the bishops of the church, who, inspired by ambition and thirst for power, perceived that if the same day was observed by both Christians and heathen, it would promote the nominal acceptance of Christianity by pagans and thus advance the power and glory of the church.”—*Great Controversy, 53.*

But though Constantine meant the law to unite all contending religions into one giant compromising conglomerate, Christian church leaders at Rome recognized it as a great victory for them. And so it proved to be.

More on Eusebius—Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea (270-338), is generally considered to be Constantine’s outstanding flatterer in the church. Eusebius, himself, mentioned that he frequently sent to and received letters from Constantine, his close friend (*Eusebius, Life of Constantine, Bk. IV, Chaps. XXXIV and XXXV*). Eusebius made this remarkable statement:

“All things whatsoever it was duty to do on the [Sev-

enth day] Sabbath, these *we* [the church] have transferred to the Lord's day."—*Commentary on the Psalms, in Migne, Patrologia Graeca, volume 23, column 1171.*

Eusebius was a very daring man. He and his associates believed they had the authority to change one of God's Ten Commandments. Commenting on this astounding statement, one historical writer wrote this:

"Not a single testimony of the Scriptures was produced in proof of the new doctrine. Eusebius himself unwittingly acknowledges its falsity, and points to the real authors of the change. 'All things,' he says, 'whatever that it was duty to do on the Sabbath, these we have transferred to the Lord's day.' But the Sunday argument, groundless as it was, served to embolden men in trampling upon the Sabbath of the Lord. All who desired to be honored by the world accepted the popular festival."—*Great Controversy, p. 574.*

Another daring thing that Eusebius did was to declare that it was Christ who changed the Sabbath to Sunday.

"Eusebius is the first ecclesiastical writer known to have taught that Christ transferred the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week."—*Robert Odom, Sabbath and Sunday in Early Christianity, 302.*

Here is where Eusebius made that statement:

"The Word, by means of the new covenant, has translated and transferred the festival of the Sabbath to the rising of the light [of the sun], and has handed down by tradition to us a likeness of the true rest, the salutary and Lord's and first day of light."—*Eusebius, Commentary on Psalm 92.*

Eusebius wrote that the proper way to keep Sunday holy, was to rise early and worship God, facing east, as the sun arose. This was in honor of Christ, *the true Sun God.*

"By this the psalmist signifies prophetically the assembling for worship, at early dawn and on each morning of

the day of the resurrection, in the church throughout the whole world.”—*Eusebius, Commentary on the Psalms [comment on Psalm 59:16, which says nothing about worshiping the rising sun].*

Eusebius’ reasoning was simple enough: Sunday was dedicated by the pagans to their greatest god, and the Seventh day to one of their insignificant ones. Therefore, the Christian worship day should be changed from Sabbath to the first day of the week—so both pagans and Christians can unite in their worship.

What Sylvester said about the Bible Sabbath—

This was the beginning of something new and ominous for the Church. Pope Sylvester, during his papal reign, expressed strong disgust with the Bible Sabbath, which God gave to mankind at the Creation of our world. Here is what he said:

“If every Sunday is to be observed joyfully by the Christians on account of the resurrection, then every Sabbath on account of the burial is to be regarded in execration [loathing or cursing] of the Jews.”—*Sylvester, quoted by S.R.E. Humbert, Adversus Graecorum calumnias 6, in Patrologia Cursus Completus, Series Latina, ed. J.P. Migne, page 143.*

This attitude of disgust toward those obedient to the Bible Sabbath, would intensify in later centuries.

Sylvester changes the names of the week—

Pope Sylvester issued an order that all Christians must henceforth call Monday, “the first from the Lord’s Day,” Tuesday, the second . . .,” and so forth (*Bede, De Temporibus Liber, Chap. IV*). This change of names, he called the “*feriae*.”

Sylvester demanded that all Christians eat nothing on both Friday and Sabbath. This was done in the hope that doing so would keep people from wor-

shipping on the Bible Sabbath. It was hoped that those who obeyed would be too weak to worship on the seventh day.

“Besides, He [Sylvester] changed the names of the days into *feriae*, and he decreed a fast . . . on the sixth day, and on the Sabbath.”—*Sicardus of Cremona, Chronicon, entry for the year 310.*

The Council of Nicea—By the year 325, Constantine had come to fullest power, and a large council was called to which leaders of the Christian Church, from all over the Empire, were commanded to attend. This was the *Council of Nicaea*, at which the church leaders decreed that Easter must be kept only on a certain Sunday of each year. Immediately afterward,

A State Church, with its inevitable persecution of religious dissenters, was beginning to form, for Constantine issued a decree immediately afterward that everyone must obey the rulings of this council, on pain of imprisonment or death.

“The ruling of the Council of Nicaea that the Pascha should be observed by *all* Christians on Sunday each year on the same day observed by Rome, was a tremendous victory for victory for the church of Rome.”—*Robert Odom, Sabbath and Sunday in Early Christianity, 245-246.*

It should be mentioned that this decree clearly stated that, as late as 325, large numbers of Christians were still not observing Easter Sunday:

“The people being thus in every place divided in respect of this” (*quoted in Eusebius, Life of Constantine, Bk III, Chap. V.*)

Historical quotations, given shortly, will establish that—by a full one hundred years after the time of Constantine—the great majority of Christians in the Roman Empire were still refusing to switch from the

Bible Sabbath to Sunday. They believed in “the Bible and the Bible only” as the rule of their faith, and they were willing to suffer for it.

As soon as Church and State unite, the result is always persecution of religious dissenters. Trouble was ahead for the people of God.

Before leaving the Council of Nicea, it should be noted that, in his decree made in connection with it, Constantine commanded the people that they must accept and obey *all the decrees issued by church leaders!* Faithful Christians recognize that the Bible, not church leaders, constitutes the highest authority in religious matters, but of this fact Constantine was ignorant.

“Receive then, with all willingness this truly Divine injunction, and regard it as in truth the gift of God. For whatever is determined in the holy assemblies of the bishops is to be regarded as indicative of the Divine will.”—*Decree of Constantine, quoted in Eusebius, The Life of Constantine, Book 3, Chap. 20.*

Only a year after murdering some of his relatives, Constantine demands that all Christians yield to the decisions of church councils, yet he himself refuses to be baptized into the church until twelve years later, as he nears death.

The Council of Laodicea—Shortly after this, the first recorded church legislation, commanding Sunday worship, was enacted at the Council of Laodicea, which convened a year or two before Constantine’s death in A.D. 336. More on this council later.

Constantine favors worldly Christian leaders—Unfortunately, Constantine was only interested in pleasing the influential church leaders at Rome. He ignored all the pleas of humble Sabbathkeepers that were submitted to him. Any Christians that resisted

the errors that were being introduced into the church met with his opposition. “Unite with the bishop of Rome or be destroyed,” was Constantine’s position.

“Great as were the favors which Constantine showed to the church, they were only for that strong, close-knit, hierarchically organized portion that called itself ‘Catholic.’ The various [so-called] ‘heretical’ sects could look for no bounty from his hands.”—*Williston Walker, A History of the Christian Church, page 105.*

Who were these other groups, called “heretics” by the Roman church, to which Constantine was opposed? Here are two of them:

The Donatist controversy—One was the Donatists. Donatus was the head pastor of the church at Carthage. He refused to accept back into the ministry those pastors who had denied their faith and joined the pagans during the Diocletian persecution.

But when Bishop Sylvester in Rome heard about this, he declared himself to be in charge of what was done in all the churches! Donatus was ordered to accept the compromising, liberal pastors back into the full ministry—or be fired! Apparently, Sylvester thought that he owned the church of Carthage!

This daring announcement resulted in complaints from Donatus made directly to Constantine. The committee he appointed to check into the matter, made a hurried decision that, for the sake of peace and harmony, Donatus should stop complaining, and let those half-converted apostates back into the ministry. But Donatus refused to relent. Upset that the “unity” in the church was being broken up, Constantine convened the Council of Arles (314), which voted against Donatus.

Tongue in cheek, Durant explains the problem:

“The Church found herself almost overwhelmed by

the Donatist heresy in Africa. Bonatus, Bishop of Carthage (315), had denied the efficacy of sacraments administered by priests in a state of sin. The Church, unwilling to risk so much on the virtues of the clergy, wisely repudiated the idea.”—*Will Durant, The Age of Faith, p. 47.*

The persecution of the Donatists and others by Constantine was highly significant—because, for the first time in Christianity, the civil government had taken sides in church controversies. Philip Schaff explains:

“This is the first example of the civil punishment of heresy; and it is the beginning of a long succession of civil persecutions for all departures from the Catholic faith. Before the union of church and state ecclesiastical excommunication was the extreme penalty. Now banishment and afterwards even the death penalty were added, because all offenses against the church were regarded as at the same time crimes against the state and civil society.”—*Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, Vol. 3, p. 630.*

The Nestorian controversy—Another quarrel arose over the fact that the liberals were calling Mary the “mother of God.” Nestorius, an associate pastor at the Antioch church declared that such a concept was blasphemous. He reasoned (correctly) that Mary was only the mother of the human nature of Christ, whereas the liberals said *she was also the mother of Christ’s divine nature!*

When Nestorius’ position was condemned by a Roman synod (430), he energetically sent out missionaries which made converts to “Nestorian Christianity” in many nations outside of the Roman Empire. However, in the centuries which followed, the Catholic Church relentlessly persecuted these “apostates.” Because the faithful had opposed apostates,

they were declared to be apostate!

“Persecuted by the Emperor Zeno, they [Nestorians] crossed into Persia, . . . founded communities in Balkh and Samarkand, in India and China. Scattered through Asia, they survive to this day, still denouncing Mariolatry.”—*Durant, Story of Civilization, Vol. 4, p. 49.*

The move to Constantinople—When, in 330, Constantine decided to move the capital of the Empire to the town of Byzantium, on the Bosphorus (to-day called Istanbul), naming it Constantinople,—*he ultimately left the entire western half of the Empire under the control of the pastor at Rome.* Although this was not Constantine’s objective, that is the way it worked out in succeeding centuries.

Great political power and wealth passed into the hands of the papacy as a result. It was no longer part of a Church State, but a Church which had become a State! It was placed in a better position to issue harsh decrees and persecute to the death those Christians who refused to yield to its demands.

“The removal of the capital of the Empire from Rome to Constantinople in 330, left the Western Church, practically free from imperial power, to develop its own form of organization. The Bishop of Rome. The greatest man in the West was now in the seat of the Caesars, and was soon forced to become the political as well as the spiritual head.”—*A.C. Flick, the Rise of the Mediaeval Church, p. 168.*

“Long ages ago, when Rome through the neglect of the Western emperors was left to the mercy of the barbarian hordes, the Romans turned to one figure for aid and protection, and asked him to rule them; and thus, . . . commenced the temporal sovereignty of the popes. And meekly stepping to the throne of Caesar, the vicar of Christ took up the scepter to which the emperors and kings of Europe were to bow in reverence through so many ages.”—*American Catholic Quarterly Review,*

April, 1911.

“Whatever Roman elements the barbarians and Arians left . . . [came] under the protection of the Bishop of Rome, who was the chief person there after the Emperor’s disappearance . . . The Roman Church in this way privily pushed itself into the place of the Roman World-Empire, of which it is the actual continuation; the empire has not perished, but has only undergone a transformation . . . It, [the Catholic Church] is a political creation . . . The Pope, who calls himself ‘King’ and ‘Pontifex Maximus’ [the title of the Roman Emperor in the time of Christ], is Caesar’s successor.”—*Adolf Harnack, What is Christianity? 1903, pp. 269-270.*

(Speaking of the time, about 500 A.D., when the Roman Empire was crumbling to pieces, Lagarde comments:

“No, the Church will not descend into the tomb. It will survive the Empire. At length a second empire will arise, and of this empire, the Pope will be the master—more than this, he will be the master of Europe. He will dictate his orders to kings who will obey them.”—*Andrea Lagarde, The Latin Church in the Middle Ages, 1915 p. vi.*

As Constantine neared death—In the thirtieth year of his reign (May A.D. 337), the emperor felt that his end was near, so he called for his close friend, bishop Eusebius of Nicomedia to baptize him. Believing that baptism, by itself, washed away all the sins of one’s previous years, years earlier Constantine decided that he would not be baptized until just before his death.

Only eleven years earlier, he had had his favorite son, Crispus—who had helped him so much in the campaigns against Licinus,—put to death. Shortly thereafter his second wife, Fausta, was slain at his command. His had been a long life, and now it was over.

But the effects of that life reach down to our own time. The errors that he helped establish within the Church are with us to this day. Constantine had made Sundaykeeping official in the empire, and, in the process, had made the local church of the Roman pastor—into the State Church of the Empire.

“Wiser than Diocletian, he gave new lift to an aging Empire by associating it with a young religion, a vigorous organization, a fresh morality. By his aid Christianity became a state as well as a church, and the mold, for fourteen centuries, of European life and thought. Perhaps, if we except Augustus, the grateful Church was right in naming him the greatest of the emperors.”—*Will Durant, Caesar and Christ, p. 664.*

Christian power politics—Rome, the capitol of the mammoth empire, was wealthier and more licentious, dissipated, and political than any other city in the Empire. As one might expect, the local Christian church there shared in those qualities.

The Roman pope was gripped by the fascination of power politics and anxious to extend his sway over all the other Christian churches. From Constantine’s time, onward, these popes used the influence of one emperor after another to help them achieve total control over the churches.

More on this later. But first, we want to let scholarly historians, and leading Catholic and Protestant writers, confirm the historical fact and importance of this changeover from the Bible Sabbath to Sunday sacredness.

It seems incredible that Sunday worship could not become the worship day of most Christians until centuries after the New Testament was written and all the Apostles had died! Yet historians, Protestants, and Catholics agree that this is what hap-

pened.

Afterward we will return to the history of how these powerful changes affected God's people in later centuries. The effects were dramatic, for a powerful State Church was now opposing itself to humble Christian families who refused to abandon the simple faith bequeathed by Bible writers and Christ Himself.

HISTORIANS ON WHAT HAPPENED

Church history scholars agree that Sunday sacredness is not in the Bible, but was brought into the Christian church centuries after the New Testament was completed.

“There is scarcely anything which strikes the mind of the careful student of ancient ecclesiastical history with greater surprise than the comparatively early period at which many of the corruptions of Christianity, which are embodied in the Roman system, took their rise; yet it is not to be supposed that when the first originators of many of these unscriptural notions and practices planted those germs of corruption, they anticipated or even imagined they would ever grow into such a vast and hideous system of superstition and error as is that of popery.”—*John Dowling, History of Romanism, 13th Edition, p. 65.*

Sunday sacredness not in the New Testament—“It would be an error to attribute [‘the sanctification of Sunday’] to a definite decision of the Apostles. There is no such decision mentioned in the Apostolic documents [that is, the New Testament].”—*Antoine Villien, A History of the Commandments of the Church, 1915, p. 23.*

“It must be confessed that there is no law in the

New Testament concerning the first day.”—*McClintock and Strong, Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature, Vol. 9, p. 196.*

“Rites and ceremonies, of which neither Paul nor Peter ever heard, crept silently into use, and then claimed the rank of divine institutions. [Church] officers for whom the primitive disciples could have found no place, and titles which to them would have been altogether unintelligible, began to challenge attention, and to be named apostolic.”—*William D. Killen, The Ancient Church, p. xvi.*

“Modern Christians who talk of keeping Sunday as a ‘holy’ day, as in the still extant ‘Blue Laws,’ of colonial America, should know that as a ‘holy’ day of rest and cessation from labor and amusements Sunday was unknown to Jesus . . . It formed no tenant [teaching] of the primitive Church and became ‘sacred’ only in the course of time. Outside the church its observance was legalized for the Roman Empire through a series of decrees starting with the famous one of Constantine in 321, an edict due to his political and social ideas.”—*W.W. Hyde, Paganism to Christianity in the Roman Empire, 1946, p. 257.*

“The festival of Sunday, like all other festivals was always only a human ordinance, and it was far from the intentions of the apostles to establish a Divine command in this respect, far from them, and from the early apostolic church, to transfer the laws of the Sabbath to Sunday.”—*Augustus Neander, The History of the Christian Religion and Church, 1843, p. 186.*

“Is it not strange that Sunday is almost universally observed when the Sacred Writings do not endorse it? . . . Sunday stands side by side with Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday, Holy (or Maundy) Thurs-

day, Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Whitsunday, Corpus Christi, Assumption Day, All Soul's Day, Christmas Day, and a host of other ecclesiastical feast days too numerous to mention. This array of Roman Catholic feasts and fast days are all man made. None of them bears the divine credentials of the Author of the Inspired Word."—*M.E. Walsh, Wine of Roman Babylon, p. 208.*

Christians did not begin worshiping on Sunday until after the New Testament had been written—"Until well into the second century [a hundred years after Christ] we do not find the slightest indication in our sources that Christians marked Sunday by any kind of abstention from work."—*W. Rordorf, Sunday, p. 157.*

"As we have already noted, excepting for the Roman and Alexandrian Christians, the majority of Christians were observing the seventh-day Sabbath at least as late as the middle of the fifth century [A.D. 450]. The Roman and Alexandrian Christians were among those converted from heathenism.

"They began observing Sunday as a merry religious festival in honor of the Lord's resurrection, about the latter half of the second century A.D. However, they did not try to teach that the Lord or His apostles commanded it. In fact, no ecclesiastical writer before Eusebius of Caesarea in the fourth century even suggested that either Christ or His apostles instituted the observance of the first day of the week.

"These Gentile Christians of Rome and Alexandria began calling the first day of the week 'the Lord's day.' This was not difficult for the pagans of the Roman Empire who were steeped in sun worship to accept, because they [the pagans] referred to their Sun god as their 'Lord.'"—*E.M. Chalmers, How Sun-*

day Came into the Christian Church, p. 3.

“The primitive Christians had a great veneration for the Sabbath, and spent the day in devotion and sermons. And it is not to be doubted but they derived this practice from the Apostles themselves, as appears by several scriptures to the purpose.”—*T.H. Morer, Dialogues on the Lord’s Day, p. 189, London [Church of England].*

Sabbathkeeping continued for centuries after the Bible ended—“The ancient Sabbath did remain and was observed . . . by the Christians of the Eastern Church [in the area near Palestine] above three hundred years after our Saviour’s death.”—*A Learned Treatise of the Sabbath, p. 77.*

The following statement was made 100 years after Constantine’s Sunday Law was passed:

“Although almost all churches throughout the world celebrate the sacred mysteries on the Sabbath every week, yet the Christians of Alexandria and at Rome, on account of some ancient tradition, have ceased to do this.”—*Socrates Scholasticus, quoted in Ecclesiastical History, Book 5, chap. 22 [written shortly after A.D. 439].*

“The people of Constantinople, and almost everywhere, assemble together on the Sabbath, as well as on the first day of the week, which custom is never observed at Rome or at Alexandria.”—*Hermias Sozomen, quoted in Ecclesiastical History, vii, 19, in A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 2nd Series, Vol. 2, p. 390 [written soon after A.D. 415].*

“Down even to the fifth century the observance of the Jewish Sabbath was continued in the Christian church, but with a rigor and solemnity gradually diminishing until it was wholly discontinued.”—*Lyman*

Coleman, *Ancient Christianity Exemplified*, chap. 26, sec. 2, p. 527.

“The ancient Sabbath did remain and was observed . . . by the Christians of the Eastern Church [in the eastern Mediterranean area] above three hundred years after our Saviour’s death.”—*A Learned Treatise of the Sabbath*, p. 77.

Catholic Church made the change—“The [Catholic] Church took the pagan buckler of faith against the heathen. She took the pagan Roman Pantheon [the Roman], temple to all the gods, and made it sacred to all the martyrs; so it stands to this day. She took the pagan Sunday and made it the Christian Sunday . . . The Sun was a foremost god with heathendom. Balder the beautiful: the White God, the old Scandinavians called him. The sun has worshippers at this very hour in Persia and other lands . . . Hence the Church would seem to have said, ‘Keep that old pagan name. It shall remain consecrated, sanctified.’ And thus the pagan Sunday, dedicated to Balder, became the Christian Sunday, sacred to Jesus. The sun is a fitting emblem of Jesus. The Fathers often compared Jesus to the sun; as they compared Mary to the moon.”—*William L. Gildea*, “*Paschale Gaudium*,” in *The Catholic World*, p. 58, March 1894.

“The Church made a sacred day of Sunday . . . largely because it was the weekly festival of the sun;—for it was a definite Christian policy to take over the pagan festivals endeared to the people by tradition, and give them a Christian significance.”—*Authur Weigall*, *The Paganism in Our Christianity*, 1928, p. 145.

“Remains of the struggle [between the religion of Christianity and the religion of Mithraism] are found

in two institutions adopted from its rival by Christianity in the fourth century, the two Mithraic sacred days: December 25, '*dies natalis solis*' [birthday of the sun], as the birthday of Jesus,—and Sunday, 'the venerable day of the Sun,' as Constantine called it in his edict of 321."—*Walter Woodburn Hyde, Paganism to Christianity in the Roman Empire, p. 60.*

Sun worship—"Sun worship was the earliest idolatry."—*Fausset Bible Dictionary, p. 666.*

"Sun worship was "one of the oldest components of the Roman religion."—*Gaston H. Halsberge, The Cult of Sol Invictus, 1972, p. 26.*

" 'Babylon, the mother of harlots,' derived much of her teaching from pagan Rome and thence from Babylon. Sun worship, that led her to Sundaykeeping, was one of those choice bits of paganism that sprang originally from the heathen lore of ancient Babylon: The solar theology of the 'Chaldeans' had a decisive effect upon the final development of Semitic paganism . . . [It led to their] seeing the sun the directing power of the cosmic system. All the Baals were thence forward turned into suns; the sun itself being the mover of the other stars—like it eternal and 'unconquerable' . . . Such was the final form reached by the religion of the pagan Semites, and following them, by that of the Romans . . . when they raised '*Sol Invictus*' [the Invincible Sun] to the rank of supreme divinity in the empire."—*Franz F.V.M. Cummont, Astrology and Religion Among the Greeks and Romans, p. 55.*

From caesars to popes—"When Christianity conquered Rome, the ecclesiastical structure of the pagan church, the title and the vestments of the '*pontifex maximus*,' the worship to the 'Great Mother' god-

dess and a multitude of comforting divinities . . . the joy or solemnity of old festivals, and the pageantry of immemorial ceremony, passed like material blood into the new religion,—and captive Rome conquered her conqueror. The reins and skills of government were handed down by a dying empire to a virile papacy.”—*Will Durant, Caesar and Christ, p. 672.*

“The power of the Ceasars lived again in the universal dominion of the popes.”—*H.G. Guinness, Romanism and the Reformation.*

Catholic teachings based on Tradition, not the Bible—“Like two sacred rivers flowing from paradise, the Bible and divine Tradition contain the Word of God, the precious gems of revealed truth. Though these two divine streams are in themselves, on account of their divine origin, of equal sacredness and are both full of revealed truths, still, of the two, Tradition [the sayings of popes and councils] is to us more clear and safe.”—*Di Bruno, Catholic Belief, p. 33.*

The first Sunday law—“Unquestionably the first law, either ecclesiastical or civil, by which the Sabbathical observance of that day is known to have been ordained, is the edict of Constantine, A.D. 321.”—*Chamber’s Encyclopedia, article, “Sabbath.”*

Here is the first Sunday law in history, a legal enactment by Constantine I (reigned 306-337): “On the Venerable Day of the Sun [*Venerable dies Solis*—the sacred day of the Sun] let the magistrates and people residing in cities rest, and let all workshops be closed. In the country, however, persons engaged in agriculture may freely and lawfully continue their pursuits; because it often happens that another day is not so suitable for grain-sowing or for vine-

planting; lest by neglecting the proper moment for such operations the bounty of heaven should be lost—given the 7th day of March [A.D. 321], Crispus and Constantine being consuls each of them for the second time.”—*The First Sunday Law of Constantine I*, in “*Codex Justinianus*,” lib. 3, tit. 12,3; trans. in Phillip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. 3, p. 380.

