

*A Brief Study of*

COMPARATIVE

# Religions

**12 Lessons**

**Prepared by:  
PAUL E. CANTRELL**

**2004**

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Prepared by:  
PAUL E. CANTRELL  
84 Northview Drive  
Mechanicsburg, PA 17050

[pecantrell@juno.com](mailto:pecantrell@juno.com)

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## Lesson One

### *“Basic Facts About World Religions”*

From the beginning of man's existence upon earth, God has desired that man seek after Him and serve Him faithfully (Acts 17:27-28; Psalm 9:10; Hebrews 11:6). And God has not left man without a witness of Himself. The Creation loudly proclaims not only God's existence, but His greatness and power (Psalm 19:1-6; Romans 1:18-23). The nations also had the benefit of information about God and His Will for mankind that should have been handed down from one generation after another. In addition to this, God wrote His Law on their hearts so they would know how to conduct themselves (Romans 2:14-16). In addition to that God placed a special chosen nation in the midst of human societies (Palestine) for hundreds of years—having given them a written law to love and to be observed (Romans 2:14; 3:2). The New Testament states that the world was without excuse to not know and serve the one true and living God (Romans 1:20). Unfortunately, that is not the story of mankind! Mankind, in general, have gone their own ways religiously.

The “world religions” are man's attempts at seeking to know God, but ending up perverting the true picture of the one true and living God (Acts 17:22-23; Romans 1:21-23). They represent man's attempt to understand what is morally right and wrong. They are man's efforts at offering worship to their god or gods. Without a written revelation from God, man has failed miserably in coming to a correct picture of God and of his approach to God (1 Corinthians 1:21, 26-28). The Jewish nation was the only nation that God gave a written revelation to and they didn't do the best job in staying with that (Romans 2:1-6).

#### GENERAL FACTS ABOUT WORLD RELIGIONS

There are twelve historically dead religions:

- 1) One in Africa
- 2) The religion of ancient Egypt
- 3) Two in America (Ancient Peru and Mexico)
- 4) Five in Asia (Mithraism, Manichaeism, and the religions of Babylonia, Phoenicia, and the Hittites)
- 5) Four in Europe (Ancient Greeks, Romans, Early Teutons and the Scandinavians).

Asia was the birthplace of every one of the world's eleven living religions:

- 1) Southern Asia (Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Sikhism)
- 2) Eastern Asia (Confucianism, Taoism, Shinto)
- 3) Western Asia (Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Mohammedanism, and Christianity)

General information about the world's eleven living religions:

- 1) Six of them originated during the 6<sup>th</sup> Century B.C.—a period of great importance to Judaism.



- 2) Only three of the eleven desire to be universal—Buddhism, Muhammedanism, and Christianity)
- 3) Six of them were clearly theistic in origin: Sikhism, Taoism, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity, and Mohammedanism.
- 4) Two were started without an emphasis on Deity—Jainism and Buddhism.
- 5) Three grew out of a polytheistic nature-worship—Hinduism, Confucianism, and Shinto.
- 6) Three carry the personal names of their founder—Confucianism, Mohammedanism, and Zoroastrianism.
- 7) Three carry an honorary title of their founder:
  - a) Jainism is so named from Mahavira—having been regarded as the “Jina” the “Conqueror.”
  - b) Buddhism is so named because Gautama, its founder, is regarded as “the Buddha,” “The Enlightened One.”
  - c) Christianity is so named because Jesus is regarded as “The Christ,” “The Anointed One.”
- 8) Four are named from a principal teaching of the founder:
  - a) Taoism means “The Divine Way.”
  - b) Shinto means “The Way of the Gods.”
  - c) Mohammedanism (Islam) means “Submission.”
  - d) Sikhism is the religion of “The Disciples.”
- 9) Out of the eleven—only two are younger than Christianity (Mohammedanism and Sikhism).
- 10) What makes the primary difference in these religions is the kind of Deity in which they believe and the kind of actions in the lives of the believers.

Comparative results of the world’s eleven living religions:

- 1) Hinduism has help to make India what it is.
- 2) Confucianism and Buddhism have help to make China what it is.
- 3) Mohammedanism has help to make South West Asia and North Africa what they are.
- 4) Roman Catholicism has help to make Italy, Spain, and Latin America what they are.
- 5) Protestantism has help to make Britain, the United States, and Canada what they are.

### CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In addition to the main eleven religions, there would be one or more offshoots or cultic groups that have been started from them, such as (Hare Krishna, Black Muslim, Zen Buddhism). And as well, Christianity has way more than its share of offshoots or cultic groups.

Christianity’s uniqueness in the midst of these religions is its sacred writings that claim to be from God. It’s unity sets it apart from all other “sacred” books. The books of the other religions have no real unity. They are an accumulation of various materials with no order, progress, or plan. The Bible, by contrast, is a single book that is historical (tied in with history), working out a purpose or plan until it comes to a perfect close.

Name	Date or Birth of Founder	Founder	Deity	Present Location	Scripture
Hinduism	1500 BC	None	Brahma, or Various	India	Vedas
Judaism	1500 BC	(Moses)?	Jehovah	World	Old Testament
Shinto	660 BC	None	Nature-gods	Japan	Ko-Ji-Ki Nihon-Gi
Zoroastrianism (Parsi Religion)	660 BC	Zoroaster	Ahura Mazda	Persia and India	Avesta
Taoism	604 BC	Lao-tze	The Tao	China	Tao-Teh-King
Jainism	599 BC	Vardhamana Mahavira	Originally none; Now Founder	India	Angas
Buddhism	560 BC	Gautama, Buddha	Originally none; Now Founder	The East	Tripitaka
Confucianism	551 BC	Confucius	Heaven, or Founder	China	Classics
Christianity	30 AD	Jesus Christ	Father-God	World	Bible (N.T.)
Mohammedanism	570 AD	Mohammad	Allah	Moslem Countries	Koran (Qur'an)
Sikhism	1469 AD	Nanak	True Name	India	Granth

## Lesson Two

***“The Hindu Religion”***

Hinduism is a national religion of India....but also Pakistan, Ceylon, and Burma to a certain extent. It is a complex religion and difficult to fully define. It was not founded by a single person, but is a composite of religious beliefs and practices of many different groups in India and Pakistan. Hinduism has had its many reformers, but most of them were merely accepted as a part of the great oneness of things, which is Hinduism. One of the better known reformers for us would be Mahatma Gandhi. Its beginning is suggested as from 2000 down to 1000 B.C.

Generally speaking, India is known more for its caste system than anything else—which is a part of their religious outlook. The caste system is believed to have been started by the light-skinned Aryans coming from the North and imposing their authority over the dark-skinned inhabitants. Caste means “color.” The system evolved into four main groups, but has multiplied into more than 3000 sub-castes over hundreds of years.

Hinduism has survived through the centuries due to its ability to absorb new concepts within its frame-work of beliefs and practices. The most famous Hindu temple in India is located in Benares on the banks of the Ganges River. It is regarded as the center of the world. If a person dies there, it is believed he goes straight into “heaven.”

**THE EVOLVING OF HINDUISM**

Hinduism has evolved over the centuries through six primary stages that is briefly shown in the following thoughts. (**Introduction to Comparative Religion** by Hume)

**1. The early nature worship (before 1000 B.C.).** This period is primarily represented by the development of the four Vedes (“Books of Knowledge”).

- a) **Rig Veda**—Composed of Verses and Psalms.
- b) **Yajar Veda**—Composed of Sacred Formulas.
- c) **Sama Veda**—Composed of Chants.
- d) **Atharva Veda**—Composed of Charms.

Their religion emphasized prayer and praise as the way to be saved. But their worship was mostly personalized objects or powers in nature.

**2. Priestly Hindusim (1000-800 B.C.).** Their religion was turned into a system of strict domination, elaborate ceremonies, various material offerings (and bloody sacrifices), all under the control of Brahman priests. The Brahmanas are a group of extensive prose treatises on religion. Now the emphasis upon salvation was through sacrifices offered by the Brahman priests.

**3. Philosophic Hinduism (800-600 B.C.).** Philosophic speculation has been a characteristic of the Hindu people. This became dominate in their third set of scriptures, the Upanishads, which



means “Seances.” These writings represent almost a new type of religion that centers around the idea of “Brahma”—“the one Supreme Being.” Salvation now was to be obtained chiefly through one’s own philosophic speculation upon a pantheistic Supreme Being.

**4. Legalistic Hinduism (c. 250 B.C.).** In addition to Prayer, Sacrifices, and Philosophic speculation, there was added a 4<sup>th</sup> necessity—one must keep detailed commandments and avoid prohibitions in his daily life in order to be saved. These thoughts are contained in the Law Book of Manu and is highly revered. Much stressed was placed on observing the caste system.