“This [Constantine’s Sunday decree of March 321] is the ‘parent’ Sunday law making it a day of rest and release from labor. For from that time to the present there have been decrees about the observance of Sunday which have profoundly influenced European and American society. When the Church became a part of State under the Christian emperors, Sunday observance was enforced by civil statutes, and later when the Empire was past, the Church in the hands of the papacy enforced it by ecclesiastical and also by civil enactments.”—Walter W. Hyde, *Paganism to Christianity in the Roman Empire*, 1946, p. 261.

“Constantine’s decree marked the beginning of a long, though intermittent series of imperial decrees in support of Sunday rest.”—Vincent J. Kelly, *Forbidden Sunday and Feast-Day Occupations*, 1943, p. 29.

“Constantine labored at this time untiringly to unite the worshipers of the old and the new into one religion. All his laws and contrivances are aimed at promoting this amalgamation, or melting together a purified heathenism and a moderated Christianity . . . Of all his blending and melting together of Christianity and heathenism, none is more easy to see through than this making of his Sunday law: The Christians worshiped their Christ, the heathen their sun-god [so

they should now be combined].”—*H.G. Heggveit, Illustreret Kirkehistorie, 1895, p. 202.*

“The retention of the old pagan name of *dies Solis*, or ‘day of the Sun,’ is, in great measure, owing to the union of pagan and Christian sentiment with which the first day of the week was recommended by Constantine to his subjects . . . It was his mode of harmonizing the discordant religions of the Empire under one common institution.”—*Arthur P. Stanley, History of the Eastern Church, p. 184.*

“The day of the sun was revered by his pagan subjects . . . and it was the emperor’s policy to unite the conflicting interests of heathenism and Christianity. He was urged to do this by the bishops of the church, who, inspired by ambition and thirst for power, perceived that if the same day were observed by both Christians and heathen, it would promote the nominal acceptance of Christianity by pagans and thus advance the power and glory of the church.”—*Great Controversy, 53.*

Constantine’s pope—“If every Sunday is to be observed by Christians on account of the resurrection, then every Sabbath on account of the burial is to be regarded in execration [cursing] of the Jews.”—*Pope Sylvester, quoted by S.R.E. Humbert, “Adversus Graecorum Calumnias,” in J.P. Migne, Patrologie, p. 143 [Sylvester (A.D. 314-337) was the pope at the time Constantine I was Emperor].*

His religious advisor—“All things whatsoever that were prescribed for the [Bible] Sabbath, we have transferred them to the Lord’s day, as being more authoratative and more highly regarded and first in rank, and more honorable than the Jewish Sabbath.”—*Bishop Eusebius, quoted in J.P. Migne,*

“*Patrologie*,” p. 23, 1169-1172 [Eusebius of Caesarea was a high-ranking Catholic leader during Constantine’s lifetime, and close religious adviser to Sylvester and Constantine].

Sunday legislation after Constantine—“Constantine’s [six Sunday Law] decrees marked the beginning of a long though intermittent series of imperial decrees in support of Sunday rest.”—*A History of the Councils of the Church, Vol. 2, p. 316.*

“What began, however, as a pagan ordinance, ended as a Christian regulation; and a long series of imperial decrees, during the fourth, fifth, and sixth, centuries, enjoined with increasing stringency abstinence from labor on Sunday.”—*Hutton Webster, Rest Days, pp. 122-123, 270.*

Council of Laodicea—Here is the first Sunday Law decree of a Christian council, given about 16 years after Constantine’s first Sunday Law of A.D. 321: “Christians shall not Judaize and be idle on Saturday [in the original: ‘sabbato’—shall not be idle on the Sabbath], but shall work on that day; but the Lord’s day they shall especially honour, and as being Christians, shall, if possible, do no work on that day. If, however, they are found Judaizing, they shall be shut out [‘anathema,’ excommunicated] from Christ.”—*Council of Laodicea, c. A.D. 337, Canon 29, quoted in C.J. Hefele, A History of the Councils of the Church, Vol. 2, p. 316.*

“The keeping of the Sunday rest arose from the custom of the people and the constitution of the [Catholic] Church . . . Tertullian was probably the first to refer to a cessation of affairs on the Sun day; the Council of Laodicea issued the first conciliar legislation for that day; Constantine I issued the first civil

legislation.”—*Priest Vincent J. Kelly, Forbidden Sunday and Feast-Day Occupations, p. 203 [a thesis presented to the Catholic University of America].*

“Question—Why do we observe Sunday instead of Saturday? Answer—We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic Church, in the Council of Laodicea, A.D. 336, transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday.”—*Peter Geiermann, A Doctrinal Catechism, 1934 edition, p. 50.*

CATHOLICS ON WHAT HAPPENED

In hundreds of statements, without any shade of hesitancy or doubt, the Roman Catholic Church proudly declares that Sunday sacredness was given to Christians by the Catholic Church; and that, in keeping it, Protestants acknowledge the authority of the papacy in religious matters!

“You may read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and you will not find a single line authorizing the sanctification of Sunday. The Scriptures enforce the religious observance of Sunday, a day which we never sanctify.”—*Cardinal James Gibbons, The Faith of Our Fathers, Chap. VII, p. 89 [This popular book has been translated into many languages].*

“Now the [Catholic] Church . . . instituted, by God’s authority, Sunday as the day of worship. The same Church, by the same divine authority, taught the doctrine of Purgatory . . . We have, therefore, the same authority for Purgatory as we have for Sunday.”—*Martin J. Scott, Things Catholics Are Asked About, 1927, p. 236.*

“Of course the Catholic Church claims that the change [of the Sabbath to Sunday] was her act . . . AND THE ACT IS A MARK of her ecclesiastical au-

thority in religious things.” *From the office of Cardinal Gibbons, through Chancellor H.F. Thomas, November 11, 1895.*

“Q. How prove you that the church hath power to command feasts and holy days?

“A. By the very act of changing the Sabbath into Sunday, which Protestants allow of, and therefore they fondly contradict themselves by keeping Sunday strictly, and breaking most other feasts commanded by the same church.

“Q. How prove you that?

“A. Because BY KEEPING SUNDAY they ACKNOWLEDGE THE CHURCH’S POWER to ordain feasts, and to command them under sin.”—*The Douay Catechism, p. 59.*

“PROVE TO ME from the BIBLE ALONE that I am bound to keep Sunday holy. THERE IS NO SUCH LAW IN THE BIBLE! It is a law of the holy Catholic Church alone.

“The Bible says, ‘Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.’ THE CATHOLIC CHURCH SAYS, NO. By my divine power, I ABOLISH THE SABBATH DAY and command you to keep holy the first day of the week. And lo! The entire civilized world bows down in reverent obedience to the command of the holy Catholic Church!”—*Priest Thomas Enright, C.S.S.R., president of Redemptorist College, Kansas City, Mo., in a lecture at Hartford, Kansas, February 18, 1884, and published in The American Sentinel [R.C. journal], June 1893, p. 173.*

“The Scripture teaches: Remember that you sanctify the Sabbath day; you will, labor six days and do all your work, but on the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God, etc., etc. Nevertheless the [Catholic] Church has changed the Sabbath to the

Lord's day by its own authority, concerning which you have no Scripture."—*John Eck, A.D. 1533, in his Handbook of Commonplaces Against Lutherans. [Eck was the leading Catholic opponent of Luther. He contended that the Catholic Church and Catholic Tradition was proven greater than Scripture by the fact that it had changed one of the Ten Commandments and that Protestants keep it.]*

"All dogmatic decrees of the pope, made with or without his general council, are infallible . . . Once made, no pope or council can reverse them . . . This is the Catholic principle, that the church cannot err in faith."— *The Catholic World, June 1871, pp. 422-423.*

"We have no right to ask reasons of the church, any more than of Almighty God, as a preliminary to our submission. We are to take with unquestioning docility, whatever instruction the church gives us."— *The Catholic World, August, 1871, p. 589.*

"Nowhere is dogmatic intolerance so necessary a rule of life as in the domain of religious belief . . . There can be but a single true religion, which, by the very fact of its existence, protests against all other religions as false."—*Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. 14, p. 765.*

"Sunday is a Catholic institution, and its claim to observance can be defended only on Catholic principles . . . From beginning to end of Scripture there is not a single passage that warrants the transfer of weekly public worship from the last day of the week to the first."—*Catholic Press, Sydney, Australia, August, 1900.*

"Protestantism, in discarding the authority of the [Roman Catholic] Church, has no good reason for its Sunday theory, and ought logically to keep Saturday

as the Sabbath.”—*John Gilmary Shea, in the American Catholic Quarterly Review, January 1883.*

“It is well to remind the Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, and all other Christians that the Bible does not support them anywhere in their observance of Sunday. Sunday is an institution of the Roman Catholic Church, and those who observe the day observe a commandment of the Catholic Church.”—*Priest Brady, in an address, reported in the Elizabeth, N.J. News of March 18, 1903.*

“The Catholic Church has decreed for many centuries that Christians observe this day of rest on Sunday.”—*Pope John XXIII, Mater et Magistra, sect. 251, May 15, 1961.*

“*Ques.*—Have you any other way of proving that the [Catholic] Church has power to institute festivals of precept [to command holy days]?”

“*Ans.*—Had she not such power, she could not have done that in which all modern religionists agree with her: She could not have substituted the observance of Sunday, the first day of the week, for the observance of Saturday, the seventh day, a change for which there is no Scriptural authority.”—*Stephen Keenan, Doctrinal Catechism, p. 176.*

“Reason and common sense demand the acceptance of one or the other of these two alternatives: either Protestantism and the keeping holy of Saturday or Catholicity and the keeping holy of Sunday. Compromise is impossible.”—*The Catholic Mirror, December 23, 1893.*

“God simply gave His [Catholic] Church the power to set aside whatever day or days she would deem suitable as Holy Days. The Church chose Sunday, the first day of the week, and in the course of time added other days, as holy days.”—*Vincent J. Kelly,*

Forbidden Sunday and Feast-Day Occupations, p. 2.

“Protestants . . . accept Sunday rather than Saturday as the day for public worship after the Catholic Church made the change . . . But the Protestant mind does not seem to realize that in accepting the Bible, in observing the Sunday, they are accepting the authority of the spokesman for the church, the Pope.”—*Our Sunday Visitor*, February 5, 1950.

“We hold upon this earth the place of God Almighty.”—*Pope Leo XIII, in an Encyclical Letter, dated June 20, 1894.*

“Not the Creator of the Universe, in Genesis 2:1-3,—but the Catholic Church “can claim the honor of having granted man a pause to his work every seven days.”—*S.C. Mosna, Storia della Domenica, 1969, pp. 366-367.*

“The Pope is not only the representative of Jesus Christ, but he is Jesus Christ, hidden under veil of flesh.”—*The Catholic National, July 1895.*

“If Protestants would follow the Bible, they should worship God on the Sabbath Day. In keeping the Sunday they are following a law of the Catholic Church.”—*Albert Smith, Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, replying for the Cardinal, in a letter dated February 10, 1920.*

“We define that the Holy Apostolic See (the Vatican) and the Roman Pontiff hold the primacy over the whole world.”—*A Decree of the Council of Trent, quoted in Philippe Labbe and Gabriel Cossart, “The Most Holy Councils,” col. 1167.*

“It was the Catholic Church which, by the authority of Jesus Christ, has transferred this rest [from the Bible Sabbath] to the Sunday . . . Thus the observance of Sunday by the Protestants is an homage

they pay, in spite of themselves, to the authority of the [Catholic] Church.”—*Monsignor Louis Segur, Plain Talk About the Protestantism of Today, p. 213.*

“We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic Church transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday.”—*Peter Geiermann, CSSR, A Doctrinal Catechism, 1957 edition, p. 50.*

“Some of the truths that have been handed down to us by Tradition, and are not recorded in the Sacred Scriptures, are the following: That there are just seven sacraments; that there is a purgatory; that, in the new law [Roman Catholic “Canon Law”], Sunday should be kept holy instead of the Sabbath; that infants should be baptized, and that there are precisely seventy-two books in the Bible [66 in our Bible that are inspired, plus six apocryphal books].”—*Francis J. Butler, Holy Family Catechism, No. 3, p. 63 [Butler (1859-?) was a Boston Catholic priest and author of a series of catechisms].*

“We Catholics, then, have precisely the same authority for keeping Sunday holy instead of Saturday as we have for every other article of our creed, namely, the authority of the Church . . . whereas you who are Protestants have really no authority for it whatever; for there is no authority for it [Sunday sacredness] in the Bible, and you will not allow that there can be authority for it anywhere else.”—*The Brotherhood of St. Paul, “The Clifton tracts,” Volume 4, tract 4, p. 15.*

“*Ques.* How prove you that the Church hath power to command feasts and holy days?”

“*Ans.* By the very act of changing the Sabbath into Sunday, which Protestants allow of [by observing it], and therefore they fondly contradict themselves, by keeping Sunday strictly, and breaking most other

feasts commanded by the same church.”—*Priest Henry Tuberville, An Abridgment of the Christian Doctrine, p. 58.*

“Protestants often deride the authority of Church tradition, and claim to be directed by the Bible only; yet they too have been guided by customs of the ancient Catholic Church, which find no warrant in the Bible, but rest on Church tradition only! A striking instance of this is the following: The first positive command in the Decalogue [Ten Commandments] is to ‘Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy’ . . . But the Sabbath Day, the observance of which God commanded, was our Saturday. Yet who among either Catholics or Protestants, except a sect or two, ever keep that commandment now? None. Why is this? The Bible which Protestants claim to obey exclusively, gives no authorization for the substitution of the first day of the week for the seventh. On what authority, therefore, have they done so? Plainly on the authority of that very Catholic Church which they abandoned, and whose traditions they condemn.”—*John L. Stoddard, Rebuilding a Lost Faith, p. 80 [a well-known Catholic writer].*

“The Adventists are the only body of Christians with the Bible as their teacher, who can find no warrant in its pages for the change of day from the seventh to the first . . . Reason and common sense demand the acceptance of one or the other of these alternatives: either Protestantism and the keeping holy of Saturday, or Catholicity and the keeping holy of Sunday. Compromise is impossible.”—*Catholic Mirror, Sept. 2 and Dec. 23, 1893. [This Baltimore journal was at that time the official organ of Cardinal Gibbons.]*

“The Church changed the observance of the Sab-

bath to Sunday by right of the divine, infallible authority given to her by her founder, Jesus Christ. The Protestant, claiming the Bible to be the only guide of faith, has no warrant for observing Sunday. In this matter the Seventh-day Adventist is the only consistent Protestant.”—*The Catholic Universe Bulletin*, August 14, 1942, p. 4.

The Bible is your only safe guide. Jesus can help you obey it. Trust God’s Word more than man’s traditions.

PROTESTANT ON WHAT HAPPENED

Protestant leaders and writers freely admit that Sunday sacredness is not found in the Bible, which only teaches observance of the Creation Sabbath.

Baptist—“There was and is a command to keep holy the Sabbath day, but that Sabbath day was not Sunday. It will however be readily said, and with some show of triumph, that the Sabbath was transferred from the seventh to the first day of the week, with all its duties, privileges and sanctions. Earnestly desiring information on this subject, which I have studied for many years, I ask, where can the record of such a transaction be found? Not in the New Testament—absolutely not. There is no scriptural evidence of the change of the Sabbath institution from the seventh to the first day of the week.”—*Dr. E.T. Hiscox, author of the Baptist Manual.*

Congregationalist—“It is quite clear that however rigidly or devotedly we may spend Sunday, we are not keeping the Sabbath . . . The Sabbath was founded on a specific divine command. We can plead no such command for the observance of Sunday . . .

There is not a single line in the New Testament to suggest that we incur any penalty by violating the supposed sanctity of Sunday.”—*Dr. R.W. Dale, The Ten Commandments, pp. 106-107.*

Protestant Episcopal—“The day is now changed from the seventh to the first day . . . but as we meet with no Scriptural direction for the change, we may conclude it was done by the authority of the church.”—“*The Protestant Episcopal Explanation of the Catechism.*”

Baptist—“The Scriptures nowhere call the first day of the week the Sabbath . . . There is no Scriptural authority for so doing, nor of course, any Scriptural obligation.”—*The Watchman.*

Presbyterian—“There is no word, no hint in the New Testament about abstaining from work on Sunday. The observance of Ash Wednesday, or Lent, stands exactly on the same footing as the observance of Sunday. Into the rest of Sunday no Divine Law enters.”—*Canon Eyton, Ten Commandments.*

Anglican—“And where are we told in the Scriptures that we are to keep the first day at all? We are commanded to keep the seventh; but we are nowhere commanded to keep the first day.”—*Isaac Williams, Plain Sermons on the Catechism, pp. 334, 336.*

Methodist—“It is true that there is no positive command for infant baptism. Nor is there any for keeping holy the first day of the week. Many believe that Christ changed the Sabbath. But, from His own words, we see that He came for no such purpose. Those who believe that Jesus changed the Sabbath base it only on a supposition.”—*Amos Binney, Theological Compendium, pp. 180-181.*

Episcopalian—“We have made the change from the seventh to the first day, from Saturday to Sunday, on the authority of the one holy, catholic, apostolic church of Christ.”—*Bishop Seymour, Why We Keep Sunday.*

Southern Baptist—“The sacred name of the seventh day is Sabbath. This fact is too clear to require argument [Exodus 20:10, quoted] . . . On this point the plain teaching of the Word has been admitted in all ages . . . Not once did the disciples apply the Sabbath law to the first day of the week,—that folly was left for a later age, nor did they pretend that the first day supplanted the seventh.”—*Joseph Judson Taylor, The Sabbatic Question, pp. 14-17, 41.*

American Congregationalist—“The current notion, that Christ and His apostles authoritatively substituted the first day for the seventh, is absolutely without any authority in the New Testament.”—*Dr. Lyman Abbot, Christian Union, June 26, 1890.*

Christian Church—“Now there is no testimony in all the oracles of heaven that the Sabbath is changed, or that the Lord’s Day came in the room of it.”—*Alexander Campbell, Reporter, October 8, 1921.*

Disciples of Christ—“There is no direct Scriptural authority for designating the first day ‘the Lord’s Day.’ ”—*Dr. D.H. Lucas, Christian Oracle, January 23, 1890.*

Christian Connection—“The Roman [Catholic] Church . . . reversed the Fourth Commandment by doing away with the Sabbath of God’s Word, and instituting Sunday as a holiday.”—*Nicholas Summerbell, History of the Christian Church, 3rd. edition, 1873,*

p. 415.

Baptist—“To me it seems unaccountable that Jesus, during three years’ discussion with His disciples, often conversing upon the Sabbath question, discussing it in some of its various aspects, freeing it from its false [Jewish traditional] glosses, never alluded to any transference of the day; also, no such thing was intimated. Nor, so far as we know, did the Spirit, which was given to bring to their remembrance all things whatsoever that He had said unto them, deal with this question. Nor yet did the inspired apostles, in preaching the gospel, founding churches, counseling and instructing those founded, discuss or approach the subject.

“Of course I quite well know that Sunday did come into use in early Christian history as a religious day, as we learn from the Christian Fathers and other sources. But what a pity that it comes branded with the mark of paganism, and christened with the name of the sun god, then adopted and sanctified by the Papal apostasy, and bequeathed as a sacred legacy to Protestantism.”—*Dr. E. T. Hiscox, report of his sermon at the Baptist Minister’s Convention, New York Examiner, November 16, 1893.*

Karlstadt—“God says without distinction, ‘Remember that you observe the seventh day’ . . . Concerning Sunday it is known that men have instituted it . . . It is clear however, that you should celebrate the seventh day.”—*Andres Karlstadt, Concerning the Sabbath and Commanded Holidays, 1524, chapter 4, pp. 23-24 [Karlstadt was a co-worker with Martin Luther at Wittenberg].*

Lutheran—“They [the Catholics] allege the change of the Sabbath into the Lord’s day, as it seemeth, to

the Decalogue; and they have no example more in their mouths than the change of the Sabbath. They will needs have the [Catholic] Church's power to be very great, because it hath dispensed with a precept of the Decalogue [Ten Commandments].”—*The Augsburg Confession, A.D. 1530, part 2, art. 7; in Philip Schaff, The Creed's of Christendom, vol. 3, p. 64. [This is the most important Lutheran statement ever penned. It was written by Melancthon, Martin Luther's closest friend.]*

ó PART SIX ó

AFTER CONSTANTINE

TWO CLASSES BY A.D. 420

There is definite historical evidence that, by far, the largest number of Christians in the Roman Empire were still faithful to Bible teachings by A.D. 425. This is a remarkable fact!

It is also clear that, in the centuries which followed, they would have continued in great measure to remain faithful to the simple teachings of Scripture—if the Church at Rome, using the police powers of the civil government, had not persecuted all who refused to submit to its authority and accept its doctrinal changes and pagan inventions.

Most Christians still keeping the Bible Sabbath a century after Constantine—This incredible fact clearly shows that the majority of Christians were faithfully adhering to Bible principles and truths, and rejecting pagan errors—in the fifth century! Their example provides a powerful encouragement for us today to accept nothing other than that found in the Sacred Scriptures of the Old and New Testament.

The following statement was written about the year A.D. 420. This was about one hundred years after the Constantine's Sunday law decree of 321, and the decree of A.D. 336 by the Church Council of Laodicea commanding all Christians to worship on Sunday!