**5. Devotional Hinduism (c. 1 A.D.).** A dramatic poem was composed and used to teach new insights on how to live called the Bhagavad Gita. It was about a Hindu knight, Arjuna, that raised the question of the propriety of killing people in war. His charioteer allays his conscious and stresses the need to worship Krishna, the incarnate God. Salvation is to be obtained chiefly through personal devotion to a persona deity.

**6. Popular Hinduism (1-250 A.D.).** The main thrust of the Hindu religion was completed by the time of Christ, but has become more popular after the time of Christ. What helped to make Hinduism more popular with the people was its final literary product. It is composed of two great epics: “The Great Bharata War” and “The Career of the God Rama.” Eighteen Puranas (collections) of religious stories was added to these two. These did not add to the salvation issue.

### IMPORTANT FEATURES OF HINDUISM

1. Caste rules prevent them from eating, marrying and all intimate dealings with persons who belong to the other main castes, or even to other sub-castes.
2. Sects are numerous. Their two chief deities are Vishnu, the Creator, and Siva, the Destroyer.
3. There are at least 59 sub-sects or groups.
4. They all worship some personal deity.
5. Idolatry is abundantly manifest throughout India. It is directed toward all kinds of human and animal representations, and even images of the male and female sexual organs.
6. Worship is chiefly individual and offerings are made to images and to attendant priests.
7. Their sacred places, seasons, and festivals are prominent.
8. Devotees make pilgrimages to various holy rivers, mountains, cities, and temples all over India.
9. They have numerous ceremonial baths and purifications.
10. Popular Hinduism connects itself closely with eating and drinking.
11. Karma and Transmigration are two beliefs which probably most Hindus believe.
12. No real effort made to make Hindu’s sacred scriptures available to the masses.
13. The Cow is sacred and allowed to run loose in the market place.
14. The low view of women is found in all their writings except for the Bhagavad Gita.

### CONCLUDING THOUGHT

Hinduism is viewed as a simple religion, but in practice it is incomprehensibly complex. The possible reason being—it has been so enlarged over the centuries by various teachings.

### Lesson Three

## *“Taoism—Buddhism—Confucianism”*

Hinduism had its origin among the people of India. Its influence has stayed pretty much in that general region. It is generally recognized as the “state” religion of India. However, among the Chinese people there have been three men that help to shape three different, but similar religious outlooks—Taoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. The three men were: Lao-Tzu, Sidhatta Guatama, and Confucius (K’ung Fu-Tzu). All three lived in the 6<sup>th</sup> Century and two out of the three lived and died in China. They helped to profoundly influence the culture and religious thinking of the Chinese people. Underlying all three systems is the belief in the good spirits and the bad spirits that govern the fortunes and misfortunes of men. Every important event should begin by an appeasement of the spirits in the form of an offering of some kind. The ritual must be correctly performed or undesirable consequences will occur.

Lao-Tzu was the oldest of the three persons that held to the ancestral religions of China. Guatama was a reformer in India of the Hindu Religion, but oddly enough, he had greater influence by his teachings in China than in India. Confucius came a short time later in China to advocate his views on ethics and religion. The Chinese people have accepted all three as a part of their religious heritage. In their words—they are three roads to the same destination. This lesson will look at these three in a brief review of their basic views.

### TAOISM

The Founder of Taoism was **Lao-Tzu**. He was born about 604 B.C. He somewhat of a contemporary with Guatama and Confucius, but their approaches were different. He tired of the way his government was ruling over the people and decided to quit and go away from civilization to nature in order to obtain harmony with **Tao** (the Supreme Governing Force in the Universe). It is said that before he went past the last outpost of civilization in China, he was challenged to write down his thinking about things. Such later became the “sacred” writings of the Tao Religion (**Tao-Teh-king**). His Supreme Governing Force was portrayed as an impersonal metaphysical being or abstract principle....He was not a personal Deity. Lao-Tzu emphasized mystical ideals originally. He also advocated the harmony of man and nature. He exalted the idea of the virtues of the simple life and communion with nature. He taught that one should subordinate oneself to nature’s way in order to lead to a meaningful life.....to aspire to attain harmony with nature for his spiritual satisfaction.

### BUDDHISM

The Founder of Buddhism was Sidhatta Gautama. He was born about 560 B.C. in India. He was a prince in his region of India and exposed to the pleasant, peaceful, and the good. As he married, had children, and observed the conditions around him, he was very unhappy. He later deserted his position of power and his family to find the answer to life’s problems. The answers



were not found in Hinduism. He kept searching in different ways and means to find a solution. He almost killed himself by suppressing his need for food too long. He finally began to find some answers that satisfied himself. His writings became the “sacred” books of Buddhism (**The Tripitaka**). One of the first things that he learned was what he called the first Law of Life—*“From good must come good and from evil must come evil.”* He had experienced the two extremes of life—Pleasure and self-denial. He felt that the good life had to be in between the two extremes. He came up with eight rules that defined the middle path of life:

- |                   |                     |                        |
|-------------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| 1) Right Beliefs  | 4) Right Behavior   | 7) Right Contemplation |
| 2) Right Resolves | 5) Right Occupation | 8) Right Concentration |
| 3) Right Speech   | 6) Right Effort     |                        |

Gautama did not advocate a new deity in his writings, but later in years his followers called him the Buddha—**“The Enlightened One.”** And they worship him as deity. Buddhism is an ascetic religion whose main teaching is the annihilation of desire. A chief characteristic of Buddhism is compassion and serenity. Salvation comes by psychology—inner peace comes by control of our minds rather than from outside gods. Buddhism is found in China, Japan, Ceylon, Thailand, Burma, Indo-China, Korea, Mongolia, and a few in India.

## CONFUCIANISM

Confucius is the founder of what is now known as Confucianism. He never thought of himself as starting a new religion—nor a new god. He was born in China in about 551 B.C. In his early maturing years he became absorbed in the history, poetry, and music of ancient China. Most of his life was spent in teaching this history, poetry, literature, music, as well as proprieties, government, and the natural sciences. He edited much of the classical writings of China’s ancient times. He did very little original work, but considered himself a transmitter rather than a creator. His disciples recorded his utterances from which emerged the system of ethics by which China has lived for centuries. His efforts were considered the greatest efforts at helping to produce the ideal Chinese character. His emphasis was primarily ethical and philosophical that gave great recognition to ancestor worship. Confucius seems to have believed in a Supreme Being that was consistently responsible and just. He died in 479 B.C. believing he was not really successful in what he wanted to achieve. However, his veneration started after his death around 195 B.C. until in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries he had temples erected to honor him in which sacrifices were offered. The ultimate exaltation of Confucius was in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries when the Manchu Emperor elevated him to a position beside Heaven and Earth—the highest objects of worship. The primary emphasis of Confucius was on the five different relationships that developed into ten attitudes by which all people should be governed:

- |   |                                    |
|---|------------------------------------|
| 1) Love in the Father.                  | 6) Obedience in the Wife.          |
| 2) Filial piety in the Son.             | 7) Humane Consideration in Elders. |
| 3) Gentility in the Eldest Brother.     | 8) Deference in Jurors.            |
| 4) Humility and Respect in the Younger. | 9) Benevolence in Rulers           |
| 5) Righteous Behavior in the Husband.   | 10) Loyalty in Subjects            |

Other groups not studied in this series: Shinto (Japan); Zoroastrianism (Persia); Jainism (India); and Sikhism (India). The next two lessons will be on Mohammedanism and Judaism.

## Lesson Four

### *The Islamic Religion*

The Muslim (Moslem) Religion looks to Mohammad as its originator. It is next to the last of the world's living religions established around the turn of the 7<sup>th</sup> Century AD. Mohammad was born in 570 AD and died 632 AD. The terms: Muslim, Moslem, Islam carry the meaning of submission or those who submit to the "one God, Allah," and to "His Prophet, Mohammad."

Mohammad was an orphan by the age of six and lived with a grandfather and uncle. When he was old enough, he hired out as a shepherd's helper. He had no formal schooling and could not read or write. He later became a camel driver going through the desert to Egypt, Persia, and Syria. His reputation gained him favor among the merchants of Mecca and was later employed by a wealthy widow who wanted to marry him. At the age of 25, he became a rich merchant in Mecca. For the next 15 years he lived happily, increased in wealth, and gained more respect of the people in the city.

When he was about 40, he became more and more concerned and depressed with how the people were living. His exposure to Judaism and Christianity convinced him that idolatry was not the way that was right. He would go off into the hills and brood and think for hours about what could be done. While on one of these trips he was supposed to have been talked to by the Angel Gabriel. He came to believe that he was chosen by Allah to preach his message of change for the Arab people. The city of Medina was receptive to his message and he became their ruler and prophet for them. War brought out between Mecca and Medina. Medina won the victory and Mohammad destroyed the idols of the people and made Mecca the city of Pilgrimage for Islam. His success in these two cities made the task easy to take all of Arabia. In two short years he became the undisputed ruler and prophet of Arabia. He helped to build mosques for daily prayers and weekly congregational worship every Friday.