“The people of Constantinople, and almost everywhere, assemble together on the Sabbath, as well as on the first day of the week, which custom is never observed at Rome or at Alexandria.”—*Hermias Sozomen, quoted in Ecclesiastical History, vii, 19, in A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 2nd Series, Vol. 2, p. 390 [written soon after A.D. 420]. (Lk 16:13, Ac 5:39, Gal 1:10.)*

Even at that late date, many local churches were still trying to keep the Bible Sabbath. *Notice that Rome and Alexandria were the exceptions.* The only places in the Empire which *totally refused* to keep the Bible Sabbath were the Christians in those two cities.

In addition, at about the same time,—*a hundred years after* Constantine's Sunday law decrees were enacted,—the church historian, Socrates Scholasticus (not the Socrates of ancient Greece), who died in A.D. 440, also made a comment about the large number of Christians who were still faithfully keeping the Bible Sabbath:

“Although almost all churches through the world celebrate the sacred mysteries on the Sabbath week, yet the Christians of Alexandria and at Rome, on account of some ancient tradition, have ceased to do this.”—*Socrates Scholasticus, Ecclesiastical History, Book 5. chapter 22.*

A full century after the switch from Sabbath to Sunday was decreed by the State and the Church—nearly all Christians everywhere were still keeping the Bible Sabbath!

Why did those humble Christians do that? —Because they believed in obeying the Bible, not man's laws.

A full 325 years after the last book of the Bible was penned, a majority of God's people still believed that the Bible was above church traditions and authority. They were still keeping the Bible Sabbath, in defiance of church and government edicts.

Surely, we must ask ourselves: Are we as faithful today in placing the Bible above human theories which attempt to change God's Word?

“Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? . . . well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”—*Matthew 15:3, 7-9.*

“Tradition” consists of man-made teachings and

practices which are not in the Bible. Here is the position of the Church on this matter:

“Like two sacred rivers flowing from paradise, the Bible and divine Tradition contain the Word of God, the precious gems of revealed truth. Though these two divine streams are in themselves, on account of their divine origin, of equal sacredness, and are both full of revealed truths, still, of the two, Tradition [the sayings of popes and councils] is to us more clear and safe.”—*Di Bruno, Catholic Belief, p. 33.*

Notice more closely Socrates’ words:

“Although almost all churches through the world celebrate the sacred mysteries on the Sabbath week, yet the Christians of Alexandria and at Rome, on account of some ancient tradition, have ceased to do this.”—*Socrates Scholasticus, Ecclesiastical History, Book 5, chapter 22.*

People cannot “*cease*” to do what they have never done. So we can know that, in earlier centuries,—even at Rome and Alexandria the Bible Sabbath was once kept.

Socrates and Sosomen wrote those words about the year 420. So nearly 400 years after the death of Christ,—Rome and Alexandria were the only places in the world where professed Christians kept only Sunday, and not the Bible Sabbath.

Other historians corroborate this fact:

“Down even to the fifth century the observance of the Jewish Sabbath was continued in the Christian church, but with a rigor and solemnity gradually diminishing until it was wholly discontinued.”—*Lyman Coleman, Ancient Christianity Exemplified, chap. 26, sec. 2, p. 527.*

“The ancient Sabbath did remain and was observed . . . by the Christians of the Eastern Church [in the eastern Mediterranean area] above three hundred years after our Saviour’s death.”—*A Learned Treatise of the Sabbath, p. 77.*

It is a striking fact that all this time the Seventh-day Sabbath continued to be kept by the majority of Christians in spite of all the inroads of paganism and compromise.

“As we have already noted, excepting for the Roman and Alexandrian Christians, the majority of Christians were observing the seventh-day Sabbath at least as late as the middle of the fifth century [A.D. 450]. The Roman and Alexandrian Christians were among those converted from heathenism. They began observing Sunday as a merry religious festival in honor of the Lord’s resurrection, about the latter half of the second century A.D. However, they did not try to teach that the Lord or His apostles commanded it. In fact, no ecclesiastical writer before Eusebius of Caesarea in the fourth century even suggested that either Christ or His apostles instituted the observance of the first day of the week.

“These Gentile Christians of Rome and Alexandria began calling the first day of the week ‘the Lord’s day.’ This was not difficult for the pagans of the Roman Empire who were steeped in sun worship to accept, because they [the pagans] referred to their sun-god as their ‘Lord.’”—*E.M. Chalmers, How Sunday Came Into the Christian Church, p. 3.*

There are those today, who claim that most Christians had begun to keep the Sunday within two or three hundred years after the time of Christ and the Apostles. But that is not true.

By the middle of the fifth century, under the duress of combined church and state legislation, many of the city Christians may have begun compromising in this direction, yet the greater majority of the Christians (especially those in smaller cities and in rural areas) remained free for a much longer period of time from the encroachment of Sunday pressure.

The important church leader, Augustine, the bishop of the church of Hippo in North Africa, who

died in the year 430, acknowledged the wide-spread keeping of the Sabbath in his day and in a letter to Jerome (the translator of the Roman Catholic Bible, the Vulgate), he urged that Christians not be persecuted for keeping it instead of Sunday. In this letter he mentions that the Seventh-day Sabbath was observed in his day “in the greater part of the Christian world.” Augustine, himself, was a Sundaykeeper.

Only Rome and Alexandria were different—

This is truly remarkable. In spite of decrees and punishments, church leader threats and governmental decrees,—the Creation Sabbath (Gen 2:1-3) commanded by God in the Bible was still being widely kept a hundred years after the church-state religious cartel began enforcing Sunday observance.

We can understand why Rome and Alexandria should not bother to keep it, for they had not done so for 200 years. Throughout the entire history of the changeover from Sabbath to Sunday, Rome and Alexandria had worked together: Alexandria providing philosophical reasons for the changes; Rome providing the decrees and anathemas. By A.D. 420—a full three hundred years after the death of the Apostle John, the last Bible writer,—Rome and Alexandria continued to be the only bulwarks of Sundaykeeping.

DRAMATIC CHANGES OCCURED

From the time of Constantine, onward, a series of dramatic changes occurred in the nominal Christian Church.

“From simple beginnings, the church developed a distinct priesthood and an elaborate service. In this way, Christianity and the higher forms of paganism tended to come nearer and nearer to each other as time went on. In one sense, it is true, they met like armies in mortal

conflict, but at the same time they tended to merge into one another like streams which had been following converging courses.”—*J.H. Robinson, Introduction to the History of Western Europe, p. 31.*

Although many more could be cited, *here is a list of forty-nine steps downward*, which the official Church gradually took:

1. Prayers for the dead (about A.D. 300) / **2.** Making the sign of the cross (A.D. 300) / **3.** Wax candles (320) / **4.** Veneration of angels and dead saints (375) / **5.** Use of images (375) / **6.** Mass as a daily celebration (394) / **7.** Beginning of exaltation of Mary, called “Mother of God” (Council of Ephesus, 431) / **8.** Priests begin to dress differently than laymen (500) / **9.** Extreme unction (526) / **10.** Doctrine of purgatory (Gregory I, 593) / **11.** Latin language used in worship and commanded (Gregory I, 600) / **12.** Prayers to Mary, dead saints, and angels (600) / **13.** Title of pope given to Boniface III (by Emperor Phocas, 607) / **14.** Kissing pope’s foot begins (709) / **15.** Temporal power of popes conferred (Pepin king of Franks, 750) / **16.** Worship of the cross, images, and relics officially required (786) / **17.** Holy water begins to be used (850) / **18.** Worship of St. Joseph (890) / **19.** College of Cardinals established (927) / **20.** Baptism of bells started (John XIII, 965) / **21.** Canonization of dead saints begins (John XV, 995) / **22.** Fasting on Fridays and during “Lent” begins (998) / **23.** Mass is a “sacrifice” (1050) / **24.** Celibacy of priests required (Gregory II, 1079) / **25.** Rosary praying invented (Peter the Hermit, 1090) / **26.** Inquisition, in operation for centuries, now made official (Council of Verona, 1184) / **27.** Sale of indulgences begins (1190) / **28.** Error of Transubstantiation decreed, to bring God down into a cup and wafer (Innocent III, 1215) / **29.** Auricular

confession of sins to priest instead of to God required (Innocent III, 1215) / **30.** Adoration of the wafer (host) decreed (Honorius III, 1220) / **31.** Laymen officially forbidden to have or read the Bible; it is placed on “Index of Forbidden Books” (Council of Valencia, 1229) / **32.** Protection by a piece of cloth (scapular) invented (by Simon Stock, a British monk, 1251) / **33.** Laymen forbidden to drink the cup at Communion (Council of Constance, 1414) / **34.** Purgatory proclaimed as dogma (Council of Florence, (1439) / **35.** Doctrine of seven sacraments affirmed on pain of mortal sin (1439) / **36.** First part of the “Ava Maria” saying is made official (1508) / **37.** Jesuit order founded (Ignatius Loyola, 1534) / **38.** Tradition (sayings of popes and councils) declared equal to Bible (Council of Trent, 1545) / **39.** Apocryphal books added to Bible (Council of Trent, 1546) / **40.** Creed of Pius IV ordered as official creed of church (1560) / **41.** Last part of “Ave Maria” (rosary saying) prepared and required (Sixtus V, 1593) / **42.** Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary proclaimed (Pius IX, 1854) / **43.** *Syllabus of Errors* is proclaimed and ratified, condemning freedom of religion, speech, press, and all “unapproved” scientific discoveries (Pius X, Vatican Council I, 1864) / **44.** Temporal authority of pope officially reaffirmed (1864) / **45.** Absolute infallibility of pope proclaimed (Vatican I, 1870) / **46.** Public schools condemned (Pius XI, 1930) / **47.** Assumption of Virgin Mary (bodily ascension into heaven shortly after her death) proclaimed (Pius XII, 1950) / **48.** Mary proclaimed be Mother of God (Paul VI, 1965) / **49.** Nearly all aspects of evolutionary theory accepted by Pope John Paul II (1998).

Two additional doctrines are now being discussed, and may soon be officially adopted: (1) Mary as

Mediatrice of mankind. This means that God and Christ can be approached through her. (2) The dogma of Mary as the Co-redemptrice of the world. The thought here is that the redemption of mankind, from start to finish, is done through Mary, working together at each step with Christ.

GROUPS WHICH PROTESTED THE GROWING PAGANISM OF THE CHURCH

A number of groups spoke up against the acceptance of error by the papal church. They were determined to maintain no other standard of right living and worship than that given in the Bible. Many keepers of the Bible Sabbath were among them. These faithful Christians included the following:

Nestorians—Nestorius was mentioned earlier, but here is additional information about him: After pastoring the church at Antioch who, in A.D. 428, he later became the senior pastor of the church at Constantinople. Nestorius dared to oppose the term, “Mother of God,” which by that time the papacy was applying to Mary. Mary, Nestorius maintained, did not give birth to God, but to Jesus. Nestorius fully accepted the Bible truth that Christ was fully man and fully God, but he rejected the idea that Mary was the mother of God.

“Especially offensive to him was the term, ‘Mother of God’ (*theotokos*), applied to Mary. He declared that if this representation were true, the heathen were right in representing their gods as having mothers.”—*Albert Henry Newman, A Manual of Church History, Vol. 1, pp. 337.*

Christian believers who accepted the position of Nestorius were extremely evangelistic, and they eventually brought Christianity to large portions of east-

ern Europe and Asia east of the Roman Empire. But the continued opposition of Rome gradually reduced their numbers.

Aerius—Aerius was a local pastor in Sebaste, Asia Minor, who denounced the practice of seeking the intercession of departed saints, celebrating the Lord's Supper as an offering for the dead, and observing fixed days of fasting. He also declared that all church pastors (including bishops and the pope) were equal before God. God and His Word were alone to be obeyed. —Five truths in accordance with Scripture. Unfortunately, Aerius and his followers were so severely persecuted, that he had to flee about A.D. 360 and died in exile; while his followers, declared to be heretics, were scattered.

(Aerius was a different man than Arius, the pastor of the Alexandrian Church about A.D. 325, and the founder of the Arians. Arius and his followers held to the error that Christ was a created being and had not eternally existed.)

Vigilantius—A pastor in Gaul (modern France) in A.D. 390, Vigilantius strongly opposed asceticism, which was the theory that by denying oneself food and proper shelter, a person could become holy. Vigilantius also opposed the worship of the relics and tombs of martyrs, and praying to the dead. Eventually, those who shared Vigilantius' beliefs were scattered by persecution.

Paulicianism—This group of pastors and laymen opposed the worship of Mary, departed saints, statues, asceticism, and moral corruption.

“The Paulician Church was not the national church of a particular race, but an old form of the apostolic church, and it included within itself Syrians, Greeks, Ar-

menians, Africans, Latins, and various other races.”—*Conybeare, The Key of Truth.*

The Paulicians were eventually persecuted so heavily by Rome that they were either slain or fled to foreign lands. Many later settled in Thrace.

The Waldenses—Contrary to later charges by papal advocates that this group did not begin until centuries later, this group was active in northern Italy as early as the time of Constantine. These faithful witnesses for the truth strongly opposed the pagan superstitions of the papacy. Eventually, the Waldenses withdrew to mountain valleys of the Piedmont, today known as the Italian Alps.

Later Reformers—Many groups later arose who were also determined to maintain Biblical principles. These included the Petrobrusians, Henricians, Humiliati; and such men as Arnold of Brescia, Tenchelm, Eudo, Marsillius of Padua, and Peter Celcicky.

But the most influential reformers before the 16th century Reformation were *John Huss* and *Jerome of Bohemia* and their followers (*Behemian Brethren*), and *John Wycliff* of England and his followers (the *Lollards*).

THE TORRENT BECOMES A FLOOD

In the centuries after Constantine, the amount of pagan theories, concepts, devices, images pouring into the Church greatly increased. There seemed to be no end to what was happened. An entire changeover from Biblical Christianity to something radically different occurred.

“The mighty Catholic Church was little more than the Roman Empire baptized.”—*A.C. Flick, The Rise of the Mediaeval Church, 1909 edition, p. 148.*

Here are a few statements, some by amazed historians, and others boastingly made by sons of the Church, which will afford you an idea of what was taking place over a matter of centuries:

“Rites and ceremonies, of which neither Paul nor Peter ever heard, crept silently into use, and then claimed the rank of divine institutions. Officers for whom the primitive disciples could have found no place, and titles which to them would have been altogether unintelligible, began to challenge attention, and to be named apostolic.”—*William D. Killen, The Ancient Church, p. xvi.*

“ ‘Remember’ said [Pope] Gregory the Great, when issuing his instructions to a missionary to the Saxon heathens, ‘that you must not interfere with any traditional [pagan] belief or religious service that can be harmonized, with Christianity.’ ”—*Gordon J. Laing, Survivals of Roman Religion, 1911, pp. 129-110.*

“Nor did Christianity stop there, It took from its opponents their own weapons, and used them; the elements of paganism were transferred to the new religion.”—*Grant Showerman, Introduction, in Franz Cumont, Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism, p. xi.*

“The belief in miracle-working objects, talismans, amulets, and formulas was dear to . . . Christianity, and they were received from pagan antiquity . . . The vestments of the clergy and the papal title’ of *‘pontifex-maximus’* were legacies from pagan Rome. The [Catholic] Church found that rural converts still revered certain springs, wells, trees, and stones. She thought it wiser to bless these to Christian use than to break too sharply the customs of sentiment . . . Pagan festivals dear to the people, reappeared as Christian feasts, and pagan rites were transformed into Christian liturgy . . . The Christian calendar of saints replaced the Roman *‘festi’* [gods}; ancient divinities, dear to the people, were allowed to revive under the names of ‘Christian saints’ . . . Gradually the tenderest features of Astarte, Cybele, Artemis, Diana, and Isis were gathered together in the worship of Mary.”—*Will Durant, The Age of Faith, 1950, pp. 745-746.*

“Worldly-minded bishops, instead of caring for the salvation of their flocks, were often but too much inclined to travel about, and entangle themselves in worldly concern . . . In the time of Constantine . . . the bishops voluntarily made themselves dependent on him in their disputes, and by their determination to make use of the power of the State for the furtherance of their aims. . . [A list of Sunday laws enacted in the fourth and fifth centuries is given]. In this way the church received help from the state for the furtherance of her ends . . . But had it not been for that confusion of spiritual and secular interests, had it not been for the vast number of mere outward conversions, thus brought about, she would have needed no such help.”—*August Neander, General History of the Christian Religion and Church, vol. 2, pp.16, 132, 300,301.*

“They have assumed infallibility, which belongs only to God. They profess to forgive sins, which belongs only to God. They profess to open and shut heaven, which belongs only to God. They profess to be higher than all the kings of the earth, which belongs only to God. And they go beyond God in pretending to loose whole nations from their oath of allegiance to their kings, when such kings do not please them. And they go against God, when they give indulgences for sin. This is the worst of all blasphemies.”—*Adam Clarke, Commentary, on Daniel 7:25.*

“The [Catholic] Church took the pagan philosophy and made it the buckler of faith against the heathen. She took the pagan Roman Pantheon, temple of all the gods, and made it sacred to all the martyrs; so it stands to this day. She took the pagan Sunday and made the Christian Sunday. She took the pagan Easter and made it the feast we celebrate during this season . . . The Sun was a foremost god with heathendom . . . The Sun has worshipers at this hour in Persia and other lands . . . Hence the Church would seem to say, ‘Keep that old pagan name [“Sunday”]. It shall remain, consecrated, sanctified: And thus the pagan Sunday, dedicated to Balder, became the Christian Sunday, sacred to Jesus.”—*William. L Gildea,*

"Paschale Gaudium," in *The Catholic World*, 58, March, 1894, p. 809 [A Roman Catholic weekly].

Infallibility and Divinity of the pope—By their own statements, eventually the church came to believe that the pope could not err:

"We hold upon this earth the place of God Almighty."—*Pope Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter, June 20, 1894, quoted in The Great Encyclical Letters of Leo XIII, p. 304.*

"The Pope is not only the representative of Jesus Christ, but he is Jesus Christ Himself, hidden under veil of flesh."—*The Catholic National, July, 1895.*

"We define that the Holy Apostolic See [Vatican] and the Roman Pontiff hold the primacy over the whole world."—*Council of Trent, Decree, quoted in Philippe Labbe and Gabriel Cossart, The Most Holy Councils, Vol. 13, col. 1167.*

"Christ entrusted His office to the chief pontiff . . . but all power in heaven and in earth has been given to Christ; . . . therefore the chief pontiff, who is His vicar, will have this power."—*Corpus Juris Canonici, 1555 ed., Vol. 3, Extravagantes Communes, Book 1, chap. 1, col. 29.*

"The Pope is of so great dignity and so exalted that he is not a mere man. but as it were God, and the vicar of God . . . The Pope by reason of the excellence of his supreme dignity is called bishop of bishops . . . He is likewise bishop of the universal church . . . He is likewise the divine monarch and supreme emperor, and King of kings. Hence the Pope is crowned with a triple crown, as King of heaven and earth and of the lower regions.—*Lucius Ferraris, Prompta Bibliotheca, art. "Papa" [Pope], art. 2, 1772-1777 ed., Vol. 6, p. 29.*

"For thou art the shepherd, thou art the physician, thou art the director, thou art the husbandman; finally, thou art another God on Earth."—*Christopher Marcellus, Oration in the fifth Lateran Council, session IV (1512), in J.D. Mansi (ed.), Sacrorum Conciliorum, Vol. 32, col. 761.*

"The priests are the parents of God."—*St. Bernard*

[fifth century archbishop].

“O wonderful dignity of the priests! In their hands as in the womb of the Blessed Virgin, the Son of God becomes incarnate!”—*Augustine*.

“The pope himself is the keybearer and the doorkeeper, therefore no one can appeal from the pope to God.”—*Augustinus Triumphus, Summa de Potestate*.

“All the names which in the Scriptures are applied to Christ, by virtue of which it is established that He is over the church, all the same names are applied to the Pope.”—*Robert Bellarmine, On the Authority of the Councils*.

“The Pope is Jesus Christ Himself hidden in the flesh. Does the Pope speak? It is Jesus Christ who speaks. Does the Pope accord a favor or pronounce an anathema? It is Jesus Christ who pronounces the anathema or accords the favor. So that when the Pope speaks we have no business to examine. We have only to obey. We have no right to criticize his direction or discuss his commands.”—*The Archbishop of Venice, prior to becoming Pope Pius X*.

“The pope is of so great authority and power that he can modify, explain, or interpret even divine laws . . . The pope can modify divine law, since his power is not of man, but of God, and he acts as vicegerent [one who has been given the authority of another] of God upon earth.”—*Lucius Ferraris, Prompta Bibliotheca, ‘Papa’ [Pope], art. 2*.

Catholic Church the highest and only authority—These are truly amazing statements:

In 1560, the *Creed of Pope Pius IV* was adopted by the Roman Catholic Church in the Council of Trent as the official creed of the Roman Catholic Church. *Article Ten* of this Creed states:

“I acknowledge the Holy Catholic Apostolic Church for the mother and mistress of all churches.”—*Creed of Pope Pius IV, adopted by the Council of Trent in 1560*.

Here are additional statements which clarify the papal position as sole authority over men and nations:

“The true [Roman Catholic] Church can tolerate no strange churches besides herself.”—*Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. XIV, p. 766.

“The Roman Catholic Church . . . must demand the right of freedom for herself alone.”—*Civiltà Cattolica*, April 1948 [official Jesuit newspaper, published at the Vatican].

“The pope has the right to pronounce sentence of deposition against any sovereign.”—*Bronson’s Review*, Vol. 1, p. 48.

“We declare, say, define, and pronounce that every being should be subject to the Roman Pontiff.”—*Pope Boniface VIII*, quoted in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. XV, p. 126.

“No Catholic may positively and unconditionally approve of the separation of church and state.”—*Monsignor O’Toole*, *Catholic University of America*, 1939.

“The pope is the supreme judge, even of civil laws, and is incapable of being under any true obligation to them.”—*Civiltà Cattolica*.

“Individual liberty in reality is only a deadly anarchy.”—*Pope Pius XII*, April 6, 1951.

“Protestantism of every form has not, and never can have, any rights where Catholicity is triumphant.”—*Bronson’s Review*.

“Heretics may be not only excommunicated, but also justly put to death.”—*Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. XIV, p. 768.

“Non-Catholic methods of worshipping God must be branded counterfeiters.”—*Flynn, Loretto, and Simon*, *Living Our Faith*, p. 247 [a widely used high school textbook.]

“In themselves, all forms of Protestantism are unjustified. They should not exist.”—*America*, January 4, 1941 [R.C. journal].

“The Church of Rome is one monarchy over all the kingdoms of the earth, and is, among temporal bodies, as the mind or the soul of the body of man, or as God in the world. Therefore the Church of Rome must not only have the spiritual power, but also the supreme temporal power.”—*Encyclical of Pope Leo XXIII, 1879.*

“We have taken this principle for a basis: that the Catholic religion with all its rites ought to be exclusively dominant, in such sort that every other worship shall be banished and interdicted.”—*Pope Pius IX.*

“All Catholics should exert their power to cause the constitution of states to be modeled after the principles of the Catholic Church.”—*Pope Leo XIII, Papal Encyclical.*

Persecution—It is to be expected that a church which believes it never errs and has supreme authority over the bodies and souls of men, should eventually believe it has the right to persecute and slay those who disagree with it.

“We believe that the rulers of a Catholic country have the right to restrict the activity of those who would lead their people away from their allegiance to the Catholic Church . . . They possess the right to prevent propaganda against the Church. This is merely a logical conclusion from the basic Catholic tenet that the Son of God established one religion and commanded all men to accept it under pain of eternal damnation.”—*American Ecclesiastical Review, January, 1946 [Roman Catholic].*

“When you are in a majority we ask for religious liberty in the name of your principles. When we are in a majority we refuse you in the name of ours.”—*Louis Veillot [French Catholic writer, speaking to a group of Protestants].*

“With all my power, I will persecute and will make war upon all heretics, schismatics, and those who rebel against our lord [the pope] and all his successors . . . So help me God and these the holy gospels of God.”—*Pontificale Romanum Summorum Pontificum.*

“Though heretics must not be tolerated because they deserve it, we must bear with them, till, by a second admonition, they may be brought back to the faith of the church. But those who, after a second admonition, remain obstinate in their errors, must not only be excommunicated, but they must be delivered to the secular power to be exterminated.”—*Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, Vol. IV, p. 90.* [This is the standard Roman Catholic book of theology and church operation. Only Catholic councils and papal decrees are superior to it.]

“The Catholic has some reason on his side when he calls for the temporal punishment of heretics, for he claims the true title of Christian for himself exclusively, and professes to be taught by the never-failing presence of the Spirit of God . . . It is not more ‘morally’ wrong to put a man to death for heresy than for murder . . . [and] in many cases persecution for religious opinions is not only permissible, but highly advisable and necessary.” *“The Lawfulness of Persecution,”* in *The Rambler*, 4, June 1849, pp. 119, 126 [English R.C. journal published from 1848 to 1862].

By way of contrast, here is a different statement:

“Every man, conducting himself as a good citizen, and being accountable to God alone for his religious opinions, ought to be protected in worshipping the Deity according to the dictates of his own conscience.”—*Writings of George Washington, Vol. 30, p. 321.*

Here is the underlying problem:

“When a religion is good, I conceive that it will support itself; and, when it cannot support itself, and God does not take care to support, so that its professors are obliged to call for the help of the civil power, it is a sign, I apprehend, of its being a bad one.”—*Benjamin Franklin, Letter dated October 9, 1780.*

“The doctrine which, from the very first origin of religious dissensions, has been held by all bigots of all sects, when condensed into a few words, and stripped of rhetorical disguise, is simply this: ‘I am in the right, and

you are in the wrong. When you are the stronger, you ought to tolerate me; for it is your duty to tolerate truth. But when I am the stronger, I shall persecute you; for it is my duty to persecute error.’ ” *Thomas B. Macaulay.*

THE CHURCH BECOMES A PERSECUTING POWER

Prior to the fourth century, by the authority of the Roman emperors, Christians were persecuted by pagans for not renouncing their Bible beliefs and converting to paganism.

After the fourth century, by the authority of the papal church, Christians were persecuted for not renouncing their Bible beliefs and converting to Catholicism.

In order to most effectively do this, the papacy forbade the people to have Bibles in their own language.

Summarizing what happened—Here is a thoughtful analysis of the unfortunate crisis which, in those earlier centuries, came to the Christian Church:

“The apostle Paul, in his second letter to the Thessalonians, foretold the great apostasy which would result in the establishment of the papal power. He declared that the day of Christ should not come, ‘except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.’ And furthermore, the apostle warns his brethren that “the mystery of iniquity doth already work.” 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4, 7. Even at that early date he saw, creeping into the church, errors that would prepare the way for the development of the papacy.

“Little by little, at first in stealth and silence, and then

more openly as it increased in strength and gained control of the minds of men, 'the mystery of iniquity' carried forward its deceptive and blasphemous work. Almost imperceptibly the customs of heathenism found their way into the Christian church. The spirit of compromise and conformity was restrained for a time by the fierce persecutions which the church endured under paganism. But as persecution ceased, and Christianity entered the courts and palaces of kings, she laid aside the humble simplicity of Christ and His apostles for the pomp and pride of pagan priests and rulers; and in place of the requirements of God, she substituted human theories and traditions. The nominal conversion of Constantine, in the early part of the fourth century, caused great rejoicing; and the world, cloaked with a form of righteousness, walked into the church. Now the work of corruption rapidly progressed. Paganism, while appearing to be vanquished, became the conqueror. Her spirit controlled the church. Her doctrines, ceremonies, and superstitions were incorporated into the faith and worship of the professed followers of Christ."—*Great Controversy*, 49-50.

FLIGHT OF THE TRUE CHURCH INTO THE WILDERNESS

Fulfilling Revelation 12—The twelfth chapter of Revelation predicted that, in order to continue to practice Bible teachings, the true church would, in later centuries, be forced by persecution to flee into distant and isolated places.

“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time. And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child. And to the woman were

given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished.”—*Revelation 12:11-14.*

Increasingly, the Church of Rome demanded obedience to its rites from everyone. Those who refused were persecuted, forced to flee, or slain. Gradually, areas more directly under papal control became devoid of Bible-obeying Christians; those who refused to pray to statues, attend the mass, recite phrases on beads, or forsake God’s holy Sabbath.

PERSECUTION INTENSIFIES

The inquisition, which the Church had actively carried on for centuries, was made official by the Council of Verona, 1184. Oh, how we regret the fact that the largest Church of Christ turned from being persecuted to being the leading persecutor in Western civilization!

“That the church of Rome has shed more innocent blood than any other institution that has ever existed among mankind, will be questioned by no Protestant who has a competent knowledge of history . . . It is impossible to form a complete conception of the multitude of her victims, and it is quite certain that no powers of imagination can adequately realize their sufferings.”—*W.E.H. Lecky, History of the Rise and Influence of the Spirit of Rationalism in Europe, vol. 2, p. 32, 1910 edition.*

An excellent though lengthy article describing in detail the right of the Roman Catholic Church to do this, will be found in the *Catholic Encyclopedia, vol.12,p. 266.*

“For professing faith contrary to the teachings of the Church of Rome history records the martyrdom of more than one hundred million people. A million Waldenses and Albigenses [Swiss and French Protestants] perished during a crusade proclaimed by Pope Innocent III in

1208. Beginning from the establishment of the Jesuits in 1540 to 1580, nine hundred thousand were destroyed. One hundred and fifty thousand perished by the Inquisition in thirty years. Within the space of thirty-eight years after the edict of Charles V against the Protestants, fifty thousand persons were hanged, beheaded, or burned alive for heresy. Eighteen thousand more perished during the administration of the Duke of Alva in five and a half years.”—*Brief Bible Readings*, p. 16.

Unfortunately, this right to persecute “heretics” has continued to be defended down into modern times. Robert Bellarmine was one of the most respected Jesuit teachers in the history of the Gregorian University in Rome, the largest Jesuit training school in the world.

“‘The church,’ says [Martin] Luther, has never burned a heretic.’ . . . I reply that this argument proves not the opinion, but the ignorance or impudence of Luther. Since almost infinite numbers were either burned or otherwise killed, Luther either did not know it, and was therefore ignorant, or if he was not ignorant, he is convicted of impudence and falsehood, —for that heretics were often burned by the [Catholic] Church may be proved from many examples.”—*Robert Bellarmine, Disputationes de Controversiis, Tom. ii, Lib. III, cap. XXII, 1682 edition. [Bellarmine, later canonized as a saint, was a leading Jesuit leader and writer.]*

“You ask if he [the Roman Catholic] were lord in the land, and you were in a minority, if not in numbers yet in power, what would he do to you? That, we say, would entirely depend upon circumstances. If it would benefit the cause of Catholicism, he would tolerate you: If expedient, he would imprison you, banish you, fine you; possibly, he might even hang you. But be assured of one thing: He would never tolerate you for the sake of ‘the glorious principles of civil and religious liberty’ . . . Catholicism is the most intolerant of creeds. It is intolerance itself, for it is truth itself.”—*Civil and Religious Liberty*, in *The Rambler*, 8, Sept., 1851, pp. 174, 178.

{*“The Rambler” was an English Roman: Catholic journal published from 1848 to 1862.*}

Here are two brief summaries of this unfortunate problem which, over the centuries, brought sadness into the lives of so many.

“From the birth of popery to the present time, it is estimated by careful and credible historians, that more than fifty millions of the human family, have been slaughtered for the crime of heresy by popish persecutors,—An average of more than 40,000 religious murders for every year of the existence of popery. Of course the average number of victims yearly, was vastly greater, during those gloomy ages when popery was in her glory and reigned despot of the world; and it has been much less since the power of the popes has diminished to tyrannize over the nations, and to compel the princes of the earth, by the terror of excommunication, interdiction, and deposition, to butcher their heretical subjects.”—*John Dowling, The History of Romanism, pp. 541-542.*

“Under these bloody maxims [Roman Catholic decrees to kill Protestants] those persecutions were carried on . . . After the signal of open martyrdom had been given in the canons of Orleans, there followed the extirpation of the [French] Albigenses, under the form of a crusade, the establishment of the inquisition, the cruel attempts to extinguish the [Swiss] Waldenses, the martyrdoms of the [English] Lollards, the cruel wars to exterminate the Bohemians, the burning of Huss and Jerome, and multitudes of other confessors, before the Reformation; and afterwards, the ferocious cruelties practiced in the Netherlands, the martyrdoms during [Catholic] Queen Mary’s reign, the extinction by fire and sword of the reformation in Spain and Italy, by fraud and open persecution in Poland, the massacre of Bartholomew, the persecution of the [French] Huguenots by the [Catholic] League, . . . and all the cruelties and perjuries connected with the revocation of the Edict of Nantes [in France] . . . These are the more open and conspicuous facts which explain the prophecy [of Daniel Seven], besides the slow and secret

murders of the holy tribunal of the inquisition.”—*T.R. Birks The Four Prophetic Empires, 1845 ed., pp. 248-249.*

“There are many unquestionable cases of Protestants punished as heretics in nearly all the lands where Roman Catholics have had power, right down to the French Revolution.”—*G.G. Coulton, The Death-Penalty for Heresy, Medieval Studies, No. 18, 1924 edition, pp. 62 [The author was a well-known member of the French Academy and an enthusiastic champion of Catholicism].*

OFFICIAL COUNCILS AND DECREES

With the passing of centuries, additional pagan customs entered the Roman Church through the rulings of church councils and the decrees of popes.

Each new ruling was accompanied by an order that it be believed and practiced on the pain of persecution and death. Yet there were those who continued to sidestep church authority by worshipping God on the seventh day of the week.

It became obvious that, until Sabbathkeeping could be totally abolished, the primacy of Rome would never be complete in lands under its control.

So, through councils and decrees, there was a continual downgrading of the Creation Sabbath, an exalting of Sunday, and issuing of ever more severe orders for the persecution of Sabbathkeepers.

The Council of Laodicea—This church council mentioned earlier, is significant as being both the first church council, and the first to demand obedience to Sunday worship.

In the fourth century, at this Council of Laodicea (336), for the first time Bible Sabbathkeeping—the worship of God on the Seventh day of the week—was forbidden by an official decree of the Church.

Here is the official statement issued by the Council of Laodicea:

“Christians shall not Judaize and be idle on Saturday [in the original: *sabbato*; that is, “shall not be idle on the Sabbath”], but shall work on that day; but the Lord’s day they shall especially honour, and as being Christians, shall, if possible, do no work on that day. If, however, they are found Judaizing, they shall be shut out [anathema, or excommunicated] from Christ.”—*Council of Laodicea, Canon 29, in C.J. Nefele, A History of the Councils of the Church, volume 2, page 316.*

This talk of “Judaizing” was a camouflage to hide the real facts in the case. Christians who kept the Seventh-day Sabbath, were not obeying the Jews—they were obeying God! They were not Judaizing,—they were Bible-izing!

The exact date of this Council of Laodicea, which issued the first Sunday legislation by the Christian Church, is not known, but is thought to have been in 336 A.D.

“The keeping of the Sunday rest arose from the custom of the people and the constitution of the Church . . . Tertullian [who lived near the liberal seminary at Alexandria], was probably the first to refer to a cessation of affairs on the Sun Day; the Council of Laodicea issued the first conciliar legislation for that day; Constantine I issued the first civil legislation.”—*Priest Vincent J. Kelly, Forbidden Sunday and Feast-Day Occupations, page 203. [Roman Catholic]*

The Council of Laodicea marked the beginning of a new era. When the persecution of God’s people began, the elimination of Sabbathkeeping lay at the heart of it. The reason for this is simple enough: Because the weekly worship day was the center and high point of religious activity, *the distinguishing characteristic of loyalty to the pope was church attendance on the day he had selected.* In contrast, weekly

worship on the Bible Sabbath showed that a family was not obedient to the Roman Church. That is why, throughout the centuries which followed, the Sabbath became the special target of the papacy.

Decree of c.A.D. 590—The decree of Gregory I (“the Great”) was typical of the attitude of Rome toward dissenters:

“About 590, Pope Gregory, in a letter to the Roman people, denounced as the prophets of Antichrist those who maintained that work ought not to be done on the seventh day.”—*James T. Ringgold, The Law of Sunday, p. 267 [Gregory I reigned from 590 to 604].*

It does seem amazing that the leader of the Roman Church would denounce as followers of “antichrist” those who continued to observe the true Sabbath. Gregory I, named the Great, bishop of Rome from A.D. 590 to 604, declared Sabbathkeepers to be preachers of antichrist! *Here is what he wrote:*

“Gregory, bishop by the grace of God to his well-beloved sons, the Roman citizens: It has come to me that certain men of perverse spirit have disseminated among you things depraved and opposed to the holy faith, so that they forbid anything to be done on the day of the Sabbath. What shall I call them except preachers of antichrist?”—*Epistles, book 13:1, in Labbe and Cossart, Sacrosancta Concilia, volume 5, column 1511.*

In spite of this, there were humble folk who continued to keep the true Sabbath; obedient children of God who were obedient to His Word.

A refusal to comply meant “*anathema*”—excommunication, persecution, and possible death.

Yet to submit meant the loss of the precious Sabbath. Many were put to death, refusing to stop obeying God’s clear command in the Fourth Commandment to honor the Bible Sabbath and use the other six days as common workdays (Exodus 20:8-11). Do

we today value the Sabbath as they did?

The ancient pagan error was demanded of the people by the popes: *Cujus regio ejus religio*: "The religion of the region must be that of the ruler." Since the popes claimed to rule over the nations, they demanded that all yield obedience to their religious teachings.

Additional Decrees—Gradually, with the passing of time, additional councils convened and more decrees were passed restricting what could be done on Sunday, and forbidding religious activities on the Bible Sabbath.

"Constantine's [six Sunday Law] decrees marked the beginning of a long though intermittent series of imperial decrees in support of Sunday rest."—*A History of the Councils of the Church, Vol 2, p. 316.*

"What began, however, as a pagan ordinance, ended as a Christian regulation; and a long series of imperial decrees, during the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries, enjoined with increasing stringency abstinence from labor on Sunday."—*Hutton Webster, "Rest Days," pp. 122-123,270.*

One of the earliest governmental decrees was issued only 65 years after Constantine's first Sunday law:

"In A.D. 386, Theodosius I and Gratian Valentinian, extended Sunday restrictions so that litigations should entirely cease on that day and there would be no public or private payment of debt. Laws forbidding Sunday circus, theater, and horse racing also followed."—*Sabbath and Sunday in Scripture and History, 328.*

Governmental decrees were issued in the years 365, 386, 389, 458, 460, 554, 589, 681,768,789, and onward. Decrees of church councils were enacted in 343, 538, 578, 581, 690, and onward. Each law became stricter; every penalty more severe. Satan was

determined to destroy the Sabbath, for it represented part of God's will for mankind. It was the one command of the Ten which, extending all the way back to Eden, *identifies our Creator!*

"Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. 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 had 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."—*Genesis 2:1-3*.

"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work . . . For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it."—*The Fourth Commandment (Exodus 20:8-11)*.

The meaning of the Fourth of the Ten Commandment is quite obvious. We are to keep it just as much as we are to keep the other commandments, and honor our parents, not kill, steal, or commit adultery.

Yet, contrary to the expressed will of God for mankind, the church at Rome was intent on transferring loyalty from God to itself. So the weekly day of worship was changed, the people were ordered to confess sins to priests instead of to God, they were given statues to pray to, and, instead of prayers to God, phrases to recite as they fingered beads.

Man-made laws were enacted to suppress that which God has expressly commanded—the keeping of the seventh-day Sabbath. In its place a common work day had been exalted, a day for which God had made no provision whatever at any time; a holy day adopted from paganism—the day of the sun.

Surely here we have a mark, an evidence, of the desire of willful men—in a daring change—to set up their own traditions in place of those things which God has commanded.

“Of course the Catholic Church claims that the change [of the Sabbath to Sunday] was her act . . . AND THE ACT IS A MARK of her ecclesiastical authority in religious things.” *From the office of Cardinal Gibbons, through Chancellor H.F. Thomas, November 11, 1895.*

But in spite of human efforts to change it, the holy Creation Sabbath—on the seventh day of the week—continues to be the weekly day of rest and worship which God gave us in the beginning, and then placed in the heart of the Ten Commandments.

A DRAMATIC CONTRAST

Let us return to those difficult times—and enter one of the separatist churches. Although separate from the “official” church, the Church of Rome, they were inheritors of the Bible beliefs and standards. They were the true line of genuine Christians!

Instead of entering a church building in which the worshipers bowed before statues representing dead people, recited phrases over and over again on beads, confessed their sins to another sinful human being, lighted candles, wore amulets, adored relics, and followed in processions with statues; the faithful gathered in little groups in hidden places.

Perhaps it might be a home, to which they had traveled by circuitous routes. Or it might be a cave or a place in the dark woods. There they knelt and prayed directly to God. Listening as one of their group read a passage from a Bible manuscript, their hearts would be warmed with his reading and simple comments. If they had the means to do so, they had a

simple Lord's Supper, the way Jesus and the disciples had it in the upper room. Softly, they would sing praises to God.

Thus encouraged, they would return home, and once again take up their everyday toiling. Indeed, these faithful Christians were the most industrious of all people in Europe or the Near East.

In addition to supporting their families, some would copy portions of Bible manuscripts. Others would take these out and travel as door-to-door salesman, selling various products. As they had opportunity, they would bring precious souls to Christ, and leave with them portions of hand-copied Bible manuscripts.

Still others would travel to distant lands—away from the dark shadow of papal control—and do direct evangelism, holding meetings in homes and on the streets.

It is because of this fact that the great majority of Bible translations and ancient hand-copied manuscripts—were all of one manuscript “family”—that which was the forerunner of our King James Version.

The alternate manuscript “family” primarily came from manuscripts primarily translated in that corrupt Alexandrian seminary. That manuscript family includes the *Codex Vaticanus* and *Codex Sinaiticus*, which were produced at Alexandria by the command of Constantine.

(For much more information on this, see the present author's book, *The KJV and the Modern Translations*.)

AS MORE CENTURIES PASSED

However, the focus of the attack always centered on the Bible Sabbath. The Seventh-day Sabbath was

the divinely ordained day for the worship of the Creator. God had never changed it. The Sun day was a man-made institution of worship in honor of a pagan god. To obey both was impossible. (Matthew 6:24)

This was exactly the problem the three Hebrew worthies faced at Dura (Read Daniel 5.) They were not at this time forbidden to worship the true God. They need only bow down that day with others in a semblance of worship to the false. But, of course, to do so would signify an acceptance of heathen worship.

And this they could not do. They would rather die first. They would rather die than lose something that many in our day consider to be of little value—the Sabbath of the Fourth Commandment given by the God of Heaven Himself.

In the centuries which followed the time of Constantine, the Roman church became more and more enraged that anyone would defy their command to worship on Sunday. It was obvious that their authority would not be supreme, as long as the Bible Sabbath continued to be kept.

The Church in the Dark Ages: 700-1500 A.D.—

This shift from Sabbath to Sunday became effective from the fourth through the seventh centuries, at a time when the popes were consolidating their enormous ecclesiastical power.

As the centuries rolled by, Sunday observance became increasingly a dominant symbol of the religious power of the Roman Church. Dissenters wherever they might be living were severely punished, but in spite of this, followers of the true Sabbath were to be found in distant or isolated places.

Many of the eastern churches, as the centuries passed, continued to hold church services on the Cre-

ation Sabbath, and refused to follow the Roman rule of disparaging God's holy day—which required using it only as a day of fasting and sorrowing, in preparation for Sundaykeeping.

For many centuries after Bible Sabbathkeeping had been crushed out of much of the western world, it was still kept in such areas as Britain, Scotland and Ireland. A school was established on the lonely isle of Iona, off the west coast of Scotland, and from there missionaries went to northern Europe, Switzerland and elsewhere.

Eventually the churches in the British Isles were taken over by Rome, but in the Italian piedmont and Swiss Alps lived the Waldenses, one of the most persecuted and hunted people of the Dark Ages. Many of them kept the Bible Sabbath.

Churches that held to this faith also existed for hundreds of years in Central Africa, in Ethiopia, and among the Armenians and Syrians of Asia. (*See Heylyn, History of the Sabbath, part 2, chap. 5, sec. 7; J.H. Merle D Aubigne, History of the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century, bk. 17, chap. 2; Roger de Hoveden, Annals, vol. 2, pp. 528-530, 281-282; Michael Geddes, Church History of Ethiopia, pp. 311-312, and other books on the Dark Ages.*)

Many of these hidden churches, such as the Celts of Scotland and the Waldensees of the Alps, were encouraged in their efforts to keep the true Sabbath by the fact that they had the Bible in their own language—a rare thing in those days before the printing press was invented. It had earlier been discovered that one of the best ways to forbid the Creation Sabbath, was to forbid the ownership of Bible manuscripts.

One of their opponents said this:

“They do not hear the masses of Christians [Catholics] . . . they flee the image of the Crucifix as the devil, they do not celebrate the feasts [holy days] of the divine Virgin Mary and of the Apostles, . . . Some indeed celebrate the Sabbath that the Jews observe!”—*Translated by J.J. von Doellinger, from Beitrage zur Sektengeschichte des Mittelalters, volume 2, number 61, page 662.*

Revelation 12:10-17 fulfilled—The pattern predicted in Revelation 12:10-17 was fulfilled during the Dark Ages. It was a simple one: Christian groups, which had access to the Bible in their own language, and were hidden away in distant places from Rome, were the ones most likely to be free to continue keeping the Creation Sabbath.