#### THE "SACRED" WRITINGS OF ISLAM

Since Mohammad could not read and write, his teachings were written down by some of his followers—Abu Berkr (his successor) in particular. These writings are looked upon as the words of the prophet and inspired by Allah. The **Koran** contains 114 chapters and is the basis of all Moslem religious teaching. Moslems are taught that they must not lie, steal, bear false witness, commit adultery, gamble or become intoxicated. He is to practice equality of race. The Koran contains many legends and traditions paralleling those in the Bible and pagan Arabia. His teachings were a mixture of Judaism, Christianity, and Arabian beliefs, mixed with his own ideas. Some 12 years later, an effort was made to revise the writings because of the variations and confusions which had arisen among the reported sayings of Mohammad. The Koran gives recognition to at least 28 prophets from their God. 22 are from the Old Testament and 3 from the New Testament. Jesus is looked upon as just a prophet and not as important as Mohammad, who is the last and greatest of the prophets.



## THE MONOTHEISM OF ISLAM

The Arab people were primarily nature worshippers at first—Sun, Moon, Stars, spirits, and Idols. They had 360 idols—one for each day in the year. But above all nature gods, they worshipped Allah Taala, the Most High God. Mohammad's exposure to Judaism and Christianity caused him to turn from the many gods to one God, whom he called Allah. Seven important characteristics of Allah have been analyzed and classified by Islam's Theologians:

- |                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| 1. Absolutely unitary | 5. All-knowing                           |
| 2. All-seeing         | 6. All-willing, inscrutably irresistible |
| 3. All-hearing        | 7. All-powerful                          |
| 4. All-speaking       |  |

Ninety-nine terms are used to describe Allah, such as: The One, The Mighty, The Powerful, The King, The Overcomer, The Avenger, The Dominator, The Slayer, The Provider, The Compassionate, The Merciful, The Forgiving, The Loving, etc. The main message of Allah is:

1. He will punish the wicked and reward the good.
2. He is gracious and forgiving to those who submit.
3. He guides whom he pleases, and misleads certain people.
4. Salvation is found in Submission.

Allah is represented as a magnificent, opulent, irresistible world-potentate—an Arab Sheikh that is glorified and magnified to cosmic proportions.

## THE ESSENTIAL BELIEFS OF ISLAM

The following six items are considered the essential beliefs of the people of Islam, as prescribed in the Koran:

1. Belief in the One God, Allah.
2. Belief in Angels.
  - a) They intercede for men.
  - b) Eight angels support the throne of Allah.
  - c) Nineteen angels guard hell.
  - d) The Devil is a bad angel or spirit.
3. Belief in the Koran.
4. Belief in the Prophets of Allah (all 28 of them)
5. Belief in Judgment, Paradise, and Hell.
  - a) There will be a judgment day after the resurrection.
  - b) Paradise has abundant pleasures for the senses.
  - c) Hell is a terrible place of punishment.
6. Belief in the Divine Decrees. (Everything is pre-destined by Allah's appointment, even men's belief and unbelief.

Islam has what they choose to call their five pillars of essential duties. All good Muslims will practice these things in their life-time:

1. Repetition of the Creed in the original Arabic language each day. "There is no God, but Allah; Mohammad is the Messenger of Allah."
2. Prayer is performed five times daily, facing Mecca, and on Fridays in the mosque.

3. Almsgiving as an offering to Allah and an act of piety.
4. Fasting during the Days of the Month of Ramadan.
5. Pilgrimage to Mecca. Once in a lifetime.

### CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Islam is divided into many sectarian groups—some suggest at least 150 or more. The Sunni Sect constitutes the main body of Moslems, which are mostly Turkish. The Shia Sect looks upon themselves as the true successors of the prophet and are very strict and militant. The Sufi Sect believes that an ordinary man may become almost divine by a process of asceticism and mysticism.

Next to Confucianism, the Muslim Religion is the largest non-Christian religion. It is one of three universal religions: Buddahism and Christianity. It is one of four monotheistic religions. It is the only active rival of Christianity in more than one continent. It is the only religion that was started in conscious opposition to Christianity.

## Lesson Five

### ***“Judaism”***

Judaism, as a separate religion, had its beginning at Mount Sinai in about the year of 1491 B.C. Although the Jewish people traced their forebears back to Abraham as the father of the Jewish Nation, the special Covenant given at Sinai was the final thing that separated them out as a special nation of people unto the God of Heaven. Belief in the one true God could be found among Gentile people during and after the time of Abraham (Job as an example), but the special practices of the Jewish Religion as we know it in the Old Testament did not begin until the Law was given at Mount Sinai. The twelve sons of Jacob (the grandson of Abraham) formed the twelve tribes of Israel that eventually were settled in the land of Canaan as a nation governed by the Law of Moses, which was given by the God that they worshipped.

#### THE TORAH (LAW)

The word “Torah” is applied in two ways: (1) It refers to the Covenant-Law given through Moses at Mount Sinai; (2) It refers to the over-all teaching of all the books of the Prophets sent to teach Israel. The heart of the Torah would be the famous “Ten Commandments.” These books were given to the Jewish Nation over a period of approximately 1100 years (1491-400). Some 25-30 different persons were used to reveal God’s message to His special nation. All thirty-seven books that make-up what is called the “Old Testament” or the “Old Covenant” are believed to be inspired by the God of Heaven.

#### THE UNIQUENESS OF JUDAISM

Several things stand out about Judaism that differentiates this religion from other world religions.

- 1) Their belief in one God. *“Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.”* They are one of three living world religions that hold this concept: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. (This does not necessarily say that Islam’s “God” is the same as Judaism and Christianity’s “God.”)
- 2) No idols. They are condemned severally and even ridiculed by the Prophets. Although, at times the Jewish people went into idolatry and were carried away from their land because of such.
- 3) An elaborate sacrificial system that helped to atone for the sins of the people constantly. These were daily, special times and yearly.
- 4) Special days of observance were observed that tie in with their deliverances or times of blessings, such as harvest time (Passover, Feast of Dedication, Feast of Tabernacle, etc.).
- 5) Sabbath Day observances. No work to be done—a day of rest for the people. It was to be strictly observed.
- 6) Special food restrictions—not only of what could be eaten, but how prepared.



## JUDAISM'S MISSION

The Jewish Nation believes from their Scriptures that the true God of Heaven chose them out to be a special nation unto God—but for what purposes? The following gives an overview of some of the things specifically mentioned:

- 1) To make known the true and living God to the nations (Isaiah 37:16, 20).
- 2) To make known that He rules over the nations (2 Chronicles 20:6; Psalm 22:28; 47:8).
- 3) To make known that He wants to guide the nations (Psalm 67:4).
- 4) To tell of His glory among the Nations (Psalm 96:3)
- 5) To be a kingdom of priests to the nations (\_\_\_\_\_)?
- 6) A nation through whom an “Anointed One” would come to bless all nation. Christianity is based on the fulfillment of this promise in Jesus, while the Jewish people do not. Theoretically, they are still looking for such.

## OBSERVATIONS

The Jewish Religion was tied in with a nation of people that separated them off from the rest of the world. However, when they lost their homeland, their religious practices, as originally given, have been watered down drastically in some cases. There is quite a variation in the beliefs of the Jewish people scattered over the world. Even though many Jews have relocated in Palestine, the place of their former Temple is occupied by a Mosque. Thus, the Temple worship and sacrifices are no longer a part of their practices. The famous “Wailing Wall” is as close as the Jews are allowed to the “holy place” of their former Temple.

## CHRISTIANITY AND JUDAISM

The Prophets of Israel foretold of three great events in Israel’s future that would affect the Jewish Nation:

- 1) A Messiah would come to bless all nations of people (Genesis 22:18; Galatians 3:16).
- 2) A new kingdom would be set up by God during the reign of the Romans kings (Daniel 2:44; 2 Samuel 7:11-17).
- 3) A new Covenant would be given to help usher in this new kingdom (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:10-13).

The major struggle between Judaism and Christianity is in these three areas. Jews believe that these things are still future. Christians believe that all three have to do with the beginning of Christianity. If the Jews are correct, then Christianity is a false religion. If Christians are right, then Judaism is no longer acceptable to the God of Heaven. The way of salvation is through Christ and all who reject Him have no hope of eternal life. Many Jews have come to a belief that Jesus is the Messiah and have converted to Christianity. They then would come under a “New Covenant” given by Christ to His followers. While Christians do not live under the “Old Covenant,” yet, it has great value to the Christian for many reasons (Romans 15:4). The two Covenants are a continuation from one to the other.

### CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Judaism as a religion still continues today in various forms. It is possibly the oldest “living religion” of the eleven world religions. Hinduism had its origin close to the same time. Judaism is believed to be the strongest in numbers and in riches in America. They have been a basic financial support for the people resettling in Palestine.

There are three main groups of the Jewish faith in the United States: Orthodox, Conservative, and the Reform. The Reform movement was to modernize the Orthodox group's thinking. The Conservation is a half-way between the two groups.

## Lesson Six

***“Catholic Religions”***

The church of Christ was established shortly after Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection in about the year 30 A.D. By the end of the first Century, the New Testament Scriptures had been given in their completed form and the church had spread over the civilized world, and was still growing in spite of the severe persecutions that came upon her for over 200 years. The Apostles of Christ had given inspired instructions in all matters of organization, worship, and doctrine to the church. A plurality of elders were appointed to oversee each congregation (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). There was no presiding elder, but they were all equal in authority in overseeing the church. Each congregation was directly under the headship of Christ (Colossians 1:18). Their worship was simple—on each first day of the week they met to partake of the Lord's Supper, Prayed, engaged in Singing, studied together from the Word of God, and gave of their Prosperity. People became Christians by believing in Jesus, repenting of sin, confessing their faith in Christ, and being immersed into Christ so they could be forgiven of their sins. These simple things need to be kept in mind as one looks at present day “Christianity.”

**APOSTASY FORETOLD**

The use of the terms, “apostasy,” or “falling away,” implies that the people were a part of the Lord's church, but left the way of God and became apostate from God. Such was foretold in no uncertain terms, as the following Scriptures will indicate:

1. **Matthew 7:15-20.** Jesus warned of the dangers of false teachers and to be aware of them.
2. **Matthew 24:24.** Jesus even warns not only about false prophets to come, but even false Christs.
3. **Acts 20:28-32.** Paul stated not only would “*grievous wolves*” enter in among the flock to destroy them, but also from among the elders would men arise speaking “*perverse things*” to draw away disciples after them.
4. **1 Timothy 4:1-5.** Paul said “*some shall depart from the faith.*” He even mentioned two of their errors they would teach: (1) Forbidding to marry; (2) Forbidding the eating of certain foods.
5. **2 Timothy 4:1-5.** Paul said some would turn their ears from the truth and turn unto fables.
6. **2 Thessalonians 2:1-12.** These verses give more in detail of what brought on the apostasy. The “*man of sin*” is pictured as:
  - a) “*opposing and exalting himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped*”
  - b) “*he as God sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.*” Both of these concepts show clearly the exalting of men above God by usurping His authority over His people. These men take the place of God and are to be listened to as God.
  - c) Paul said the “*mystery of iniquity*” was already at work, but he is being held back for now. He then turns to identify the “*man of sin.*”
    - 1) “*Whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders.*”



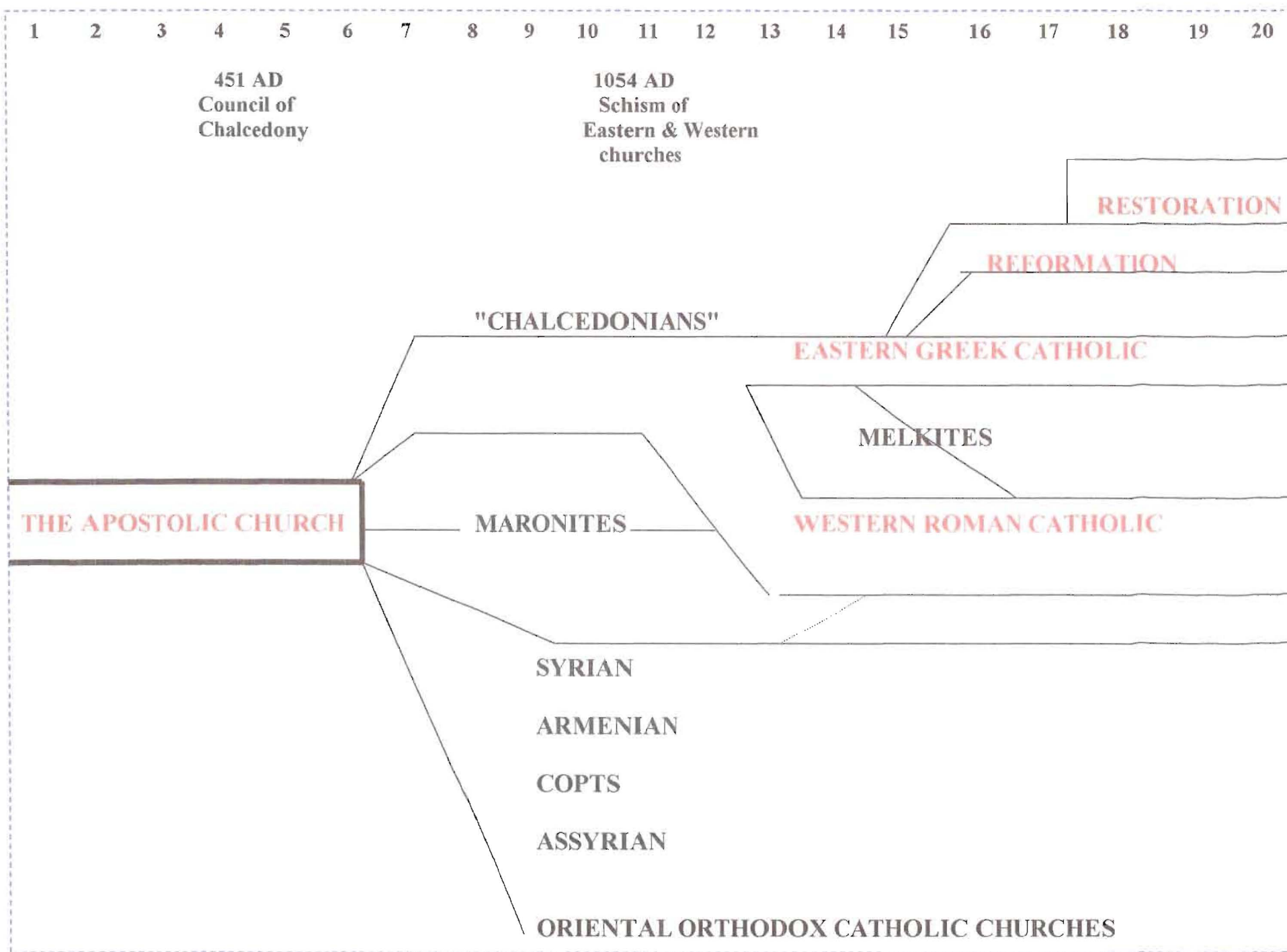
- 2) *"With all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish."*
- 3) *"They received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved."*
- 4) *"God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie."*
- 5) Their end is to be condemnation because they did not believe the truth, but preferred to enjoy the pleasures of sin or unrighteousness.
7. **2 Peter 2:1-3.** Peter said that false teachers would come.
  - a) *"They will secretly bring in damnable doctrines"*
  - b) *"Denying the Lord who bought them"*
  - c) *"Bring swift destruction upon themselves"*
  - d) *"Many will follow their pernicious ways"*
  - e) *"Way of truth will be evil spoken of"*
  - f) *"They will make merchandise"* of Christians.
8. **1 John 2:18.** John tells about the anti-Christ that was coming who would deny that Jesus came in the flesh (1 John 4:1-3).
9. **Jude 4.** Jude speaks about ungodly men turning the grace of God into lasciviousness and denying both God and Christ.

The Apostle John, by inspiration, not only pictures the martyred saints and their final victory, but as well symbolizes the great apostasy of the church brought on by the combining powers of the Religious and Civil authorities. The church in the eyes of those who beheld her had turned into a whore (harlot) riding on a scarlet Beast. Following are some references in Revelation that seems to be picturing what happened to the true church and the apostate church as it appears before the world (Rev. 11:1-2; 12:5-6, 13-17; 13:1-8, 9-18; 17:1-18; 18:1-5, 24; 19:1-8).

### VARIOUS "CATHOLIC" CHURCHES

If the above prophecies are accepted as true from God, then history should easily reveal the many changes that occurred in the original church given by God. Historically, those changes were beginning to plague the Lord's church early in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. By the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> century, there are many different groups all claiming to be the "catholic" church. The one that Americans have been more familiar with has been the Roman Catholic Church.

In 451 A.D., at the Council of Chalcedony, was when the rift between churches became so obvious. The larger group was known as "Chalcedonians" because of agreeing with the decisions of the Council of Bishops of the churches, and later became known as the Western Catholic Church and the Eastern Catholic Church. Other groups split away and were referred to as "Maronites," "Syrian," "Armenian," "Coptics," and "Assyrian"—all later known as the Oriental Orthodox Catholic Churches. (See Chart). It wasn't until 1054 A.D. that the split between the Eastern (Greek) Orthodox Catholic Church and Western (Roman) Catholic Church was finalized and went their separate ways. The Chart on the next page will help visualize this.