Something wonderful was lost—You see, you’re reading the story of people who lost something—something they loved. Rather, it was taken from them—the precious Sabbath they valued, and needed. And they had to stand in silent grief, and watch, as the years passed, and their little children grew up never having had it.

But there were others who resisted this apostasy against Bible truth. And they paid the highest price for it.

Still others fled and tried to go into hiding in distant places, taking with them their beloved families and their Bibles, and the truths that meant so much to them.

For us today, there is help only in one line: Determine by the grace of God to live right yourself. Study the Bible. And by the grace of Christ, obey it at whatever the cost. They were willing to die back then for what the Bible said. Are you willing to suffer today for the same truths? Will you stand for the faith of your fathers?

Plead with your heavenly Father on your knees for a deeper experience. Plead for souls that don't know these precious Bible truths. Live these truths yourself. Your prayers and your daily life are the best way you can help others live better. And to live better is to live Biblically. Take your stand for God's holy Sabbath, and don't waver, and others will follow your example.

Do you value your Bible? Do you read it regularly? Do you obey it? People who say it is "legalism" to obey the Bible are leading people in the wrong direction. By the enabling grace of Christ (and by His grace alone!), we can obey all that God asks of us in that sacred book.

When the northern tribes invaded the empire, the larger number of them accepted the Roman version of Christianity, instead of the purer eastern faith. At the request of the pope, they prohibited Sunday work with severe civil decrees in their respective countries.

Yet, it is an intriguing fact that, all through those centuries, the medieval church never confused Sunday with the Sabbath in their thinking. They recognized and freely admitted that Sunday was not the Bible Sabbath. Christians never called Sunday "the Sabbath" until several centuries ago when, for the first time, Puritans in England began calling it the "Sunday sabbath."

Interestingly enough, just as is done today, most blue laws throughout history never forbade most amusements, except the most objectionable types.

Yet Sunday rest proved difficult to regulate. To church and civil decrees were added superstitious tales of letters from heaven, commanding Sunday observance, or tales of miraculous punishments visited upon violators of Sunday.

Gregory, a sixth-century bishop in the city of Tours, in France, wrote up a bookful of them—fire falling from the skies and killing Sabbathkeepers, iron sticking to the hand, blood spurting from the eyes, or thorns growing inside the eyeballs of Sunday violators, and so forth.

In what company has Sunday arisen! Born of tradition, introduced by gnostic philosophers, popularized by Sun worship, clothed in anti-Semitism, enforced by law, sanctified by superstition, finally upheld by the death sentence. All these means have been necessary because of a lack of divine authorization in even one smallest passage of Scripture.

The only solution for those who would today seek the true Bible faith is to read and obey the Holy Scriptures. There you will find the pure faith and the correct teachings you should pattern your life by, uncorrupted by the errors that Constantine and others brought into the Christian Church over a thousand years ago.

ó PART SEVEN ó

APPENDICES

1054: THE GREAT SCHISM BETWEEN THE CATHOLIC AND GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCHES

It is well-known that Great Schism occurred when the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches split apart. This was an extremely important event in religious history. But did you know that the Sabbath was an important reason why it occurred? Here,

briefly, is the story of the day the Pope and the Archbishop excommunicated one another.

Pope Leo IX, head of the Roman Catholic Church that was headquartered in Rome, Italy, was determined that the Eastern Church, under Patriarch Michael Cerularius, yield obedience to certain papal teachings, which included the keeping of Sunday exclusively as the weekly holy day.

Hoping to maintain the centuries-old union of the two major Christian Churches, Cerularius sent a moderate reply to the demand. But, dissatisfied, the pope sent Cardinal Humbert at the head of a legation of four church leaders (including the future Pope Stephen IX) to Constantinople, to urge total obedience to the papal demands by Cerularius, the Eastern Emperor (Constantine IX) and the Eastern Church.

When Cerularius refused to yield on any of the controverted points of teaching, Humbert went into a rage; and on July 16, 1054, he placed an official papal bull (decretal) on the altar of Santa Sophia—at the very time that hundreds of worshipers were gathered for a church service. It declared that everyone in the Eastern Church was excommunicated!

Upon reading it and learning that the papal legation were leaving for Rome, Cerularius, with the approval of Constantine IX, excommunicated Humbert, his entire legation, and Pope Leo IX as well!

The result was the Great Schism, separating the Roman Catholic Church from the Greek Orthodox Church. One of the key demands of the papacy was that the Eastern Church could no longer keep the seventh-day Bible Sabbath. (At that time, although they had yielded to Rome's demand to attend church on Sunday, they were still faithfully keeping the Bible

Sabbath.)

“The anti-Sabbath attitude of the Western [Roman] Church was an important factor in the Great Schism of 1054 . . . The quarrel embittered itself as the Catholics accused the Christians of Constantinople of Judaizing with the Jews [by keeping the Sabbath, as they were doing at that time] and Christianizing with the Christians, while genuine believers should look upon the Jews and their Sabbath with execration. ‘The Easterners,’ Cardinal Humbert wrote, ‘chose to observe the Sabbath with the Jews’ (*Cardinal Humbert, quoted in Migne, Patrologia Latina, 143:936-937*).

After the schism, the patriarch of Constantinople, Michael Cerularius, wrote the patriarch of Antioch an account of the event and said, ‘For we are commanded [by Scripture] also to honor the Sabbath’ (*Epistle 124, quoted in Migne, Patrologia Graeca, 120:778*).”—*The Sabbath in Scripture and History, 196-197*.

1562: DEL FOSSO SPEAKS AT THE COUNCIL OF TRENT

This was the day that the foundation of Roman Catholic authority was laid. Many historians consider this to be one of the three most important events in Catholic history.

Protestants had declared that all doctrine must be brought to the test of the Inspired Word; and any concepts not found there must be rejected. This deep truth lies at the heart of Protestantism. Rome was determined to overthrow that truth. But how to do it was the question; for there was a division in the Church over the primacy of *Tradition*.

Down through the centuries, in every dispute over worship, doctrine, or practice, Rome had always declared Tradition—the sayings of popes and councils—

to be superior to Scripture. But how could they defend putting the words of men above the Word of God? It was not until January 1562, that the question was finally settled.

Every basic modern doctrine of Catholicism finds its foundation in the decisions affirmed at the *Council of Trent* (1545-1563), initially convened by Pope Paul III, to figure out ways to oppose the Protestant faith. But, in that council, there was an ongoing battle over this matter of Tradition. It would be embarrassing to officially codify the fact that the opinions of men, not the Bible, was the basis of the beliefs and practices of the Catholic Church!

“From a doctrinal and disciplinary point of view, it [the Council of Trent] was the most important council in the history of the Roman Church, fixing her distinctive faith and practice in relation to the Protestant Evangelical churches.”—*Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia*, art. “*Council of Trent*.”

What reasoning could be offered for placing Tradition above the Holy Scriptures, *as the highest authority*? In other words, what excuse could be given for declaring the uninspired words of men to be superior to the Bible? This was a real crisis.

There was much bickering over this point. Protestantism was making a powerful attack on papal beliefs—*specifically because* those beliefs were based on Tradition. Since Roman Catholic Tradition was nothing more than a hodgepodge collection of confused sayings and borrowed pagan practices of earlier times, many of the archbishops and cardinals attending this important council hesitated to make an official statement that they all knew that Tradition was the basis of the Roman Catholic Church. The problem was that there was just no reason they could offer for placing Tradition above the Bible.

But then came the deciding point—and it came as a surprise. What is not generally known is that the entire argument was settled in one day.

When Gaspar del Fosso, the Archbishop of Reggio, stood up and spoke on January 18, 1562, he decided (once and for all) the entire future course of Catholicism.

Rising to his feet and calling for attention, he wholeheartedly praised Tradition; and then he made bitter jibes at those who wanted to downgrade its supremacy in the Church.

Since others had already spoken in defense of Tradition, what was it that made del Fosso's speech so decisive? It was this:

First, he reasoned that the Church of Rome was founded on Tradition; and the Church and its beliefs would soon perish without it. Then he gave his punch line: He told the assembled delegates that the great proof that the doctrine of "Tradition-above-Scripture" *must be right* was the fact that, centuries earlier—and quite apart from any Scriptural command,—the Church had changed the seventh-day Sabbath, *which God Himself had commanded*, to Sunday, the first day of the week!

Del Fosso declared that this proved Tradition to be more important than the Bible—*for Church Tradition had presumed to change the very law of God itself*—and had apparently succeeded! And what is more, del Fosso climaxed—*the Protestants were obeying Rome by also keeping Sunday!* They were obeying Catholic Tradition, which totally proved Tradition to be superior.

That morning, del Fosso made it clear that Sunday sacredness was the pivotal proof of the entire doctrinal structure of Catholicism. His speech set-

tled the matter. The tone of the gathering changed. Never again in the councils of Rome would a question to be raised in regard to the supreme authority of papal Tradition. The fact that Rome had changed God's Sabbath to the papal Sunday, and Protestants carefully obeyed the papacy in this matter, was the "proof" needed to forever establish Rome's authority. A Catholic historian explains:

"Finally at the last opening [session] on the eighteenth of January, 1562, their last scruple was set aside; the Archbishop of Reggio made a speech in which he openly declared that Tradition stood above Scripture. The authority of the Church could not therefore be bound to the authority of the Scriptures; because the Church had changed the Sabbath into Sunday, not by the command of Christ, but by its own authority. With this, to be sure, the last illusion was destroyed, and it was declared that Tradition does not signify antiquity, but continual inspiration."—*J.H. Holtzman, Canon and Tradition, p. 263.*

Henceforth, boasting statements like these could be made by the Church of Rome:

"Like two sacred rivers flowing from Paradise, the Bible and divine Tradition contain the Word of God, the precious gems of revealed truth . . . Of the two, Tradition is to us more clear and safe."—*Joseph F. Di Bruno, Catholic Belief, 1884 ed., p. 45 [Italian Catholic writer].*

Because of the decision made at the Council of Trent, Catholic writers are quite proud of the fact that they changed the Sabbath to Sunday, and declare it is the MARK of their authority.

"Of course the Catholic Church claims that the change [of the Sabbath to Sunday] was her act . . . AND THE ACT IS A MARK of her ecclesiastical authority in religious things." *From the office of Cardinal Gibbons, through Chancellor H.F. Thomas, November 11, 1895.*

"The observance of Sunday by the Protestants is an HOMAGE they pay in spite of themselves to the AUTHORITY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH." *Monsignor Louis*

Segur, Plain Talk About the Protestantism of Today, p. 213.

“Q. How prove you that the church hath power to command feasts and holy days?

“A. BY THE VERY ACT of changing the Sabbath into Sunday, which Protestants allow of, and therefore they fondly contradict themselves by keeping Sunday strictly, and breaking most other feasts commanded by the same church.

“Q. How prove you that?

“A. Because BY KEEPING SUNDAY they ACKNOWLEDGE THE CHURCH’S POWER to ordain feasts, and to command them under sin.” *The Douay Catechism, p. 59.*

“PROVE TO ME from the BIBLE ALONE that I am bound to keep Sunday holy. THERE IS NO SUCH LAW IN THE BIBLE! It is a law of the holy Catholic Church alone.

“Some non-Catholics object to Purgatory because there is no specific mention of it in Scripture. There is no specific mention of the word Sunday in Scripture either. The Sabbath is mentioned, but Sabbath is [a keeping of] Saturday. Yet the Christians of almost all denominations worship on Sunday, not on Saturday. The Jews observe Saturday. Nowhere in the Bible is it stated that worship should be changed from Saturday to Sunday.”—Martin J. Scott, *Things Catholics Are Asked About*, 1927, p. 236 [Roman Catholic].

“Prove to me from the Bible alone that I am bound to keep Sunday holy.—There is no such law in the Bible! It is a law of the holy Catholic Church alone, The Bible says, ‘Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.’ THE CATHOLIC CHURCH SAYS, NO. By my divine power, I ABOLISH THE SABBATH DAY and command you to keep holy the first day of the week. And lo! The entire civilized world bows down in reverent obedience to the command of the holy Catholic Church!” *Priest Thomas Enright, CSSR president of Redemptorist College, Kansas City, Mo., in a lecture at Hartford, Kansas, Febru-*

ary 18, 1884, and published in *The American Sentinel* [R.C. journal], June 1893, p. 173.

CENTURIES OF FAITHFULNESS

In the early 1950s, J.F. Coltheart completed several years of researching the fact that there have been faithful Christians who kept the Bible Sabbath all through the Dark Ages and afterward. He published his findings in his 1954 book, *The Sabbath of God through the Centuries*. Aside from the New Testament writings, the keeping of the seventh-day Sabbath was mentioned 164 times down through the ages, 37 times in the first five centuries alone. These historical statements were made by or about various groups throughout Europe, Africa, the Near East, India, China, and the Far East. *Only a very few can be quoted here:*

1st and 2nd Centuries: “There is not any city of the Grecians, nor any of the barbarians, nor any nation whatsoever, whither our custom of resting on the seventh day hath not come.”—*Josephus (the Jewish historian), quoted in M’Clatchie, Notes and Queries on China and Japan, Vol. 4, Nos. 7-8, p. 100.*

“The primitive Christians had a great veneration for the Sabbath, and spent the day in devotion and sermons. And it is not to be doubted but they derived this practice from the Apostles themselves, as appears by several scriptures to the purpose.”—*T.H. Morer, Dialogues on the Lord’s Day, p. 189, London [Church of England].*

3rd and 4th Centuries: “It is certain that the ancient Sabbath did remain and was observed by the Christians of the Eastern Church, above three hundred years after our Saviour’s death.”—*A Learned*

Treatise on the Sabbath, p. 77.

“From the Apostles’ time until the Council of Laodicea, which was about the year 364, the holy observation of the Jews’ Sabbath continued, as may be proved out of many authors; yea, notwithstanding the decree of the Council against it.”—*John Ley, Sunday and Sabbath, p. 163, London, 1640.*

“The ancient Christians were very careful in the observation of Saturday, or the seventh day . . . It is plain that all the Oriental churches, and the greatest part of the world, observed the Sabbath as a festival . . . Athanasius likewise tells us that they held religious assemblies on the Sabbath, not because they were infected with Judaism, but to worship Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath. Epiphanius says the same.”—*Antiquities of the Christian Church, Vol. 2, Bk. 20, chap. 3, sec. 1, 66, 1137, 1138.*

5th Century: “For although almost all [Christian] Churches throughout the world celebrate the sacred mysteries [the Lord’s Supper] on the Sabbath of every week, yet the Christians of Alexandria and at Rome, on account of some ancient tradition, refuse to do this.”—*Socrates Scholasticus, Ecclesiastical History, Bk. 5, chap. 22, p. 289.* (The footnote says: “That is, upon the Saturday. It should be observed that Sunday is never called ‘the Sabbath’ by the ancient fathers and historians.” This historian lived in the early 5th century.)

Augustine (354-430) states that the Sabbath was observed in his day “in the greater part of the Christian world.” His testimony is significant since, as a church leader, he was a devoted Sundaykeeper. (See *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 1st Series, Vol. 1, pp. 353-354.*)

7th Century: "It seems to have been customary in the Celtic Churches of early times, in Ireland as well as Scotland, to keep Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, as a day of rest from labour. They obeyed the fourth commandment literally upon the seventh day of the week."—*The Church in Scotland*, p. 140.

8th Century: "The hills of Persia and the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates reechoed their songs of praise. They reaped their harvests and paid their tithes. They repaired to their churches on the Sabbath day for the worship of God."—*Realencyclopaedie fur Protestantische and Kirche*, art. "Nestorianer." Also in Yule, *The Book of Marco Polo*, Vol. 2, p. 409.

"Widespread and enduring was the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath among the believers of the Church of the East and the St. Thomas Christians of India, who never were connected with Rome. It also was maintained among those bodies which broke off from Rome after the Council of Chalcedon; namely, the Abyssinians, the Jacobites, the Maronites, and the Armenians."—*Shaff-Herzog, The New Encyclopaedia of Religious Knowledge*, art. "Nestorians."

9th Century: "Pope Nicholas I, in the ninth century, sent the ruling prince of Bulgaria a long document . . . saying in it that one is to cease from work on Sunday, but not on the Sabbath. The head of the Greek Church, offended at the interference of the Papacy, declared the Pope excommunicated."—*Wilkinson, B.G., Truth Triumphant*, p. 232.

10th Century: "They [Scottish Christians] worked on Sunday, but kept Saturday in a Sabbatical manner."—*Andrew Lang, History of Scotland from the*

Roman Occupation, Vol. 1, p. 96.

“And because they [the Waldenses] observed no other day of rest but the Sabbath days, they called them *Insabathas*.”—*Luther, Fore-Runners, pp. 7-8.*

11th Century: “They [Scottish Christians] held that Saturday was properly the Sabbath on which they abstained from work.”—*Celtic Scotland, Vol. 2, p. 350.*

“The observance of Saturday is, as everyone knows, the subject of a bitter dispute between the Greeks [Eastern Church] and the Latins [Papal Church].”—*Neale, History of the Holy Eastern Church, Vol. 1, p. 731* [referring to the separation between the Eastern and Western Churches in A.D. 1054, partly caused by the Eastern Church’s refusal to stop keeping the Bible Sabbath].

12th Century: “The spread of heresy at this time is almost incredible. From Bulgaria to the Ebro, from northern France to the Tiber, everywhere we meet them [the Sabbathkeeping *Pasagini*]. Whole countries are infested, like Hungary and southern France; they abound in many other countries, in Germany, in Italy, in the Netherlands and even in England they put forth their efforts.”—*Dr. Hahn, Gesch. der Ketzler, 1, 13-14.*

PROTESTANTS AFFIRM MORAL PRINCIPLES

Dr. John Dowling, for many years the pastor of the Bearean Baptist Church in New York City, wrote the following important statement:

“The Bible, I say, the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants! Nor is it of any account in the estimation of the genuine Protestant how early a doctrine

originated, if it is not found in the Bible . . . Hence if a doctrine be propounded for his acceptance, he asks, is it to be found in the Inspired Word? Was it taught by the Lord Jesus Christ and His apostles? If they knew nothing of it, no matter to him whether it be discovered in the musty folio of some ancient visionary of the third or fourth century, if it is not found in the Sacred Scriptures, it presents no valid claim to be received as an article of his religious creed . . . He who receives a single doctrine upon the mere authority of tradition, by so doing, steps down from the Protestant rock, passes over the line which separates Protestantism from popery, and can give no valid reason why he should not receive all the earlier doctrines and ceremonies of Romanism.”—*John Dowling, History of Romanism, 13th ed., pp. 67-68.*

Baptist—The official teaching of the Baptist denomination is set forth in the *New Hampshire Confession of Faith*:

“We believe the Scriptures teach that the law of God is the eternal and unchangeable rule of His moral government; that it is holy, just, and good; and that the inability which the Scriptures ascribe to fallen men to fulfill its precepts arises entirely from their love of sin; to deliver them from which, and to restore them through a Mediator to unfeigned obedience to the holy law, is one great end of the gospel, and of the means of grace.”—*Article 12, quoted in O.C.S. Wallace, What Baptists Believe (1934), p. 79.*

A missionary tract of the *Baptist Publication Society* says this:

“To prove that the ten commandments are binding, let any person read them, one by one, and ask his own conscience as he reads, whether it would be any sin to break them. Is this, or any part of it, the

liberty of the gospel? Every conscience that is not seared as with a hot iron must answer these questions in the negative . . . The lawgiver and the Saviour are one; and believers must be of one mind with the former as well as with the latter. But if we depreciate the law which Christ delighted to honor, and deny our obligations to obey it, how are we of His mind? Rather are we not of that mind which is enmity against God, which is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be? . . . If the law be not a rule of conduct to believers, and a perfect rule too, they are under no rule; or which is the same thing, are lawless . . . Thus it is, by disowning the law, men utterly subvert the gospel. Believers, instead of being freed from obligation to obey it, are under greater obligation to do so than any men in the world.”—*Tract No. 64, Baptist Publication Society.*

Charles Spurgeon, a leading Baptist preacher, wrote this:

“Jesus did not come to change the law, but He came to explain it, and that very fact shows that it remains; for there is no need to explain that which is abrogated . . . By thus explaining the law He confirmed it. He could not have meant to abolish it, or He would not have needed to expound it . . .

“That the Master did not come to alter the law is clear, because, after having embodied it in His life, He willingly gave Himself up to bear its penalty, though He had never broken it, bearing the penalty for us, even as it is written, ‘Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us’ . . .

“If the law had demanded more of us than it ought to have done, would the Lord Jesus have rendered to it the penalty which resulted from its too severe de-

mands? I am sure He would not. But because the law asked only what it ought to ask, namely, perfect obedience, and exacted of the transgressor only what it ought to exact, namely, death as the penalty for sin—death under divine wrath—therefore the Saviour went to the tree, and there bore our sins, and purged them once for all.”—*Charles Spurgeon, Perpetuity of the Law of God, pp. 4-7.*

Methodist Episcopal—This great community of Christians also upholds obedience to the holy law of God.

“Although the law given from God by Moses as touching ceremonies and rites [such as passover and circumcision] doth not bind Christians; yet no Christian whatsoever is free from obedience to the commandments which are moral.”—*Constitution of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Articles of Religion, Art. 6, in Methodist Episcopal Church Doctrines and Discipline (1928), p. 7.*

John Wesley—“The moral law contained in the ten commandments, and enforced by the prophets, He [Christ] did not take away. it was not the design of His coming to revoke any part of this. This is the law which never can be broken, which ‘stands fast as the faithful witness in heaven.’ The moral law stands on an entirely different foundation from the ceremonial or ritual law . . . Every part of the moral law most remain in force upon all mankind, and in all ages; as not depending either on time or place or any other circumstances liable to change, but on the nature of God and the nature of man, and their unchangeable relation to each other.”—*John Wesley, On the Sermon on the Mount, Discourse 6, Sermons on Several Occasions (1810), pp. 75-76.*

Methodist Episcopal—Bishop Matthew Simpson

showed the close connection of law and grace.

“The law of God should be distinctly set forth. Our congregations should be gathered as around the base of Mount Sinai, while from its summit is heard the voice of God in those commandments which are unalterable and eternal in their character . . .

“There are many preachers who love to dwell on the gospel alone . . . But sometimes they go beyond this, and speak against the preaching of the law,—and hint that it belongs to a past age, a less civilized society; that men can best be moved by love alone. Such a gospel may rear a beautiful structure, but its foundation is on the sand.