## Lesson Seven

### ***“Protestant Churches”***

**(Lutheran, Reformed, Church of England, Presbyterian)**

The apostasy of the church led to men seeking for power, position, and riches in the various religious bodies calling themselves “Christian.” The degradation and shame to which religious leaders went (in the name of Christ) was crying for reform. And reform began to come, slowly at first, and then it burst into a flame that began to sweep through one country after another. The existing religious groups were divided into the Eastern churches, Western churches, and Middle Eastern churches—But, the reforming efforts primarily took place in the Western churches referred to as “The Roman Catholic Church.” Because of its strong control over the nations of Europe, it was not an easy thing to go against such powers. In spite of the dangers, brave men spoke out and made efforts to bring about reforms—many of them dying a violent death for their efforts. Proper credit should be given to these brave men during the early efforts at reformation. These men were grasping for God’s truth, but their background was so filled with so much false ideas that it was hard for them to see the truth all at once. They had no desire to leave the Roman Catholic Church, only to reform it. Their attempts were repulsed by the Catholic Church officials with such strong measures that most of them died without seeing much reform. More and more “protesting groups” were being formed because of the rejection of the Roman Church officials to reform. Following are some of the basic principles that the reformers held in common:

- 1) The Bible, as the inspired revelation of God, is the only infallible rule of faith and practice—not ecclesiastical tradition and the Bible.
- 2) What is not contrary to Scripture is acceptable.
- 3) The priesthood of all believers in contrast to a special class of priests.
- 4) Each believer has access directly before the throne of God, Himself.

While these principles were a definite change for the reformers; yet, there were many other needed changes that needed to come.

### **MARTIN LUTHER—LUTHERAN CHURCH**

Martin Luther (1483-1546) was effective in helping to start the Lutheran Church. His deep study of the Bible led him to the conclusion that justification was not by works of merit but by a deep trust or faith in God. His prominence became more pronounced by his strong opposition to the sale of indulgences (listing 95 reasons why the sale of indulgences was wrong). Upon his excommunication by the Catholic hierarchy, he was protected by King Charles V and continued to actively preach, teach, and publish books against the errors of the Catholic Church. His efforts resulted into what is today known as the Lutheran Church, which became the state church of Germany, Sweden, Denmark, and Norway. Luther’s determined stand on the Bible when being examined by the Catholic officials showed his strong faith in the Word of God.

A brilliant scholar (Philip Melancthon—1497-1560) helped foster the reformation efforts in Germany also, as a friend of Luther and a scholar. They complimented one another.

Melanchthon was the author of the Augsburg Confession, which served as the doctrinal basis of the Lutheran Church in Germany. While Luther appealed to the common people, Melanchthon appealed to the scholarly.

### **JOHN CALVIN—REFORMED CHURCH OF SWITZERLAND**

John Calvin (1509-1564) first lived and worked in France. He had a brilliant mind. By the age of 27 he had organized the teachings of Augustine into his famous "Institutes," which became highly influential in the reform efforts in Switzerland. He was forced to flee from France for his life and settle in Geneva where he exerted his greatest influence in the reformation. The teachings of Calvin were summed up in five basic principles that became known as "Calvinism:" Inherited sin; Predestination; Limited Atonement; Preservation of the saints; and Irresistible Grace. The reformed Presbyterian Church was established as a result of his efforts.

John Knox (Scotland) was greatly influenced by Calvin and help to form the Presbyterian Church in his native land of Scotland.

### **HENRY VIII—CHURCH OF ENGLAND**

Henry VIII (1491-1544) was king of England, but was not strictly a reformer. However, his run-in with the pope at Rome helped to foster "Protestantism" in England. He openly broke ties with the Catholic Church in Rome and formed a separate church in England, with himself as the head of the church (1534). While he identified to some extent with the reformers, there was little change at first in the churches in England. Edward VI, who followed Henry to the throne, was very favorable to the reformers. However, upon his death, Mary came to the Throne and tried to change the tide back to the papacy. After her short reign of terror, she was replaced by Elizabeth who legalized the reform churches and helped to encourage the reformation.

### **CONCLUDING THOUGHTS**

The sixteenth century reformation efforts caused a break with Rome as far as ecclesiastical jurisdiction and control, and many changes in teaching and practice were initiated. However, many former false practices introduced by men over the centuries were retained in the new protestant groups that were formed, such as:

- 1) Infant Sprinkling for Baptism.
- 2) Instrumental Music in Worship.
- 3) Division of the people into Clergy and Laity.
- 4) Observance of religious holidays (Lent, Easter, Good Friday, etc.)
- 5) Use of Religious Titles (Reverend, Father, etc.)
- 6) Etc.

The irony of it all is seen in the fact that "protestants" in many instances have only changed from one man being the head of the church to a group of men serving as authorities over the churches, with doctrines and commands of men (Creed Books) considered as more authoritative than the Bible itself.



## Lesson Eight

### ***“Protestant Churches”***

**(Ana-Baptist, Baptist, Methodists)**

The sixteenth century Reformation Movement helped to open the door for many people to go to the Bible for authority for their beliefs and practices. The larger churches started during this time became the State Church: Lutheran in Germany; Anglican in England; Reform in Switzerland; Presbyterian in Scotland, etc. However, some groups did not desire this connection and keep themselves separate from the State. Some of the smaller independent groups were known for their opposition to a State Church.

#### **ANA-BAPTIST**

One of the independent groups that arose in the latter half of the sixteenth century was called by their enemies “Ana-Baptist.” They seemed to have identified with the teaching of Zwingli and others in Switzerland. It was a large loosely organized group that was strongly persecuted by both Protestants and Catholics that scattered them all across Europe. But as they went, they spread their teachings zealously. Three things infuriated their enemies:

- 1) Opposition to church and state being tied together;
- 2) Rejection of infant baptism;
- 3) And that there was only one true church made up of committed people.

In addition, they stressed:

- 4) A return to Apostolic practices—a restoration of New Testament Christianity.
- 5) The need to re-baptize those sprinkled at infancy. Their enemies dubbed them “Ana-Baptists” with reference to their emphasis on “Re-Baptism.”
- 6) There are grave questions as to whether they as a group taught baptism by immersion.
- 7) They called themselves simply “brethren.”

Menno Simons finally drew many of these scattered groups together into a fellowship. His followers were called Mennonites. Many immigrated to America. The Ana-Baptist movement has led to several other groups that have arisen out of that movement.

#### **BAPTIST CHURCHES**

The present-day Baptist churches seem to have stemmed from the Ana-Baptist movement in the early seventeenth century in the northern part of Europe. The first churches came to the United States about 1640. They accepted the name “Baptist” that probably came from their emphasis upon “immersion” instead of sprinkling. While they insist upon immersing people, it is not in order to be saved, but to get into the Baptist Church. They have a strong emphasis upon the doctrine of “Salvation by faith only.” The early Baptist Churches were strongly Calvinistic. The Primitive Baptist group probably was more in line with Calvin’s teaching than any other division among them. They held to the concepts of “experience of grace,” “once saved, always

saved,” etc. Out of the many divisions of the Baptist Churches (28 or more), two have emerged as the largest: The American Baptist Churches, and the Southern Baptist Churches. The Baptist Churches lay claim to being the largest Protestant group in America.

### **METHODIST CHURCHES**

The Methodist Churches had their origin from within the Church of England. John Wesley was a preacher that helped to start worshipping societies in which emphasis was placed on worshipping in spirit...as well as in correct form. These little groups were “dubbed” “Methodist” because of their methodical ways of doing things religiously. The Methodist Episcopal Church had its beginning in America in December, 1784. They adopted most of the “Articles” of beliefs of the Church of England. While they did not accept much of the Calvinistic teachings, they did continue sprinkling of infants to erase the “original sin.” The Methodist Churches spread rapidly over America and became at one time the largest of the Protestant denominations in America. However, the later divisions in the twentieth century by the Holiness, Pentecostal, and Charismatic movements caused a big decline in their numbers. They have since joined with the United Brethren Churches and are now known as “The United Methodist Church.”

### **CONCLUDING THOUGHTS**

The big thrust that came out of the Protestant Movement was the return to the Bible as the only Authority. But, this wasn’t as readily adhered to as it should have been. Many of the religious errors of the Catholic Church were brought over into various Protestant groups. Most of the Protestant groups followed the basic teaching of “faith only” salvation. Most of them stayed with sprinkling instead of immersion—mainly because of their Calvinistic teaching of “original sin.” The Baptist Churches were among some of the first to break with sprinkling. Most of these “Old Line Churches” hold to a “denominational” view of the church. To them, the idea of the “one church” would be the one invisible church made up of different denominational groups. Because of the acceptance of some of Calvin’s teachings, the Baptist Churches place an over-emphasis upon “grace” that relegates obedience as a non-essential. Most of the older Protestant groups accept the idea of the trinity (3 persons in the Godhead) and the virgin birth of Christ. While these churches do not agree with each other on some of each others’ beliefs, they do look upon them as being Christian and having the hope of heaven. Of all of these older and larger groups of Protestant Churches, only one (Baptist Churches) professes to have no creed but the Bible.



## Lesson Nine

### ***“Protestant Churches”***

#### **(Holiness, Pentecostal, and Charismatic Churches)**

The Reformation Movement (1500s) had its effect upon Roman Catholicism and several major religious groups were started out of the efforts of many different people. Since then, there has come a religious movement (1900s) that has erupted out of the Protestant Churches and has greatly affected these churches. Out of this movement has resulted many different groups that have a common identity through what is referred to as “Holiness,” “Pentecostal,” or “Charismatic.” It would be valuable to look at each of these three terms and some historical background of each in order to better understand their origin and direction.

#### **THE HOLINESS MOVEMENT**

**John Wesley (1703-1791).** It is believed that Wesley was influenced by the Moravian Movement in his revivalism. He is considered the founder of the Methodist church, although he seems to have retained his membership in the Church of England. He carried his message from England to Scotland and America about the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration. But he also emphasized that man had the ability to choose. He dealt much with the idea of the possibility of attaining spiritual perfection in this life. He called it Complete Sanctification (sinless perfection). That is, a person comes to the point in his life that he sins no more. Wesley did not seem to carry this doctrine to the extreme that some of his followers did later.

**American Revivalism** added its characteristics to the work of the Holy Spirit upon man. Camp Meetings, great emotional excesses, religious fervor were a part of the times. There was a strong emphasis upon an “experience of grace.” The people knew little of the Bible and thus were easily led by one who seemed to have the knowledge. Unusual things begin to attend these meetings: Holy Jerks, Holy Laughs, Barking like a Dog, Wild Dancing, Godly Hysteria, Falling, Rolling in the isles.

**In 1850, Charles Finney** began to affect American Revivalism. He stressed what he called a 2<sup>nd</sup> work of grace—sanctification. To precede that, there needed to be a very dramatic, emotional and inward experience of the heart in one’s search for God. His ideas were labeled as “Crisis” theology of salvation. He tried to lead people into a seeking after a holiness of experience that would be acceptable to God.

**The Methodist Church in America** joined in to help place a strong emphasis upon a 2<sup>nd</sup> work of grace. This began to spill over into other churches. This became known as the “Holiness Movement.” In 1867, the movement was formed into **THE NATIONAL HOLINESS ASSOCIATION.**

- 1) They had camp ground Holiness meetings
- 2) They had traveling Evangelists
- 3) They started Holiness colleges

- 4) They started Publishing houses
- 5) They had regional associations, etc.

As the movement grew, their doctrines became better defined:

- 1) Instant conversions
- 2) Instant sanctifications
- 3) Instant divine healings
- 4) Instant baptism of the Holy Spirit

Emphasis upon the above teachings caused the Methodist Church leadership to reject the movement and in 1894 publicly withdrew from them. They saw where it was heading and were not happy with what they expected to happen. In ten years (1890-1900) some 23 separate Holiness denominations were founded out of Methodism:

- 1) Church of the Nazarene
- 2) Pilgrim Holiness Church
- 3) Church of God of Anderson, Ind.
- 4) Salvation Army
- 5) Christian and Missionary Alliance
- 6) The Full (4-fold) Gospel Church of God, etc.

Some well-know men in the movement were: A. B. Simpson, Boardman, Inskip, Torrey, and Andrew Murray.

### THE PENTECOSTAL MOVEMENT

The Divisiveness of the Holiness Movement led to what has been called the Pentecostal Movement. A strong debate erupted over the question of how to tell when one truly had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Charles Fox Parham advocated that "speaking in tongues" was the answer. William J. Seymour, a black preacher, helped to spread this concept world-wide. His group held a revival for 3 years (day and night) catching the imagination of the religious world. From this, preachers were spread around the U.S. and the world to push the Pentecostal movement. They began advocated that the gifts of the 1<sup>st</sup> century were for today also. The battle between the Pentecostals and Holiness groups was inevitable. Pentecostals were looked upon as a lunatic fringe group and were disowned by most groups. However, in 1943, the Organization of the National Association of Evangelicals accepted the Pentecostals into their fellowship and recognition.

Following World War II, Pentecostalism began having more impact on American religious life. They began having great "salvation-healing revivals" and tent meetings. Such men as Oral Roberts, William Branham, Jack Coe, and women like Katherine Kuhlman helped to push the movement forward. They made "speaking in tongues" and "divine healing" popular. By 1960, they had attained a world-wide membership of about 8,000,000.

### THE NEO-PENTECOSTAL or CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT

**In 1953**, an organization was formed called: **The Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International (FGBMFI)**. It helped to bring the message to business men in their communities.



Many ministers and members of traditional churches were impressed with what they saw and heard. From 1960 on Pentecostalism began to jump denominational boundary lines and to penetrate mainline churches.

By 1976, well-organized Charismatic fellowships were found within the Lutheran, Presbyterian, Episcopal, and Mennonite denominations. The Catholic Church seems to have been the most open to the Charismatic influence. These people felt that they had more in common with the Charismatics than with their own denomination. However, they were encouraged to remain in their churches and change them. This didn't work out, which resulted into more and more new churches being formed by dissatisfied people in the traditional churches. The movement entered the youth culture in what was known as the "Jesus Movement."

### WHY DID PEOPLE JOIN THESE MOVEMENTS?

Several suggestions could be given in answer to this question. For our purposes in this study, I would like to suggest three:

- 1) **Popularity.** Growth is accelerating and people like to be a part of such. But the stigmas have to be removed. FGBMFI was able to greatly enhance their image before the people. TV programs helped greatly. They no longer had the stigma that it once had.
- 2) **Tiring of Liberalism.** Many people were tiring of the liberalism coming into the mainline churches. Pentecostal & Charismatic churches appeared to be more conservative. They claimed to accept the Bible as the inspired Word of God. Much of formalism was done away with—with assemblies that seem to be alive with activity.
- 3) **Scripture ignorance.** Most people were ignorant of what the Bible said about the work of the Holy Spirit. They were more impressed with the excitement than what the Bible teaches. "Speaking in tongues" helped to give something tangible to hold on to. Before, people only "felt" they were saved—now, they have tongues to prove they are saved.

### DANGERS CONCERNING THESE MOVEMENTS

We certainly do not believe that they are or have led the people back to the Bible as they would like us to think. While they place an emphasis on the Bible and reading and studying it, yet the whole movement is taking the people away from the Bible as a final and sole authority in religion. It is reaching out for something mystical—implying that the Word of God is not sufficient. It is reach for something unexplainable with an emphasis upon subjective experiences. Such is hard to deal with. Not because the Scriptures are not clear and plain on the things being taught, but there is so much subjectivity, feelings, experiences, and emotions that are involved. The Bible is replaced by experiences.

All knowledge of Christ, the Holy Spirit, Salvation, etc., must come from the Word of God. We must avoid extremes of cold formalism and letting emotions and feelings take over. Jesus is Lord when we listen to what He says!



## Lesson Ten

*“Cultic Religions”*

The term “Cultic” needs to be defined for better communication, since it is used in more than one way by various writers. Some used the term to identify any religious group not connected with “Christianity” in any sense, nor is it connected to any of the major world religions. Another use of the term is to identify those religious groups who profess to believe in Christ, but who do not conform to what is called “historic Christian doctrine.” Others use the term to identify any group professing to believe in Christ, but in reality they recognize a person or persons as their leader and respect his or her teachings above that of Christ. For example:

- a) Jehovah Witnesses—Charles T. Russell and J. F. Rutherford.
- b) Christian Science—Mary Baker Eddy.
- c) Mormons—Joseph Smith and Brigham Young
- d) Unity School of Christianity—Charles and Myrtle Filmore.
- e) Moral Re-Armament—Frank Buchman.

One more observation that I personally feel is of vital importance is where the term is used to identify those groups who profess “Christianity” but deny the Deity of Christ: Jehovah Witnesses, Mormons, Christian Science, etc. One thing for certain, each religious group—whether “cultic” identified or not needs to be measured by the Divine Standard of Truth to see if they are of God!