“No true edifice can be raised without its foundations being dug deep by repentance toward God . . . The law without the gospel is dark and hopeless; the gospel without law is inefficient and powerless. The one leads to servitude, the other to antinomianism. The two combined produce ‘charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.’—*Bishop Matthew Simpson, Fourth Lecture, Yale Lectures on Preaching, 1878, quoted in Eton and Mains, ed., Lectures on Preaching, pp. 128-129.*

Presbyterian—Here is Article 5 of the Presbyterian Confession of Faith:

“The moral law doth forever bind all, as well justified persons as others, to the obedience thereof; and that not only in regard of the matter contained in it, but also in respect of the authority of God the Creator who gave it. Neither doth Christ in the gospel in any way dissolve, but much strengthen this obligation.”—*Presbyterian Confession of Faith, Art. 5, in The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. (1896), Chap. 19, sec. 5, pp. 88-89.*

John Calvin—Commenting on Matthew 5:17 and

Luke 16:17, Calvin wrote these words:

“We must not imagine that the coming of Christ has freed us from the authority of the law; for it is the eternal rule of a devout and holy life, and must, therefore, be as unchangeable as the justice of God, which it embraced, is constant and uniform.”—*John Calvin, Commentary on a Harmony of the Gospels, Vol. 1, p. 277.*

“The law sustained no diminution of its authority, but ought always to receive from us the same veneration and obedience.”—*John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Church, ii, 7, sec. 15.*

Congregationalist—“The law of God is and must of necessity be unchangeable and eternal.”—*Timothy Dwight, Theology, Vol. 4, p. 120.*

Jonathan Edwards, that great Congregationalist preacher and president of Princeton University, wrote this:

“Through the atonement of Christ more honor is done to the law, and consequently the law is more established, than if the law had been literally executed, and all mankind had been condemned. Whatever tends most to the honor of the law, tends most to establish its authority.”—*Jonathan Edwards, The Works of Jonathan Edwards, 1842 ed., Vol. 2, p. 369.*

Dwight L. Moody—This great revivalist, in his *Weighted and Wanting*, made this statement:

“Now men may cavil as much as they like about other parts of the Bible, but I have never met an honest man that found fault with the ten commandments. Infidels may mock the Lawgiver and reject Him who alone can deliver us from sin, but they can’t help admitting that the commandments are right. Renan said that they are for all nations, and will remain the

commandments of God during all the centuries . . .

“The people must be made to understand that the ten commandments are still binding, and that there is a penalty attached to their violation . . .

“The Commandments of God given to Moses in the mount at Horeb are as binding today as ever they have been since the time when they were proclaimed in the hearing of the people. The Jews said the law was not given in Palestine (which belonged to Israel), but in the wilderness, because the law was for all nations . . .

“Jesus never condemned the law and the prophets, but He did condemn those who did not obey them.”—*D.L. Moody, Weighed and Wanting, pp. 11, 16, 15.*

Lutheran—A Lutheran catechism explains their position on the moral law:

“23. *How many kinds of laws did God give in the Old Testament?* Three kinds: 1. The ceremonial church law; 2. The civil law; 3. The moral law.

“24. *Which of these laws is still in force?* The moral law, which is contained in the ten commandments.

“25. *Cannot this law be abolished?* No, because it is founded on God’s holy and righteous nature.”—*Epitome of Pontoppidan’s Explanation of Martin Luther’s Small Catechism (1935), pp. 6-7.*

Martin Luther—“I wonder exceedingly how it came to be imputed to me that I should reject the law of ten commandments . . . Can anyone think that sin exists where there is no law? . . . Whoever abrogates the law, must of necessity abrogate sin also.”—*Martin Luther, Luther’s Works (trans., Weimar ed.), Vol. 50, pp. 470-471.*

“He who destroys the doctrine of the law, destroys

at the same time political and social order. If you eject the law from the church, there will no longer be any sin recognized as such in the world; for the gospel only defines and punishes sin by reference to the law.”—*Martin Luther, quoted in M. Michelet's Life of Luther (Hazlitt's trans.), 2nd ed., Vol. 4, p. 315.*

Free Methodist—“No Christian whatsoever is free from the obedience of the commandments which are called moral.”—*Free Methodist Discipline, Fifth Article.*

Church of Christ—Alexander Campbell, founder of this church, wrote this:

“God’s ten words, not only in the Old Testament, but in all revelation, are the most emphatically regarded as the synopsis of all religion and morality.”—*Alexander Campbell, Debate on the Roman Catholic Religion, p. 214.*

A remarkable statement—At a *New York Ministers' Conference*, held November 13, 1893, Dr. Edward T. Hiscox author of the *Baptist Manual*, read a paper about the early centuries of the Christian Church. Because of the intense interest of the ministers present, part of the paper was published in the *New York Examiner*, a Baptist paper, on November 16, 1893. We call attention to these striking and earnest statements:

“There was and is a commandment to keep holy the Sabbath day, but that Sabbath day was not Sunday. It will be said, however, and with some show of triumph, that the Sabbath was transferred from the seventh to the first day of the week, with all its duties, privileges, and sanctions. Earnestly desiring information on this subject, which I have studied for many years, I ask, Where can the record of such a transaction be found? Not in the New Testament,

absolutely not. There is no Scriptural evidence of the change of the Sabbath institution from the seventh to the first day of the week.

“I wish to say that this Sabbath question, in this aspect of it, is the gravest and most perplexing question connected with Christian institutions which at present claims attention from Christian people; and the only reason that it is not a more disturbing element in Christian thought, and in religious discussions, is because the Christian world has settled down content on the conviction that somehow a transference has taken place at the beginning of the Christian history . . .

“To me it seems unaccountable that Jesus, during three years’ contact with His disciples, often conversing with them upon the Sabbath question, discussing it in some of its various aspects, freeing it from its false glosses, never alluded to any transference of the day. Also that, during forty days of His resurrection life, no such thing was intimated. Nor, so far as we know, did the Spirit, which was given to bring to their remembrance all things whatsoever that He had said unto them, deal with this question. Nor yet did the inspired Apostles, in preaching the gospel, founding churches, counseling and instructing those founded, discuss or approach this subject.

“Of course, I quite well know that Sunday did come into use in early Christian history as a religious day, as we learn from the Christian Fathers and other sources. But what a pity that it comes branded with the mark of paganism, and christened with the name of the sun god, when adopted and sanctioned by the papal apostasy, and bequeathed as a sacred legacy to Protestantism!”—*Dr. Edward T. Hiscox, Author of the Baptist Manual, in a paper read to a New York*

Ministers' Conference, held on November 13, 1893, and printed in the Baptist paper, New York Examiner, November 16, 1893.

Catholicism replies—Burns and Oates, of London, are publishers of Roman Catholic books, one of which is called *The Library of Christian Doctrine*. In one part of it, called “*Why Don't You Keep the Sabbath Day?*” the following argument of a Catholic with a Protestant is given:

“You will tell me that Saturday was the Jewish Sabbath, but that the Christian Sabbath has been changed to Sunday. Changed! but by whom! Who has the authority to change an express commandment of Almighty God? When God has spoken and said, ‘Thou shalt keep holy the seventh day,’ who shall dare to say, Nay, thou mayest work and do all manner of worldly business on the seventh day; but thou shalt keep holy the first day in its stead? This is a most important question, which I know not how you can answer.

“You are a Protestant, and you profess to go by the Bible and the Bible only; and yet in so important a matter as the observance of one day in seven as a holy day, you go against the plain letter of the Bible, and put another day in the place of that day which the Bible has commanded. The command to keep holy the seventh day is one of the ten commandments. You believe that the other nine are still binding. Who gave you authority to tamper with the fourth? If you are consistent with your own principles, if you really follow the Bible and the Bible only, you ought to be able to produce some portion of the New Testament in which this fourth commandment is expressly altered.”—*Why Don't You Keep the Sabbath Day?* pp. 3-4 [Roman Catholic].

The religious authority that made the change—“Sunday is a Catholic institution, and its claims to observance can be defended only on Catholic principles . . . From beginning to end of Scripture there is not a single passage that warrants the transfer of weekly public worship from the last day of the week to the first,”—*Catholic Press (Sydney, Australia), August 25, 1900.*

“The Bible says, ‘Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.’ THE CATHOLIC CHURCH SAYS, NO. By my divine power, I ABOLISH THE SABBATH DAY and command you to keep holy the first day of the week. And lo! The entire civilized world bows down in reverent obedience to the command of the holy Catholic Church!”—*Priest Thomas Enright, C.S.S.R., president of Redemptorist College, Kansas City, Mo., in a lecture at Hartford, Kansas, February 18, 1884, and published in The American Sentinel [R.C. journal], June 1893, p. 173 [emphasis his].*

ó PART EIGHT ó

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1 - HAS THE WEEKLY CYCLE CHANGED?

The writings of historians, the records of chronographers, the languages of earth, the calendars of time, and the existence of the Jewish race— all testify to the fact that the weekly cycle on our calendars today is the same as in earlier centuries— going back to the time of Christ, to Moses, and beyond.

In the beginning, God gave us the weekly seven-day cycle, with the Sabbath as the last day. That pattern has never changed. The seventh day of the week today is the true Bible Sabbath. Our seventh day is the Sabbath which Jesus kept; it was the Sabbath in the time of Moses when the Ten Commandments were written down. Historians and scientists all agree that this is true.

If there had been any change in the weekly cycle, between the time of Creation and the time of Moses, a correction would have been made when the Ten Commandments were given to the Hebrews. *From that time, on down to the present, there have always been Jews to testify as to the true Sabbath!* It is the same seventh day of the week which is on our calendars. While all the other ancient races are now intermingled, the Jews have been kept separate, so they could testify to the fact that our seventh day is the Bible Sabbath!

The yearly (not weekly) cycle has been changed. In 1582, the length of the year was changed to include the leap year. This changeover resulted in October 1582 having only 21 days! But each week remained the same; each was seven days in length. Thursday, October 4, was followed by Friday, October 15. God has divinely protected the weekly cycle down through the ages. If He had not done this, it would be impossible to keep the Sabbath holy, as He has commanded. But, because He has, there is no excuse for disobedience. The seventh day is a holy day, made holy by the command of God. All calendars agree: The seventh day is the Sabbath. Sunday is the first day; the day called "Saturday" in the English language is the Sabbath.

However, in 108 of the 160 languages of mankind, the seventh day is called "*the Sabbath*"! Dr. William Mead Jones, of London, prepared a chart proving this. (A copy of this chart can be obtained free of charge from the publisher of this book: Ask for "*The Chart of the Week*" [BS-27-28].) English is one of the few major languages in which the seventh day is not called "the Sabbath." (The word, "Sabbath," was originally a Hebrew word and means "rest.")

Here are ten examples; all mean "Sabbath." Hebrew: Shabbath / Greek: Sabbaton / Latin: Sabbatum / Arabic: Assabit / Persian: Shambin / Russian: Subbota / Hindustani: Shamba / French: Samedi / Italian: Sabato / Spanish: Sabado.

Here are several statements by astronomers that the weekly cycle has never been changed, confused, or lost:

"By calculating the eclipses, it can be proven that no time has been lost and the creation days were seven, divided into 24 hours each."—*Dr. Hinkley, The Watchman, July 1926. [Hinkley was a well-known astronomer.]*

"The human race never lost the septenary [seven day] sequence of week days and that the Sabbath of these latter times comes down to us from Adam, though the ages, without a single lapse."—*Dr. Totten, professor of astronomy at Yale University.*

"Seven has been the ancient and honored number among the nations of the earth. They have measured their time by weeks from the beginning. The origin of this was the Sabbath of God, as Moses has given the reasons for it in his writings."—*Dr. Lyman Coleman.*

"There has been no change in our calendar in past centuries that has affected in any way the cycle of the

week.”—*James Robertson, Director American Ephemeris, Navy Department, U.S. Naval Observatory, Washington, D.C., March 12, 1932.*

“It can be said with assurance that not a day has been lost since Creation, and all the calendar changes notwithstanding, there has been no break in the weekly cycle.”—*Dr. Frank Jeffries, Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society and Research Director of the Royal Observatory, Greenwich, England.*

God has given us many ways by which we can know that we today have the true Bible Sabbath, and that it is the seventh day of the week. He wants everyone to be sure, whether or not they have access to historical and astronomical records. He has given us more than written proof—He has given us living proof—the Jewish race. Every other Near Eastern ethnic group has disappeared: the Hitites, Summarians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Moabites—all gone. The Jews remain a distinct people—and with them the Bible Sabbath. It has been 3,400 years since the time that God gave them manna in the wilderness—but all during that time they have been keeping the Bible Sabbath, week after week, century after century. Ask any Jewish acquaintance what day is the Sabbath. He will tell you that it is Saturday, the seventh day.

Orthodox Jews scattered throughout the world have kept strict record of time. They have carefully observed the seventh-day Sabbath throughout the ages. The existence and testimony of the Jewish race is alone enough to settle the matter.

It is remarkable how complete is the Biblical and historical evidences corroborating the fact that the Bible Sabbath was given to us by the God of heaven.

Let us keep the Sabbath that Jesus kept! He worshiped on the Bible Sabbath and never told us to stop keeping it. No one else in the Bible said to either. The seventh day is the Sabbath; for God never changed it.

For a copy of the 256-page book, *Beyond Pitcairn*, explaining in far more remarkable detail about the Bible Sabbath, Send \$2.00 to the publisher of this book. It is an extremely readable book.

2 - WHAT DID JESUS SAY ABOUT THE LAW OF GOD?

While here on earth, Jesus gave us a careful example of obedience to the Sabbath day He had earlier, at the Creation, given to mankind.

“And 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.”—*Luke 4:16*.

His custom should be ours; for He is our Example. He gave us an example of obedience that we should follow.

“He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked.”—*1 John 2:6*.

“Leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps.”—*1 Peter 2:21*.

“I have kept My Father’s commandments, and abide in His love.”—*John 15:10*.

“For this is the love of God; that we keep His commandments.”—*1 John 5:3*.

Throughout His earthly life, Jesus continually gave us an example of obedience to the Moral Law of Ten Commandments. And He told His disciples to obey it also.

“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For ver-

ily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

“Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”—*Matthew 5:17-19*.

Not only did Christ give us a careful example of obedience while here on earth,—but He also rebuked man-made attempts to change His laws.

“But in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”—*Matthew 15:9*.

“Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.”—*Matthew 15:6*.

“But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?”—*Matthew 15:3*.

Throughout His life, Christ did as Scripture predicted He would do: He magnified the law and made it honorable.

“The Lord is well pleased for His righteousness’ sake; He will magnify the law, and make it honourable.”—*Isaiah 42:21*.

“Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of Me: I delight to do Thy will, O My God; yea, Thy law is within My heart.”—*Psalms 40:7-8 [compare Hebrews 10:7]*.

Christ also taught that others should obey the law of God, as He was doing.

“Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven.”—*Matthew 7:21*.

“Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”—*Matthew 5:19*.

“Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And He said unto him . . . If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.”—*Matthew 19:16-17*.

However, God’s faithful ones fully realize that they are incapable, in their own strength, of rendering this obedience to God. We must all lay hold of the enabling grace of Christ.

“I am the vine, ye [are] the branches: He that abideth in Me, and I in Him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing.”—*John 15:5*.

3 - WHICH DAY IS THE LORD’S DAY?

What day is the “Lord’s Day” mentioned in Revelation 1:10? The Bible is very clear about this; in fact, so clear it will surprise you.

Christ was in the beginning with God the Father.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.”—*John 1:1-2*.

Christ is the Creator; for God the Father created all things by Him.

“God, who created all things by Jesus Christ.”—*Ephesians 3:9*.

“God . . . hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son . . . by whom also He made the worlds.”—*Hebrews 1:1-2*.

“For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth . . . all things were created by Him . . . and by Him all things consist [hold together].”—*Colossians 1:16-17*.

Therefore it was Christ who, after creating the world in six days, rested on the seventh and made the Sabbath.

“Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. 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 had 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.”—*Genesis 2:1-3*.

What day is the “Lord’s day” in Revelation 1:10?

“I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet.”—*Revelation 1:10*.

The Sabbath was “made”; it was made for man.

“The Sabbath was made for man.”—*Mark 2:27*.

The one who made it was Christ, our Creator. Christ is our Lord; and the Sabbath is the Lord’s day.

Did you know that, repeatedly, we are told in the Bible that the Bible Sabbath is the Lord’s day? Here are several examples:

The Sabbath is the day UNTO the Lord.

“This is that which the Lord hath said, To morrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord . . . Today is a Sabbath unto the Lord: today ye shall not find it in the field.”—*Exodus 16:23, 25*.

“Six days may work be done; but on the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord.”—*Exodus 31:15*.

“Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you an holy day, a Sabbath of rest to the Lord.”—*Exodus 35:2*.

The Sabbath is the day OF the Lord.

“The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord.”—*Exodus 20:10*.

“The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work.”—*Deuteronomy 5:14*.

“Ye shall do no work therein; it is the Sabbath of the Lord in all your dwellings.”—*Leviticus 23:3*.

The Sabbath is the Lord’s holy day.

“If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord . . . Then shalt thou delight

thyself in the Lord; I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.”—*Isaiah 58:13-14*.

The Sabbath is the day blessed and hallowed by the Lord.

“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.”—*Genesis 2:3*.

No other day of the week is ever claimed by the Lord as His day.

John the Revelator, who mentioned the “Lord’s day” in Revelation 1:10, earlier heard Christ call Himself “the Lord of the Sabbath day.”

“For the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath day.”—*Matthew 12:8*.

“The Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath.”—*Mark 2:28*.

John well-knew which day was the Lord’s day. It is the memorial day of the Creator (*Genesis 2:1-3; Exodus 31:17*) and the memorial day of the Redeemer (*Ezekiel 20:12, 20*).

God blessed the Sabbath (*Genesis 2:3*), sanctified it (*Genesis 2:3*), and hallowed it (*Exodus 20:11*). We are commanded to hallow it (*Jeremiah 17:22, 24, 27; Ezekiel 20:20; 44:24*); just as, in the Lord’s Prayer, we are told to hallow the name of the Lord (*Matthew 6:9; Luke 11:2*).

The Sabbath is the Lord’s day, a day that God wants to share with you. He plans to keep it with you all through eternity to come.

“For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before Me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship be-

fore Me, saith the Lord.”—*Isaiah 66:22-23*.

It is a remarkable fact that no early Christians used Revelation 1:10 to defend their position that Sunday was “the Lord’s day.” They apparently recognized that Revelation 1:10 did not name a certain day; whereas, throughout the Bible, the seventh-day Sabbath is repeatedly referred to as the day of the Lord.

One careful researcher analyzed all the extant literature from A.D. 100 to 340, and concluded:

“Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1-3; and Revelation 1:10 are never cited by the writers of this period in support of Sunday observance.”—*R.L. Odom, Sabbath and Sunday in Early Christianity, p. 303*.

Another researcher, a Baptist Bible scholar, tried to find whatever evidence he could find in the New Testament which would identify Sunday as the Lord’s day. But he found none.

“There are in the New Testament no commands, no prescriptions, no rules, no liturgies applying to the Lord’s Day.”—*W.O. Carver, Sabbath Observance, p. 52*.

Come, worship Him on the best day, His day, the only day of worship your God ever gave you.

4 - WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT SUNDAY?

Are we told anywhere in the Bible that we should keep Sunday holy? Is there even one verse in all of Scripture that officially changes the sanctity of God’s holy Sabbath from the seventh day to the first day?

There is not one passage—not one—anywhere in the Bible that commands us to do such a thing.

Sunday is never called sacred or holy anywhere

in the Bible. It is never called the Sabbath or the Lord's Day.

Sunday is only mentioned nine times in the entire Bible. The first time is **Genesis 1:5**, where the first day of Creation Week is spoken of. No Sunday sacredness here. It is just one of the six working days of Creation Week.

Five times refer to Jesus' appearances on Sunday to His disciples after His rest in the tomb on the Bible Sabbath (*Matt 28:1; Mark 16:1-2, 9; Luke 24:1; John 20:1, 19*). Jesus went and found His disciples and told them the good news that He was alive. But there is nothing here about Sunday holiness.

Here are the eight texts in the New Testament that mention the first day of the week:

Matthew 28:1 is the first first-day text in the New Testament. We are here told that the Sabbath ends before the first day of the week begins,—and that is all that this passage tells us. Matthew wrote his record several years after the resurrection of Christ.

Mark 16:1-2 is the second first-day text; and **Mark 16:9** is the third. We learn here that the Sabbath was past before the first day began. They are two different days. The seventh-day Sabbath is holy; the other is one of the six working days. Years after the resurrection, Mark knew of no first-day sacredness.

Luke 24:1 is the fourth one. Nothing new here. Luke does point out in the two preceding verses (*Luke 23:55-56*) that some of Jesus' most faithful followers "rested on the Sabbath day according to the commandment" (the Fourth Commandment of Exodus 20:8-11). In all His years of instruction, Jesus had said nothing about Sundaykeeping—or we would see His followers faithfully observing it. But this is not to be found; for Sunday sacredness is foreign to Scrip-

ture.

John 20:1 is the fifth first-day text in the New Testament. Again, the same simple record of the early morning experience and nothing more.

John 20:19 is the sixth one. As with the others, John's record gives no account that Jesus ever mentioned the first day of the week. What John does say is that the disciples were gathered together "for the fear of the Jews." He specifically points out that this was not a worship gathering. They were simply in hiding, fearful that they too would soon be killed as Jesus was. Some have suggested that the disciples were celebrating Christ's resurrection. This is incorrect; for they did not yet believe Jesus had risen. They were frightened men with, for all they knew, a dead Saviour. Twice, Mark says that those men, gathered in that upper room, refused to believe that Christ had risen—even when others came and told them (*Mark 16:11* and *16:12-13*). Later Christ appeared to them (*Luke 24:33-37*); but even He had a difficult time convincing them.

Acts 20:7-8 is the seventh text, and the only one in the book of Acts. After having spent seven days at Troas, Paul and his missionary company held a farewell gathering with them that night, which lasted till midnight.

According to the Bible, each new day begins at sunset (Bible time: sunset to sunset—see *Genesis 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31*). The first day of the week begins Saturday evening at sunset and ends Sunday evening at sunset. Because this meeting in Acts 20:7-11 was held on the first day of the week and at night, it must therefore have been held on Saturday night.