**THE CHALLENGE OF FALSE TEACHERS**

During Jesus’ public ministry He encountered time and again the religious leaders of the Jewish nation as He attempted to correctly teach the people the Will of God. He observed their hypocritical efforts of religiousness, but their hearts were not really into such (Matthew 15:1-9; Chapter 23). And before His death, Jesus warned His followers that there would come false teachers professing to believe in Him, but would try to lead them astray (Matthew 7:15-23). Not only was the early church plagued by such teachers, but through the centuries they have made major inroads into pure New Testament Christianity. The Reformation Movement in the 1500s and later was a major effort to reclaim those basic teachings of Christ—but it also fractured into a multiplicity of differing denominational groups—all claiming to believe in Christ and holding to the “historic fundamentals” of Christianity. In addition to the various churches that were started there have been many “cultic” groups that have erupted from these churches.

For those who profess to believe in the original New Testament Christianity started by God, it becomes a great challenge to have a compassion and love for those caught up in false teaching and yet at the same time to rigorously oppose such from the Scriptures. Our objective should not be to win an argument, but to save a soul from death. While the “old line” Protestant groups are declining or barely holding their own, the “cultic” groups are growing in large numbers. In 1964, the world membership of such groups was estimated to be from ten to fifteen million strong. Forty years later, you can imagine how that number has greatly increased.

## MAJOR CULTIC GROUPS

1. **Jehovah Witnesses & the Watch Tower publication.** Their original founder was Charles T. Russell in the late 1800s. The teachings of Mr. Russell were propagated largely by a printing company called the "Watch Tower Bible & Tract Society." Their meeting places are called "Kingdom Halls." Their meetings are primary to indoctrinate their members to go out and teach their beliefs to others. They have their own special translation of the Bible that helps to uphold their peculiar doctrines. They do not believe in the Deity of Christ nor in the Trinity. They are strongly pre-millennial.
2. **Christian Science and New Thought.** The "mother" of this sect is primarily attributed to Mary Baker Eddy, assisted by P. P. Quimby in the late 1800s. Their emphasis is upon self-healing, the great power of faith to heal the body. They do not believe in going to medical doctors. The book that is used as their authority for the church is "Science and Health, With Key to the Scriptures" that was first published by Mrs. Eddy in 1875. It is a work that has clearly been mostly plagiarized. Upon her death, the group divided into two separate groups. They do not believe in the Deity of Christ. Heaven or Hell is what the mind of man experiences here.
3. **Mormonism and the Book of Mormon.** This group had as its founder Joseph Smith, Jr. in the early 1800s. Smith was supposed to have had a revelation from God about the hidden books of Scripture in America that correspond to the Bible from across the seas. He was directed to where the "plates" were found and he was able to translate them into English. As the group moved Westward, they located primarily in the city of Salt Lake, Utah. They refer to themselves as the "Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints." After the death of Smith, Brigham Young caused a division in the group that was called "The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints." Their headquarters wound up being in Independence, Missouri. Both groups believe in latter day revelations from God through their prophet. Their sacred books (in addition to the Bible) are: The Book of Mormon, The Pearl of Great Price, and The Doctrine and Covenants. They do not believe in the Deity of Christ. They have grown rapidly in this country and around the world with thousands upon thousands of "missionaries" here and abroad advocating their peculiar beliefs.
4. **Additional "cultic" groups:**
  - a) Spiritism
  - b) Reign of Father Divine
  - c) The Theosophical Society
  - d) Zen Buddhism
  - e) The Church of the New Jerusalem—Swedenborgianism
  - f) The Bahai Faith
  - g) The Black Muslim Cult
  - h) The Unity School of Christianity
  - i) Anglo-Israelism—Armstrong's Radio Church of God
  - j) etc.

**CONCLUDING THOUGHTS:** All we have tried to do is expose you to a brief overview of differing religious groups. For more in depth study, special books can be secured for such.



## Lesson Eleven

*“Restoration of New Testament Christianity”*

*“Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are our ways, O King of the saints! Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your Name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, for Your judgments have been manifested.”* (Revelation 15:3-4)

Restoration efforts have been found in many lands around the world for centuries. All have been built around the principle that the Bible must be man’s sole authority. But it is one thing to pay lip service to such a concept, but an altogether different thing when it is consistently followed!

The most prominent and far reaching effort of Restoration has been in this Country. One could list several possible reasons for that, such as:

- 1) Less persecution here than in Europe.
- 2) More open-mindedness of the people to hear what the Bible says.
- 3) Better grasp of the principle of Restoration.
- 4) Better educated leadership to avoid pitfalls of the groups that have gone before.
- 5) One fact that seems to stand out that indicates its effectiveness in this country is the combining of several independent groups into one major thrust—From the British Isles, The New England states, Pennsylvania, Carolinas, Western Reserve, Canada, Georgia, Kentucky, etc.
- 6) Another factor that lent itself well to help make their efforts effective was the absence of a state church in America that could dominate or persecute. There were so many multiplying groups emerging everywhere, which brought more to the forefront the need for unity and restoration!

In this lesson, we will attempt to present a brief overview of the success of the Restoration Movement in America.

**EARLY EFFORTS IN AMERICA**

**1. The O’Kelley Movement (1793).** This was a revolt against the Authoritarianism of Bishop Francis Asbury of the Methodist Church. They, at first, called themselves “Republic Methodists.” Their leader in the revolt was James O’Kelley of Virginia. They adopted these cardinal principles:

- a) Christ as the only head of His church.
- b) The name “Christian” to be used instead of any sectarian name.
- c) The Old and New Testament as the only “Creed.”
- d) Christian character as sole test of fellowship.
- e) Emphasis upon purity of life.

**2. The New England Movement (1801).** Two Baptist preachers began a similar emphasis in New England. Elias Smith and Dr. Abner Jones joined forces in 1804. They advocated:

- a) To wear no sectarian titles.



- b) The Bible to be the only Guide.
- c) They practiced immersion, but fellowshiped with the un-immersed.
- d) This movement had trouble with Unitarianism at times.

**3. The Barton W. Stone Movement (1803).** Five Presbyterian preachers formed their own synod upon removing themselves from the larger group. Shortly afterwards, they realized they had gone the same route of setting up another denomination, so they dissolved their Synod in June 24, 1804. They issued what was entitled: **"The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery."** Barton W. Stone of Kentucky was the most influential of the group.

**4. Informal efforts at fellowship with other groups.** The Eastern churches became known as "Christian Churches." The Stone Movement contacted them and efforts were made for them to work together to the same end in 1809. In 1931, the Eastern churches merged with the Congregational Church (Congregational Christian Church). Later, they merged with the Reformed and other groups that became known as the "United Church of Christ."

**5. The Samuel Simon Smucker Movement (1839).** He had a vision of bringing a union among the different churches. He organized "The Society for the Promotion of Christian Union" in 1839. Its purpose was: *"to promote Christian union, on apostolic principles, according to the general plan proposed in the fraternal appeal to the American churches."* Smucker made it very clear that he had no desire to start another denomination, but merely to have the churches to work together. It was to be a confederation of churches with each denomination to retain its own government, organization, discipline and mode of worship under the umbrella of a weak central government. In the end, most Protestant leaders rejected Smucker's plea.

### LATER EFFORTS IN AMERICA

**1. The Thomas and Alexander Campbell Movement (1809).** Thomas Campbell came to America first before his family. He was a Presbyterian Clergyman. He was distressed by divisions among Presbyterians. In time, he was suspended by his Synod for fellowshiping another group of Presbyterians not in their fellowship. He then decided to form the "Christian Association of Washington (PA) with a group of preachers and members sympathetic to his views of unity. In 1809, he drafted an expression of their views and goals called the "Declaration and Address." It stressed:

- a) Udenominal Christianity;
- b) Christian Unity;
- c) The sole Authority of the Scriptures.

The Address had 13 propositions. The first 3 illustrated the basic principles of restoration.

Thomas' son, Alexander, and family joined him in America from Scotland. Alexander had already been exposed to restoration ideas in Scotland. Upon arrival, he found that both he and his father were in agreement on their concept of restoration and unity. They together, pushed for a restoration among the churches. Their influence was far wider than the Stone Movement. They envisioned the crumbling of all denominational bodies and being replaced with the divine church of the New Testament. Alexander Campbell expressed it this way: *"The restoration of original*

*Christianity, and not the reformation of Popery or of Protestantism, is the polar star of all our aims and efforts ecclesiastic."*

**2. The Stone and Campbell Movements joined forces in 1831.** It was inevitable that preachers and churches from these two movements would come into contact with each other. The more their contact, the more they realized they were after the same thing. They had no means of control of the churches; thus, no official merger could be dictated. But godly men from both groups kept working towards their working together and giving recognition to each other.

**3. The John Wright Movement (1819).** John was an Indiana Baptist, but realized the need of going by the Bible. He offered a resolution to the Blue River Association of Churches to put away all party names and be just Christians. By 1821, they were calling themselves just "Christians." In addition, he helped to bring fifteen Tunker Churches into their fellowship on the same basis. They, in turn, later united with the Stone Movement—and then, with the general restoration movement.