"It was the evening which succeeded the Jewish Sabbath. On the Sunday morning the vessel was about to

sail.”—*Conybeare and Howson, Life and the Epistles of the Apostle Paul, Vol. 2, p. 206. [This is the most authoritative and complete book on the life of the Apostle Paul.]*

“The Jews reckoned the day from evening to morning; and, on that principle, the evening of the first day of the week would be our Saturday evening. If Luke reckoned so here, as many commentators suppose, the apostle then waited for the expiration of the Jewish Sabbath, and held his last religious service with the brethren at Troas . . . on Saturday evening, and consequently resumed his journey on Sunday morning.”—*Dr. Horatio B. Hackett, Commentary on Acts, pp. 221-222. [Dr. Hackett was professor of New Testament Greek in Rochester Theological Seminary.]*

After the Saturday night meeting at Troas (*Acts 20:7-11*), Paul’s company immediately set to work. They set sail that night. Paul preferred to go alone part of the way; so, the next morning, Sunday morning, he walked nineteen miles across a point of land to Assos, where his friends took him on board the ship (*Acts 20:11-14*).

If Sunday was Paul’s holy day, why then did he stay with the brethren at Troas seven days and then leave them on Sunday morning in order to walk eighteen and a half miles that day? The Bible says, “for so had he appointed” to do. That was planning quite a bit of work for Sunday.

They had spent seven days at Troas; and then on Saturday night (after the Sabbath was past) they had a farewell gathering with the believers, “ready to depart on the morrow.”

What does it mean “to break bread”? This is the common Bible expression for partaking of food. The disciples broke bread daily from house to house (*Acts 2:46*); and they “did eat their meat [“food” in the Greek] with gladness” (*2:46*). It should here be men-

tioned that even if they had held an actual communion service that night, this would in no way make it a holy day. The Lord's Supper commemorates Christ's death, not His resurrection. "Ye do shew the Lord's death till He come." 1 Corinthians 11:26.

So we see that the book of Acts is as silent on first-day sanctity as are Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

1 Corinthians 16:1-2 is the eighth and last text. It is the final mention of the first day of the week in the New Testament—and the only one mentioned in all of Paul's writings. Although Paul wrote many, many letters, this is his only mention of the first day of the week. That is very significant.

Paul wanted the folk to save aside money for the poor in Jerusalem. He was an evangelist who did not like to make calls for money in Sabbath services. "That there be no gatherings when I come," is what he said. He evidently observed that if people did not lay aside at home systematically, on a basis of weekly income, there would have to be a gathering when he came—not only a gathering of money, but gatherings of people also.

"Let every one of you lay him in store." This plan had no connection with a weekly collection at a church service. It was to be laid aside at home. This text also teaches us to total up our money and work up our budgets on the first day of each week, since there is not time in the sixth-day preparation on Friday afternoon to carefully give attention to such matters. For the Sabbath begins at sunset, and figuring up money totals might take longer than is expected—and run into the Sabbath. Bookkeeping and the keeping of accounts is not to be done on Sabbath; and is best not done at the end of the work week.

So there we have it: eight texts where Sunday is mentioned in the New Testament—and no indication of a new holy day, much less a direct command by the God of heaven to observe it in the place of the seventh-day Sabbath.

After giving full consideration to all these “Sunday passages” in the New Testament, *Smith’s Dictionary of the Bible* makes this comment:

“Taken separately, perhaps, and even all together, these passages seem scarcely adequate to prove that the dedication of the first day of the week was a matter of apostolic institution, or even of apostolic practice.”—*Smith’s Dictionary*, art. “The Lord’s Day,” p. 356.

Thank God every day of your life for the Bible! It is your pathway to Christ and to eternal life. Never leave the pathway for that which relatives or learned men may tell you about. If their ideas do not agree with the Voice of God, you had better stay with the plain words of Scripture.

5 - WHAT WAS ABOLISHED AT THE CROSS?

But are we not told that the law was nailed to the cross, so we no longer need to keep the Sabbath? Here are the passages referred to:

“Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me) to do Thy will, O God. Above when He said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin Thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law. Then said He, Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second.”—*Hebrews 10:7-9*.

“Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace.”—*Ephesians 2:15*.

What do those passages mean? They cannot mean

that either the moral law of Ten Commandments or the Creation Sabbath were destroyed at Calvary.

Hebrews 10:7-9 is talking about the sacrificial and offering laws. It says so. Christ's sacrificial death on the cross eliminated the sacrificial laws (also called ceremonial laws). The death of God's Lamb did away with the offering of lambs on the altar. The sacrificial laws were taken away and the moral law of Ten Commandments established.

Ephesians 2:15 is talking about "the commandments contained in ordinances." The ordinances were the ceremonial laws. By His death, Christ eliminated the sacrificial laws and, as our Mediator, brought us to God.

Jesus did not come to earth to destroy the moral law! Keep in mind that it was because that law could not be abolished that Christ had to die. Christ did not die so we could keep sinning. He died to provide us miraculous, divine grace to empower us to keep the law.

"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His commandments."—*1 John 5:2*.

"Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus."—*Revelation 14:12*.

- The moral law is a perfect law (*Psalms 19:7; 119:172, 142; Romans 7:12*). The ceremonial law was imperfect (*Hebrews 7:18-19; 10:1-4*).

- The moral law is in itself spiritual (*Romans 7:14*). The ceremonial law was not in itself spiritual (*Hebrews 9:10*).

- The moral law was spoken directly by God Himself (*Deuteronomy 4:12-13, 22-23; Exodus 20:1*). The ceremonial law was spoken by Moses (*Leviticus 1:1-*

2; 7:37-38; etc.).

- The moral law was written by the Lord Himself upon two tables of enduring stone (*Deuteronomy 5:22; Exodus 31:18*). The ceremonial law was written by Moses in a book (*Exodus 34:27; Deuteronomy 31:9*).

- The moral law is eternal, requiring obedience from all (*Romans 3:31; Matthew 5:17; Luke 16:17; Matthew 19:17; 1 Corinthians 7:19; Revelation 22:14*). The ceremonial law was abolished at the cross; therefore obedience to it is not required from anyone today (*Ephesians 2:15; Colossians 2:14-17; Acts 15:24*).

It is the Ten Commandment law of God that the saints will keep. When asked, "Which law?" Jesus replied by naming several of the Ten Commandments (*Matthew 19:17-19*). And the Apostle James did likewise (*James 2:10-12*).

Some today claim that there is no law since the death of Christ. But the Bible teaches that if there is no law, there is no sin! Indeed, without the law to identify sin, we cannot know what sin is. Apart from the presence of the law, sin does not exist.

"Where no law is, there is no transgression."—*Romans 4:15*. "Sin is not imputed when there is no law."—*Romans 5:13*. "For by the law is the knowledge of sin."—*Romans 3:20*. "I had not known sin but by the law."—*Romans 7:7*.

"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law; for sin is the transgression of the law."—*1 John 3:4*.

The only thing abolished at the cross was the ceremonial law, contained in ordinances. They were the sacrificial laws. After Christ's death, it was no longer necessary to sacrifice lambs at the temple; for Christ our Lamb had died. But after the death of Christ we

were still obligated to keep the moral law.

Daniel 9:26-27 predicted that, at His death, Christ would “cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease.” And the Apostle Paul tells us that this is exactly what happened. When Christ died, the ceremonial ordinances were blotted out. The sacrificial services in the Temple no longer had meaning in the eyes of God.

“Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross.”—*Colossians 2:14*.

“Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.”—*Ephesians 2:15-16*.

A leading Protestant writer, Dr. Albert Barnes, in commenting on Colossians 2:16, said this:

“But the use of the term [‘sabbaths’] in the plural number, and the connection, show that he [Paul] had his eye on a great number of days which were observed by the Hebrews as festivals, as a part of their ceremonial and typical law, part of the moral law,—and not on the moral law or the Ten Commandments. No part of the moral law—not one of the Ten Commandments—could be spoken as a shadow of things to come.”—*Dr. Albert Barnes, Commentary on Colossians 2:16*.

The “shadowy laws” were the ones that foreshadowed the coming of Christ: the slaying of the lambs and goats, the keeping of the yearly Passover, etc. All these ceremonial laws were taken away by the death of Christ.

“For the [sacrificial] law, having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have cease to be offered? . . . But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins ev-

ery year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins.”—*Hebrews 10:1-4*.

Dr. Adam Clark explains it this way:

“There is no intimation here that the Sabbath was done away, or that its moral use was superseded by the introduction of Christianity. I have shown elsewhere that, Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy, is a command of perpetual obligation, and can never be superseded.”—*Clark’s Commentary, Colossians 2:16*.

And these sacrificial laws included yearly holy days, or yearly “sabbaths.” The weekly Sabbath was given to mankind at the foundation of the world and is the fourth of the Ten Commandments.

But the yearly sabbaths were gatherings for special sacrificial service and foreshadowed the death of Christ. At those services, there were special “meat offerings” and “drink offerings.” A list of the yearly sabbaths will be found in *Leviticus 23:4-44*.

The weekly seventh-day Sabbath is called “the Sabbath” in the Bible, but the yearly sabbaths are easily identified. When mentioned together, an “s” is added: they were the “sabbaths” or “sabbath days.” All those yearly gatherings were abolished at the cross. Paul calls them (and their meat and drink offerings) a “shadow.”

“Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.”—*Colossians 2:16-17*.

“For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.”—*Hebrews 10:1*.

This is because the meaning of the Temple services ended when Christ died. At that moment a hand reached down from heaven and tore the veil of the

temple in two, thus desecrating it and destroying its significance:

“Jesus, when He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent.”—*Matthew 27:50-51*.

“Then said I [Christ], Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me) to do Thy will, O God. Above when He said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law. Then said He, Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second.”—*Hebrews 10:7-9*.

The first—the shadow laws and ceremonies—were taken away by the death of Christ, that He might solidly establish by His death the principle that man must obey God—and, through the merits of Christ, he can be empowered to do it!

“Jesus did not give a new code, but He also did not say that the moral teachings of the Old Testament were suspended. The ceremonial and ritualistic laws of the Old Testament are abrogated for the Christian, but not the Ten Commandments.”—*J. Philip Hyatt, “God’s Decrees for Moral Living,” in The Teacher, October, 1943, Vol. 57, No. 10, p. 5 [Baptist]*.

Back around the beginning of the 20th century, a Catholic priest in Missouri offered \$1,000 for anyone who could give him one verse in the Bible that said that the Sabbath had been changed to Sunday. But no one ever claimed the reward. The reason is simple: There is no such passage. The seventh day is the Sabbath; for God never changed it.

The Bible Sabbath is actually the buttress—the foundation stone—of the great truth that God created the world in six days! None should attempt to

weaken this great truth, by saying that Christians can ignore the Sabbath and, instead, keep Sunday “in honor of Christ’s resurrection.” (The memorial of Christ’s resurrection is baptism; see Romans 6:1-4.) Here is a statement which emphasizes the fact that the Sabbath points us directly to the Creatorship of God:

“He that observes the Sabbath aright holds the history of that which it celebrates to be authentic. He, therefore, believes in the creation of the first man; in the creation of a fair abode for man in the space of six days; in the primeval and absolute creation of the heavens and the earth; and, as a necessary antecedent to all this,—in the Creator who, at the close of His creative effort, rested on the seventh day. The Sabbath thus becomes a sign by which the believers in a historical revelation are distinguished from those who have allowed these great facts to fade from their remembrance.”—*James G. Murphy, in the Moody Bible Institute Monthly, November 1930.*

Alexander Campbell, the founder of the Disciples of Christ Church stated it even more clearly: *The Sabbath could not be changed without going back and changing or redoing the creation of our world!* This is because the Bible Sabbath is the birthday of our planet. We honor our Creator by keeping His Sabbath each week.

“‘But,’ say some, ‘it was changed from the seventh to the first day.’ Where? When? and by whom? . . . No, it never was changed, nor could it be, *unless creation was to be gone through again,*—for the reason assigned must be changed before the observance, or respect to the reason, can be changed!”—*Alexander Campbell, writing in The Christian Baptist, February 2, 1824, Vol. 1, No. 1.*

It would require a blotting out of this world and a second creation of it to change the Sabbath given us by our Creator to another day! Can a person change his birthday? “Impossible,” you say. And, indeed, it is. In the same manner, the seventh-day Sabbath—the birthday

of our world —cannot be changed to any other day of the week. Folk may try to do it, but it cannot be done. Christ never changes. He established the Sabbath for man on the seventh day, thus showing that He is the Lord, the Creator-God, and the only Saviour. Only God has the authority to select the day our Sabbath should be on. Any man that pretends to change it—is merely pretending to be God. Man cannot change the Sabbath any more than Christ can be changed from being our Lord and our Creator.

Many of the outstanding Protestant leaders of recent centuries have recognized that the Moral Law of Ten Commandments could not possibly be abolished!

“God threatens to punish all who transgress these [ten] commandments . . . But He promises grace and every blessing to all who would keep them. We should, therefore, love and trust in Him, and gladly obey His commandments.”—*Martin Luther, Small Catechism, in Philip Schaff, The Creeds of Christendom, Vol. 3, p. 77.*

“The moral law, contained in the Ten Commandments, and enforced by the Prophets, he [God] did not take away. It was not the design of His coming to revoke any part of this; Every part of this law must remain in force upon all mankind, and in all ages; as not depending either on time of place, or any other circumstances liable to change, but on the nature of God, and the nature of man, and their unchangeable relation to each other.”—*John Wesley, “Upon Our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount,” Discourse, 5, in Works, Vol. 5, 1829 edition, pp. 311-312.*

“This rule [of Ten Commandments] is unchangeable because it is in harmony with the unchangeable nature of God . . . This rule of God among men is an expression of His holiness. It must be eternally what it has ever been.”—*O.C.S. Wallace, What Baptists Believe, 81, 1934.*

“Unlike the ceremonial [sacrificial] and civil codes which were given to Israel as the chosen people and holy

nation, the Moral Law [the Ten Commandments] is intended for all mankind, and it has never been abrogated nor repealed.”—*William C. Procter, Moody Bible Institute Monthly, December 1933, p. 160.*

“Christ’s teaching goes beyond the ten commandments, but does not thereby make the commandments of non-effect. Quite the contrary! Christianity strengthens the authority of the commandments.”—*The Episcopal Church Sunday School Magazine, June-July, 1942, Vol. 105, No. 6, pp.-183-184.*

The *major creeds of Christendom* accept the unchangeable nature of the Ten Commandments and our duty to keep them. Here they are:

Lutheran—*Formula of Concord, article 6, p. 131.* Reformed Church—*Second Helvetic Confession, chapter 12, p. 855.* Church of England—*Thirty Nine Articles of Religion, article 7, pp. 491-492.* Protestant Episcopal—*Thirty Nine Articles, revised, article 6, p. 808.* Presbyterian—*Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter XIX, sections V, VII, XX, pp. 643-644.* Congregational—*Savoy Declaration, p. 718.* Baptist—*Philadelphia Confession, p. 738.* And *New Hampshire Confession, article 12, p. 476.*

It would be madness for mankind to attempt to abolish God’s moral code. Yet many today are trying to do just that.

ó PART NINE ó

THE MOST AMAZING MAN IN HISTORY

Ancient writers, modern writers, atheists, and religionists—all have declared Jesus Christ to be the most amazing man in all history! His astoundingly unselfish teachings, presenting a level of morality

above that of all other teachers; His influence on the lives of people down through the centuries that followed; the marvelous transformation of human lives for the better, in those who have surrendered their lives obediently to Him; the forgiveness of sin and enabling grace to obey the Ten Commandments which He grants to those who submit to His control; the wonderful hope of a new world to come, which He imparts to His followers;—all this and much, much more places Him on a level above all others. He who became a man is our God, whom we reverently worship.

Consider the following statements:

WHAT ANCIENT WRITERS SAID ABOUT CHRIST

Ancient Writers—Several well-known secular historians and government officials of the first and early second centuries A.D. (Tacitus, Pliny the Younger, and Suetonius), as well as some others (Lucian, the cynic; Celsus; the Babylonian *Talmud*), mentioned Christ and Christians.

Tacitus—In A.D. 114, Tacitus (a Roman writer) wrote that the founder of the Christian religion, Jesus Christ, was put to death by Pontius Pilate in the reign of the Roman emperor, Tiberius (*Tacitus, Annals, Book XV, chapter 44*; written between A.D. 115-117). Tacitus' book, *Ab Excessu Divi Augusta*, is commonly known as *The Annals of Tacitus*.

Pliny the Younger—Pliny the Younger (a Roman historian) wrote a letter to Emperor Trajan on the subject of Christ and Christians. Pliny was the Roman proconsul of Bithynia and Pontica in A.D. 103-105. In one letter to the emperor, Trajan, he was telling him about interesting affairs in the provinces

under his jurisdiction; and he mentioned the rapid growth of Christians and how they met to sing hymns composed by their leader, Christ.

Pliny then asked the emperor for counsel as to what he should do with these people, who appeared quite harmless. That account is found in the tenth book of his collected letters (*Pliny the Younger, Book X, p. 97; published c. A.D. 110*). A prolific writer, Pliny wrote about many subjects, just as his uncle, Pliny the Elder, had done in earlier years before dying in the Vesuvius eruption of A.D. 79., which Pliny the Younger described.

Trajan—Emperor Trajan (A.D. 98-117) wrote a letter in reply to Pliny's inquiry for guidance.

Suetonius—Suetonius, another first-century Roman writer, also spoke of Christ. He was describing a Messianic movement during the reign of Claudius, who was Roman emperor from A.D. 41 to 54 (*Lives of the Caesars, Book 5, paragraphs 25 and 16, concerning an event which occurred in A.D. 49*). Suetonius also wrote about events during Nero's reign, involving Christians (A.D. 54-68).

Babylonian Talmud—The *Babylonian Talmud* (a Jewish book of collected non-Biblical writings) makes mention of Jesus Christ. Adolf Deissman, the skeptical historian, acknowledges that Jesus had not been ignored by the pagan authors of His time.

Other ancient sources—Christ is mentioned in a number of other old Jewish texts. In addition, of course, He is found in the four Gospels and the entire New Testament. More handwritten copies of the New Testament were made in the first ten centuries, A.D., than of any other ancient book.

Early Christian writings—Among the early Christian writings which refer to Christ and Chris-

tians, we may cite the church Fathers, the early church manual (called the *Didache*), a harmony of the Gospels (the *Diatessaron*) made by Tatian, and many other sources. This would include hymns and letters found among the papyri excavated by archaeologists in Egypt.

In addition, Josephus wrote a short biography on Jesus (*Antiquities, Book XVIII, chapter III, section 3*; written A.D. 90). However, that particular statement may be spurious. There are enough other historical mentions of Christ and His followers, that we do not need to defend the Josephus quotation.

Roman Records of persecution—Additional evidence for the existence of Christians would be the Roman records of their persecution, along with archaeological excavations and inscriptions.

For example, there are records of how, under the rule of Emperor Domitian (A.D. 81-96), not only was John placed in boiling oil and then, when unharmed by it, sent to Patmos, but also many leading citizens of Rome were known to have accepted martyrdom rather than deny their faith in Christ.

The catacomb inscriptions—This would include the extensive evidence in the catacombs. In order to avoid persecution, these catacombs were dug by Christians during the first, second, and third centuries A.D. In times of crisis, they would go down into the catacombs and live for a time. They also buried their dead in small crypts cut out of the walls of those tunnels. These caves were cut out of the porous tufa rock; and all authorities recognize that the work was entirely done by Christians in those first three centuries. These underground chambers and their connecting labyrinth of passages stretched out for miles beneath the city of Rome. It has been estimated that, if

the passages were laid out in a straight line, they would reach more than 500 miles!

Flavius Clemens, first cousin to the emperor, and his wife, Domitilla, were slain because they refused to renounce Christ. Another prominent victim was Acilius Glabrio, a member of one of the foremost families of Rome. The first of the famous catacombs (underground tunnels and caves of the city), belonging to the family of Domitilla, was one of the first to be excavated.

SOME OF THE EARLIEST STATEMENTS

The following two quotations are two different translations of a statement by Tacitus. The great fire, which he mentions, occurred in A.D. 64 and destroyed most of the city of Rome. Breaking out in some wooden shops adjoining the *Circus Maximus*, the conflagration spread and burned for a week. It may have started accidentally; but a rumor began—and was generally believed—that Nero ordered it to be set, so he could play (or sing) an aria from an opera of his own composing on the destruction of Troy while the city burned; thus the adage: “Nero fiddled while Rome burned.” At any rate, according to Tacitus, Nero successfully switched the blame to the Christians.

Paul apparently was martyred in Rome the next year (A.D. 65). But retribution came to Nero only three years after that. In A.D. 68, the Roman Senate ordered Nero to be slain. Hearing of this sentence, and learning that the rabble were coming for him, Nero fled from the city. As they approached, he begged a slave to kill him, which was done.

Tacitus: translation 1—“But neither by human aid, nor by the costly largesses by which he attempted to propitiate the gods, was the prince [Nero] able to

remove from himself the infamy which had attached to him in the opinion of all, for having ordered the conflagration [of Rome]. To suppress this rumor, therefore, Nero caused others to be accused, on whom he inflicted exquisite torments, who were already hated by the people for their crimes and were commonly called Christians.

“This name they received from Christ, their leader, who was put to death as a criminal by the procurator, Pontius Pilate, in the reign of Tiberius. This destructive superstition, repressed for a while, again broke out and spread not only through Judea where it originated, but reached this city [Rome] also.”—*Tacitus, Annals, book 15, par. 44.*

Tacitus—translation 2—“Consequently, to get rid of the report [that he was responsible for the burning of Rome], Nero fastened the guilt, and inflicted the most exquisite tortures, on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace.

“Christ, 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 Pilate; and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their center and become popular.

“Accordingly, 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.” —*Tacitus, Annals, book 15, par. 44.*

Pliny the Younger—“They met on a certain day, before it was light, and addressed a form of prayer to Christ as a divinity, binding themselves by a solemn oath not for the purpose of any wicked design but never to commit any fraud, theft, or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust when they were called on to deliver it up; after which it was their custom to separate, and reassemble, to eat in common a simple meal.

“In fact, this contagious superstition is not confined to the cities only, but has spread its infection among the neighboring villages and country . . .

“Having never been present at any trials concerning those who profess Christianity, I am unacquainted not only with the nature of their crimes, or the measure of their punishment, but how far it is proper to enter into an examination concerning them

. . .

“In the meanwhile, the method I have observed towards those who have been brought before me as Christians is this: I have asked them whether they were Christians: If they admitted it, I repeated the question twice and threatened them with punishment; if they persisted, I ordered them to be at once punished—for I was persuaded, whatever the nature of their opinions might be, a contumacious and inflexible obstinacy certainly deserved correction . . . Some among those who were accused by a witness in person at first confessed themselves Christians, but immediately after denied it; the rest owned indeed that they had been of that number formerly . . . They affirmed that the whole of their guilt, or their error, was that they met on a stated day before it was light,

and addressed a form of prayer to Christ as a divinity . . .

“After receiving this account, I judged it so much the more necessary to endeavor to extort the real truth, putting two female slaves to the torture, who were said to officiate in their religious rites.”—*Pliny the Younger, Book X, 97; published c. A.D. 110.*

Emperor Trajan—“You have adopted the right course, my dearest Secundus, in investigating the charges against the Christians who were brought before you. It is not possible to lay down any general rule for all such cases. Do not go out of your way to look for them. If indeed they should be brought before you, and the crime is proved, they must be punished; with the restriction, however, that where the party denies he is a Christian, and shall make it evident that he is not, by invoking our gods, let him (notwithstanding any former suspicion) be pardoned upon his repentance. Anonymous information ought not to be received in any sort of persecution. It is introducing a very damaging precedent, and is quite foreign to the spirit of our age.”—*Emperor Trajan, Letter to Pliny the Younger (also known as Secundus), c. A.D. 110.*

Suetonius—“He [Emperor Claudius] banished the Jews from Rome who were continually raising disturbances, Christus being their leader.”—*Suetonius, Lives of the Caesars, Book 5, para. 25. [The expulsion occurred in A.D. 49.]*

Suetonius—“[During the life of Emperor Nero] Christians were punished. These were men of a new and magical religion.”—*Suetonius, Lives of the Caesars, Book 5, para. 16. [Nero ruled from A.D. 54-68.]*

It should be noted here that the Roman writer,

Orosius, said that the expulsion by Claudius occurred in the ninth year of his reign, which would be A.D. 49. Thus, a Christian community existed in Rome within 18 years after the crucifixion. This is corroborated by Acts 18:2: "A certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla: because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome."

The following two statements may or may not be genuine. Both are questioned because they sound like something a follower of Christ would write. We know that Josephus was not a Christian.

Publius Lentulus—"There lives a man of singular character, whose name is Jesus Christ, in Judea. The barbarians esteem Him as a prophet, but His own followers adore Him as the immediate offspring of the Immortal God. He is endowed with such unparalleled virtue as to call the dead from their graves, and to heal every kind of disease with a word or touch. This Person is tall and elegantly shaped; His aspect is amiable and reverent; His hair flows into those beautiful shades which no color can match, falling into graceful curves below His ears, agreeably couching upon His shoulders and parting on His head like the head of a Nazarite. His forehead is smooth and large; His cheeks are without spot, save that of a lovely red. His nose is smooth and formed with exquisite symmetry; His beard is thick and of a color suitable to the hair of His head, reaching the middle like a fork. He rebukes with majesty, commands with mildness, and invites with the most tender and persuasive language; His whole address, in deed or word being elegantly graceful and characteristic of so exalted a being. No man has ever seen Him laugh, but many have seen Him weep, and so persuasive are

His tears that the multitude could not withhold theirs from joining in sympathy with His. He is very temperate, modest and wise; and, in short, whatever this phenomenon may turn out in the end, He seems, at present from His excellent bearing and Divine perfection, in every way surpassing the children of men.”—*Publius Lentulus, Letter to the Roman Senate, c. A.D. 30.*

Josephus—“Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works—a teacher of such men as receive truth with pleasure. He drew over to Him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was [the] Christ; and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned Him to the cross, those that loved Him at the first did not forsake Him, for He appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning Him; and the tribe of Christians, so named after Him, are not extinct at this day.”—*Josephus, Antiquities, xviii.*

Josephus—In a second statement (in *Antiquities, XX:9, para. 200*). Josephus again speaks of “Jesus who was called Messiah.”

WHAT MODERN WRITERS HAVE SAID

Jesus was a real man who lived, walked, and worked with people. Historical records tell us about His life and His death. There are more pages of original and duplicated manuscripts about this man, His life, and His sayings than can be found in regard to any other person of ancient history. Collections of these manuscripts are to be found scattered throughout the major libraries and historical archives of the

world. Scholars, trained in the field of New Testament studies, have spent their lifetime in careful analysis of these materials—and the person that these records speak about.

The ages have come and gone; and this one individual stands out from among all others. There was a purity within His life that changed men who came in contact with Him. And it has changed others since then as well. Men discovering Him have gladly lived and laid down their lives for Him. And this often by cruel deaths. But it mattered not because of that which He did within their lives.

This is the secret of His influence: the happiness and peace of heart which He has been able to give people, the forgiveness of sin, the power to live clean and obedient lives, and the hope of eternity. This is the secret of what He can do for you. He changes men. He can do for you that which you cannot do for yourself. He can also help you live a self-controlled, pure, contented life.

The following quotations introduce you to the only Man in history who can radically lift you—and change you for the better.

Phillips Brooks—“I am far within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, and all the navies that ever were built, and all the parliaments that ever sat, and all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man upon this earth as powerfully as has that one solitary life—the life of Christ.”

Editor, Los Angeles Times—“Will Jesus ever be surpassed? Nineteen hundred years have passed, and His equal has not risen. This is not true of the world’s other great ones. Every generation produces geniuses worthy to be compared with those who have gone

before. But of no other man can it be said: 'He stands alone; he has no rival; no equal; no superior.' Yet this is true of Jesus. Nineteen hundred years, instead of diminishing His greatness, have accentuated it."

Jean Paul Richter—"The life of Christ, the holiest among the mighty and the mightiest among the holy, has lifted with His pierced hands empires off their hinges and turned the stream of centuries out of their channel. He still governs the ages."

Henry Morgenthau—"The greatest personality in human history is Jesus. We shall never escape from war, but by following His teaching."

Hindu professor in south India—"My study of modern history has shown me that there is a moral pivot, and that more and more of the best life of the East is revolving around it. That pivot is Jesus Christ."

A. Barhmo-Samajist—"There is no one else seriously bidding for the heart of the world except Jesus Christ. There is no one else in the field."

Benjamin Franklin—"Christ's system of morals and religion, as He left them to us, is the best the world has seen or is likely to see."

Earnest Renan—"He is the incomparable Man to whom the universal conscience has decreed the title of Son of God, and that with justice." [*French infidel, philosopher, historian, and leading writer of his day.*]

Daniel Webster—"I believe Jesus Christ to be the Son of God. That which He wrought established in my mind His personal authority and renders it proper for me to believe what He asserts."

Professor Simpson, M.D., D.Sc.—"I do not know in what mood of pessimism I might have stood before you today had it not been that, ere the dew of

youth had dried from off me, I made friends with the sinless Son of Man, who is the wellhead of the stream that vitalizes all advancing civilization and who claims to be the First and the Last, and the Living One who was dead and is alive for evermore." [*President, Royal College of Physicians, in his final address to the college.*]

Unknown—"Socrates taught for forty years, Plato for fifty, Aristotle for forty, and Jesus for only three; yet those three years infinitely transcend in influence the combined one hundred and thirty years of the teaching of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, three of the greatest men of all antiquity.

"Jesus painted no pictures; yet the paintings of Raphael, Michelangelo, and Leonardo da Vinci received their inspiration from Him. Jesus wrote no poetry; but Dante, Milton, and scores of the world's greatest poets were inspired by Him. Jesus composed no music; yet Haydn, Handel, Beethoven, Bach, and Mendelssohn reached their highest perfection of melody in the hymns, symphonies, and oratorios written in His praise.

"Thus every sphere of human greatness has been incomparably enriched by the humble carpenter of Nazareth. But His unique contribution to the race of men is the salvation of the soul. Philosophy could not accomplish that nor art—nor literature—nor music.

"Only Jesus Christ can break the powers of sin; only He can speak 'powers into the strengthless soul, and life into the dead.' The world admires Christ afar off. Some adopt Him as their example and try to pattern their lives after His. A few open the door of their hearts and invite Him in to be their Saviour. 'Though Christ a thousand times, in Bethlehem be born, if He's

not born in thee, thy soul is still forlorn.' ”

Sunday School Times—“His birth was contrary to the laws of life. His death was contrary to the laws of death. He had no cornfields or fisheries, but He could spread a table for five thousand and have bread and fish to spare. He walked on no beautiful carpets or velvet rugs, but He walked on the waters of the sea of Galilee and they supported Him.

“Three years He preached His Gospel. He wrote no book, built no church house, had no monetary backing. But, after nineteen hundred years, He is the one central character of human history, the Pivot around which the events of the ages revolve, and the only Regenerator of the human race.”

Mohandas K. Gandhi—“I believe that Jesus belongs not solely to Christianity, but to the entire world!”

Leckey—“The three short years of the public ministry of Jesus have done more to soften and regenerate mankind than all the moralizing of all the moralists and all the philosophizing of all the philosophers since the world began!”

Unknown—“High up on the cliffs overlooking a noble river, like the Orontes or the Rhine or the Hudson, you will see some great outjutting rock. From century to century, the rock has remained the same with every moment of the flow beneath it. So the stream of time and of history, ever changing, flows past the changeless Christ, the Rock of Ages.”

Anonymous, quoting Bunyan—“Thousands upon thousands who have followed Christ through all the pilgrimage of life are on record as saying what John Bunyan said in those beautiful and incomparable words: ‘I have lived to hear my Lord spoken of; and wherever I have seen the print of His shoe in the

earth, there I have coveted to set my foot too. His name has been to me as a civet-box; yea, sweeter than all perfumes. And His countenance I have more desired than they that have most desired the light of the sun.' ”

The Christian Statesman—“He who is the Bread of Life began His ministry hungering. He who is the Water of Life ended His ministry thirsting. Christ hungered as man, and fed the hungry as God. He was weary, and yet He is our rest. He paid tribute, and yet He is the King. He was called a devil, and cast out devils. He prayed, and yet He hears prayer. He wept, and He dries our tears. He was sold for thirty pieces of silver, and redeems the world. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and is the Good Shepherd. He died, and gave His life, and by dying destroys death.”

The world's Creator (John 1:1-3)

The world's Example (Matt 16:24)

The world's Teacher (Matt 7:28-29)

The world's Master (John 13:13)

The world's Saviour (Luke 19:10)

The world's Lord (Rom 9:5-6)

The world's King (Rev 1 1:15)

The world's Light (John 8:12)

The world's Life (John 14:6)

The world's love (John 3:16).

Joseph Parker, quoted in Moody Monthly—“Dr. Joseph Parker, on one occasion, referred to the Unitarian conception of Jesus Christ as merely a great example, and then went on to say: ‘We have been to hear Paderewski play. It was wonderful, superb, magnificent. Then we went home and looked at the piano. We would have sold it to the first man who would have been fool enough to buy it. This is the effect of your great examples upon us. I want not only a great

example, but a great Saviour, one who can deliver me from my weakness and my sins.' To follow a good example in the future will not blot out the black record of the past; we need the blood of Christ's atoning sacrifice to accomplish that. To hear Paderewski play will not make us like a Paderewski. Could Paderewski incarnate himself within one, he could play like himself. So the Christian life is not Christ and I, but Christ in me. We need the Christ within to live the Christ life without."

C.K. Lee, quoted in *Triumphs of Faith*—"C.K. Lee, a native Christian leader of China was in this country a few years ago. One Sunday he spoke in a modernistic church in California. At the conclusion of the message, a young college student propounded this question, 'Why should we export Christianity to China when you have Confucianism in your country?' 'There are three reasons' was the rejoinder. 'First of all, Confucius was a teacher and Christ is a Saviour. China needs a Saviour more than she needs a teacher. In the second place, Confucius is dead and Christ is alive. China needs a living Saviour. In the third place, Confucius is some day going to stand before Christ to be judged by Him. China needs to know Christ as Saviour before she meets Him as Judge.' "

D.G. Barnhouse—"At a fork in the road, the missionary with his Mohammedan friends paused to consider which fork of the road to take. The missionary seized the opportunity . . . seeing a tomb alongside the road (there are often tombs of holy men along roadsides in that country). He said, 'Let us go to the tomb and ask the dead man the direction.'

"The Mohammedans looked at the missionary in amazement, 'Why should we ask a dead man direc-

tions when we can go to yonder house with living people in it who can tell us where the road leads?’

“ ‘Exactly!’ said the missionary. ‘That is why we can ask Jesus Christ what is the way of life—for He is living; Mohammed is dead!’”

A Hindu, quoted in the Glory Christian—“A Hindu once wrote: ‘It is an interesting thing that though there have been Mohammedans in India for a thousand years you never hear a Hindu say, I wish that you were more like Mohammed. We have known Christianity a quarter of that time, but there is no educated Hindu who would not say to any Christian, ‘I wish that you were more like Christ.’”

H.G. Wells—“Christ is the most unique Person of history. No man can write a history of the human race without giving the foremost place to the penniless teacher of Nazareth.” [*H.G. Wells was a outspoken atheist.*]

Dr. Arnold Toynbee—“We stand and gaze with our eyes fixed upon the farther shore of history, and straightway filling the whole horizon—there stands the Saviour” [*author of a multi-volume history of the world*].

Henry Drummond—“Ten minutes spent in Christ’s presence, even two minutes if it be face to face and heart to heart, will make the whole life different.”

Unknown—“The *Encyclopedia Britannica* uses 20,000 words to tell about Jesus, and never hints that He did not exist. This is more words than the *Britannica* allows for Aristotle, Alexander the Great, Cicero, Julius Caesar, or Napoleon Bonaparte. H.G. Wells blasphemed Jesus, yet he felt compelled to discuss Jesus on ten pages in his *Outline of History* and never questioned that a man named Jesus did

live.”

Anonymous—“ ‘Jesus’ is a precious name to all believers because it always reminds us that He is the Saviour. It was the name given to Him by God when He came into this world. It teaches us the purpose of His incarnation. It is His human name reminding us that He who is God also became man. Peter made much of this name in the healing of the crippled beggar, and declared that there is no other name sufficient for our salvation.”

John Oxenham—“In Christ now meet both East and West, in Him meet South and North. All Christly souls are one in Him, throughout the whole wide earth.”

Unknown—“Said Betrand Russell, famed philosopher and iconoclast, ‘In this strange and insecure world where no one knows whether he will be alive tomorrow, and where ancient states vanish like morning mists, it is not easy for those who, in youth, were accustomed to early solidities to believe that what they are now experiencing is a reality and not a transient nightmare. Very little remains of institutions and ways of life that when I was a child appeared as indestructible as granite.’ *In reply, we say:* ‘Change and decay in all around we see,’ but Jesus Christ is ‘the same yesterday, and today, and forever’ (Heb 13:8). Of Him the imperishable Word of God says, ‘Thou remainest’ (Hebrews 1:11).”

Anonymous—“He was born contrary to the laws of nature, lived in poverty, was reared in obscurity and only once crossed the boundary of the land He lived in. He had no wealth or influence, and had neither training nor education in the world’s schools. His relatives were inconspicuous and uninfluential.

“In infancy He startled a king; in boyhood He

puzzled the learned doctors; in manhood He ruled the course of nature. He walked upon the billows and hushed the sea to sleep. He healed the multitudes without medicine and made no charge for His services.

“He never wrote a book, yet all the libraries of the country could not hold the books that have been written about Him. He never wrote a song, yet He has furnished the theme for more songs than all song writers put together. He never founded a college, yet all the schools together cannot boast of as many students as He has. He never practiced medicine, and yet He healed more broken hearts than the doctors have healed broken bodies.

“He is the Star of astronomy, the Rock of geology, the Lion and the Lamb of zoology, the Harmonizer of all discords and the Healer of all diseases. Great men have come and gone, yet He lives on. Herod could not kill Him; Satan could not seduce Him; death could not destroy Him; the grave could not hold Him.

“He was rich yet for our sakes became poor. How poor? Ask Mary. Ask the wise men. He slept in another’s manger; He cruised the lake in another’s boat; He rode on another man’s donkey; He was buried in another man’s tomb. He is the ever perfect One, the Chiefest among ten thousand. He is altogether lovely.”

Unknown—“Christ’s Last Will and Testament: He left His purse to Judas; His body to Joseph of Arimathea; His mother to John; His clothes to the soldiers; His peace to His disciples; His supper to His followers; Himself as an example and as a servant; His Gospel to the world; His presence always with God’s children!”

Elam Evangel—“*Pharisees, with what would*

ye reproach Jesus? 'He eateth with publicans and sinners.'

"*And you, Caiaphas, what have you to say of Him?*" 'He is a blasphemer, because He said, "Hereafter ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven.'

"*Pilate, what is your opinion?*" 'I find no fault in this Man.' "

"*And you, Judas, who sold your Master for silver—have you some fearful charge to hurl against Him?*" 'I have sinned, in that I have betrayed Innocent Blood.'

"*And you, centurion, who led Him to the cross, what have you to say against Him?*" 'Truly this was the Son of God.'

"*And you, demons?*" 'He is the Son of God.'

"*John the Baptist, what think you of Christ?*" 'Behold the Lamb of God.'

"*And you, John the Apostle?*" 'He is the Bright and Morning Star.'

"*Peter, what do you say of your Master?*" 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.'

"*And you, Thomas?*" 'My Lord and my God.'

"*Paul, you have persecuted Him. What testify you against Him?*" 'I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.'

"*Angels of Heaven, what think ye of Jesus?*" 'Unto you is born a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.'

"*And thou, Father in Heaven, who knowest all things?*" 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'

" 'Dear reader, what think you of Christ?' "

Watchman-Examiner—"Was it merely the Son of Joseph and Mary who crossed the world's horizon nineteen hundred years ago? Was it merely human

blood that was spilled at Calvary's hill for the redemption of sinners? What thinking man can keep from exclaiming, 'My Lord and my God!' "

D.J. Burrell—"Two infidels once sat in a railroad train discussing Christ's wonderful life. One of them said, 'I think an interesting romance could be written about Him.' The other replied, 'And you are just the man to write it. Set forth the correct view of His life and character. Tear down the prevailing sentiment as to His divineness and paint Him as He was—a man among men.'

"The suggestion was acted upon and the novel was written. The man who made the suggestion was Colonel Ingersoll; the author was General Lew Wallace [later governor of New Mexico]; and the book was *Ben Hur*.

"In the process of constructing it he found himself facing the un-accountable Man. The more he studied His life and character the more profoundly he was convinced that He was more than a man among men; until at length, like the centurion under the cross, he was constrained to cry, 'Verily, this was the Son of God.'

Eight Bells—"A father reading his Sunday paper and wishing not to be disturbed by his little girl, cut up a map of the world, gave it to her, and told her to put it together. After awhile she returned with it and every piece was in its place. The father was very much surprised and said, 'Why, how did you do it, darling? You don't know anything about geography?' The little one replied, 'There was a picture of Jesus on the other side, and I knew when I had Jesus in the right place, the whole world would be all right.'

George Bancroft—"I find the name of Jesus Christ written on top of every page of human his-

tory.”

Charles Spurgeon—“Christ is the great central fact of the world’s history. All lines of history converge upon Him. All the great purposes of God culminate in Him.”

Unknown—“A few years ago a group of distinguished historians amused themselves by writing a book called *If, or History Rewritten*. Among these historians were Van Loon, Maurois, Belloc, Chesterton, and Ludwig. Some of the ‘ifs’ which they discussed were these: if Lee had not lost the Battle of Gettysburg, if the Moors in Spain had won, if the Dutch had kept New Amsterdam, if Louis XVI had an atom of firmness, if Booth had missed Lincoln, if Napoleon had escaped to America.

“The attempt to reconstruct the past on the ground of these hypotheses and to imagine what might have been was indeed an interesting intellectual enterprise. But there are no ‘ifs’ in history.

“The greatest fact of history is the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ; and therefore the greatest ‘if’—the greatest possible imagination—would be ‘if Christ had not come.’ Such an ‘if’ is almost too staggering for our minds. It is like imagining the world without a sky, or having the sun forever blotted out, and our world being reduced to a dark, frozen mass. Try to think of your own life without Christ. ‘If I had not come . . . (Jn 15:22).’ ”

King’s Business—“Over two centuries ago, a number of prominent literary men were assembled in a clubroom in London one evening. The conversation veered to a discussion of some of the illustrious figures of the past, and one of the company suddenly asked, ‘*Gentlemen, what would we do if Milton were to enter this room?*’” Ah; replied one of the circle,

‘we would give him such an ovation as might compensate for the tardy recognition accorded him by the men of his day.’

“ *‘And if Shakespeare entered?’* asked another.

“ ‘We would arise and crown him master of song was the answer.

“ *‘And if Jesus Christ were to enter?’* asked another.“ ‘I think,’ said Charles Lamb amid an intense silence, ‘we would all fall on our faces.’ ”

As we conclude this part of the book:

The cry down through the ages is for someone who can change a man’s heart and give him powers to live right and to put away his sins. The guilt, to which conscience points, cannot be denied. Man was made by God to live morally right; and he can never be happy until he does.

But only that power which made man can change him and restore to him the precious thought that he is as clean as a baby in the sight of heaven. Read the story for yourself; it is found in the Bible.

Jesus Christ lived and died in order to forgive your past sins and, by His enabling grace, to strengthen you so you will not choose to return to them, but to live in obedience to the will and laws of God. Jesus Christ lived and died to enable you to obey the Ten Commandments. He alone can save you from sin and empower you to live in harmony with the rules and standards given in the Holy Scripture.

Is this what you really want for your life?—A changed life in Christ; a happy, obedient life in Christ? Are you tired of trying and failing? Do you want a clean conscience and a pure life? I believe you do. Let me explain, for a moment, how it can be yours.

Just now, wherever you may be, bow your head

and surrender to Him your desires and your plans. Give Him all that is left of your life, and ask Him to take it and use it—for the remainder of your years on earth. If necessary, find a quiet place alone where you can do this. Shut the door on the world. Take the time alone with Him to get the job done right. Don't leave until it is done.

You went in poor and worn-out. You will come out wealthy and with a purpose and peace you have not experienced in years. In the moment-by-moment strength of living in contact with Christ, you can face life and conquer it. For you are no longer trying to do it alone. You are now God's little child, hidden in Christ.

And then—equally important—for the remainder of your life, you must dedicate time every day to reading His Inspired Word and praying to Him. Unless you do this, you will return to your old ways and the shattered life of earlier years. And, amazingly, within a few days or weeks you will have forgotten your Best Friend entirely. And when will be the next time you will decide to come back?

You dare not take that chance. Cling to Him every day. Start each morning with Him. Walk with Him all day long. You cannot have peace and the power unless you spend time with Him every day. And tell others what you have found. Pray with them—everyone you know, everyone you meet—whether they know Him already or not. Resist temptation and resist sin. It will try to assert itself and come back. Don't be surprised at this. But have nothing to do with it. And be careful of the old worldly friends. Now is the time to choose real Christians for your close friends. But let Jesus be the closest of them all. The people we like to be with are the ones we become like. Choose

the best. It will mean a lot in the coming years.

Stay close to Jesus every day. You will find that there is great strength in, by faith, keeping the eye fixed upon Him.

May God bless you every day.