**4. The John Mulkey Movement (1809).** He also began to advocate in Kentucky the need to go by the Bible alone. Because of contact with churches in the Stone Movement, he associated with them.

**5. The Christian H. Dasher movement (1819).** He was a German immigrant, that sought a return to New Testament Christianity. His efforts resulted in several churches in the Valdosta, Ga., area. In 1839, these churches associated themselves with the main body of restoration churches.

### STRUGGLES AGAINST DIVISIONS AND DEPARTURE FROM THE RESTORATION PRINCIPLE

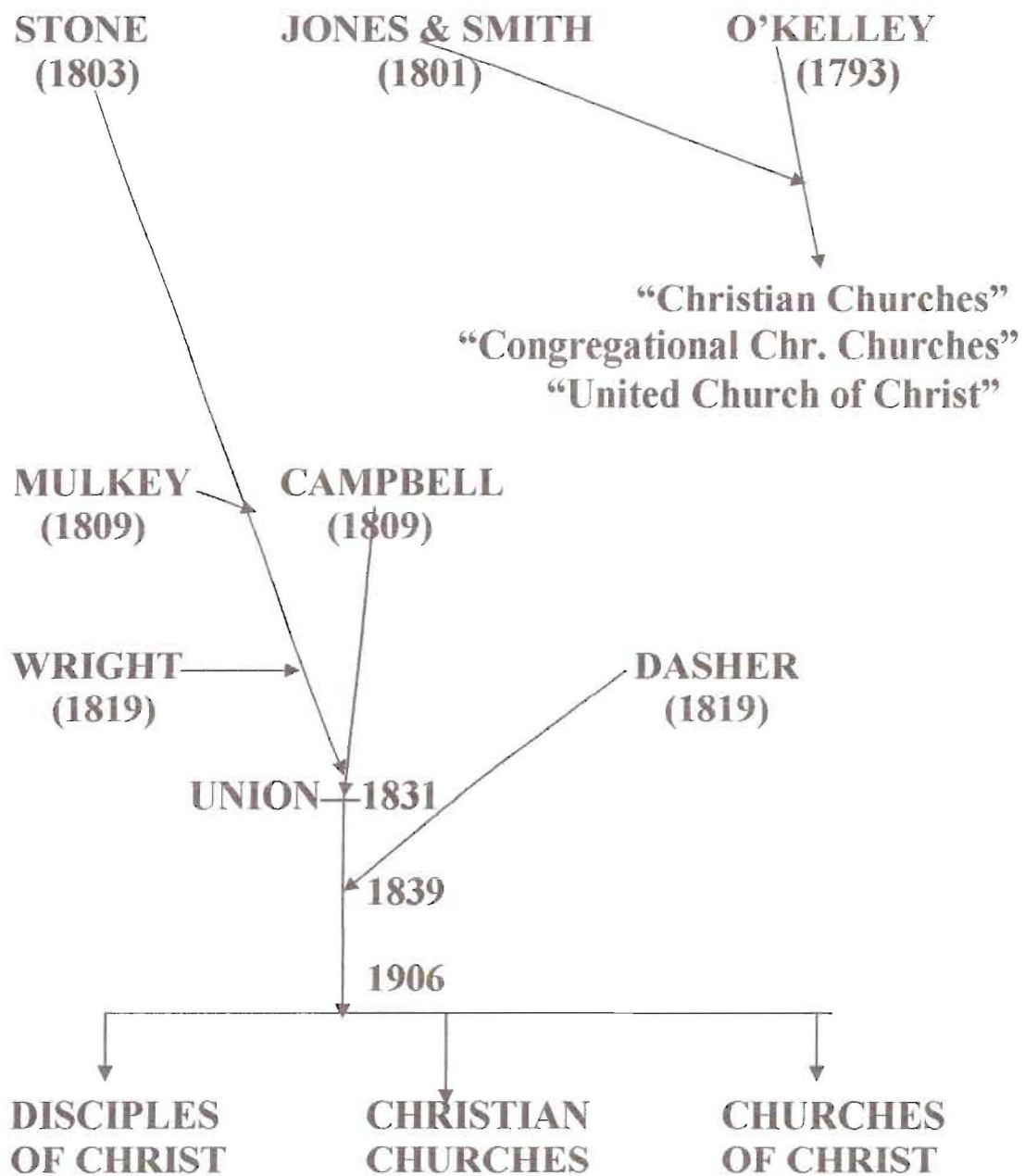
There were two major thrust in the movement: Union and Restoration. They stressed the need to be unified, rather than divided into different sectarian groups. But, they also saw the need of going back to the Bible to bring about a restoration of the true church. To try to accomplish both ideals was too narrow—it excluded too many! More and more they sacrificed the "Restoration Principle" for their concept of Union with other disciples. This group ultimately became known as "The Disciples of Christ Church." They have of recent years restructured themselves into a denominational body. They hope to merge themselves out of existence as a separate body.

To others, the feeling was very strong that both concepts went together. But it became more obvious that going back to the Bible became more and more exclusive of whom they could truly call Christian and fellowship. These churches used the terms: "Christian Churches" or "Churches of Christ." These two groups later divided over a basic approach to the Bible resulting in a clear distinction by the 1906 Religious Census.

The Restoration Movement is a thrilling story of good men wanting to get back to the original New Testament Christianity. But men's hearts are not always willing to pay the price.



## Charted Overview of Restoration Movement in America





## Lesson Twelve

## *“New Testament Christianity: A Continuing Challenge to Mankind”*

*“Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this we will do if God permits.”*

(Hebrews 6:1-3)

Restoration is a perfectly good word and is used often in our conversations with one another about various things. But when this word is used with reference to the religion of Christ, it is describing that effort to recover the original religion given by Christ—because it has been lost by the indifference of men. The original pattern was given by divine inspiration to the Apostles of Christ and written down in our New Testament. Restoration is a valid concept because:

- 1) Original Christianity was divinely given by God for the good of mankind;
- 2) It cannot be improved upon by man;
- 3) Therefore, man needs to get back to what God originally gave!

Restoration is an IDEAL—something being sought for that was perfect when first given by God. Then, is complete restoration going to ever happen? Can it be fully and completely realized? The answer would obviously be “NO!” Even though Jesus challenges us to be “perfect” as our Father in heaven is perfect (Matthew 5:48), it is something we know we will never reach. But if we are content to strive for anything less than perfection, have we lost our true goal given to us by the Lord?

Let’s look at three concepts for a moment and analyze which of the three fits us. Are we willing to look closely at our outlook?

- 1) **The Ideal.** This represents complete or perfect restoration. We have arrived!
- 2) **Working towards the Ideal.** We are constantly striving, searching, struggling, and working towards attaining the complete restoration.
- 3) **Unconcerned about the Ideal.** We have accomplished some and are satisfied with the status quo...just maintaining where we are.

Which of the last two statements describes you? Shouldn’t we be always striving toward the goal of perfection? Should we not want to see a complete restoration of New Testament Christianity?

### **WHAT IS REQUIRED TO HAVE THE CHURCH RESTORED?**

Restoration infers that there has been a departure from the original and there is a desire to bring it back to what it was originally. If the church fell away into apostasy, then what is required for it to be restored again?

- 1) To require again what it took to bring the church into existence in the first place. How did people come into the church? What made them a part of the body or church of Christ? The answer is basically found in Acts 2:22-47.

- a) They had the Gospel (good news) of Christ preached to them.
  - b) They were called upon to believe that Jesus is both Lord and Christ and the willingness to confess it.
  - c) When they asked what they must do, they were told to repent and be baptized (burial with Christ in water) for the removal of their sins.
  - d) They gladly received the message and were baptized.
  - e) The Lord added them to the apostles, whom God placed into the church.
- 2) Once the church comes into existence again, then, it becomes necessary to worship according to God's instructions—correct activities and with a correct spirit.
  - 3) It then, is necessary for the church to begin to do the good works that God ordained for it to do, such as: Preaching the Gospel to the whole world, Benevolence towards all, the building up of the body of Christ, etc.
  - 4) God's children are to present their bodies as living sacrifices unto Him—to live godly and righteous lives before all.
  - 5) They are to constantly maintain that unity and oneness that God has given them in Christ.
  - 6) The church is to be the pillar and ground of the truth—keeping their message pure.

### CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

God has given us His divine pattern for the church. We must follow that divine pattern if we want the blessings of God. While efforts may help to restore all of the basics of Christianity, it will never be possible to say...."We have arrived!" There will always be the challenge—onward towards perfection! The reason—the human element will always hinder us. Yet, it is important to:

- 1) Constantly seek only for truth;
- 2) Constantly seek only to teach truth and all the truth;
- 3) And as well constantly seek to practice it fully as we come to know and understand God's truth.

