

Chapter 2 The Judeo-Christian Period 31-73

The first age of the Church of God appears in the literature as the Apostolic Age or Period, The Early Church in the Apostolic Period, the Primitive Church, and the like. Some refer to this time as the Ephesian Era of the Church by drawing a parallel between the seven churches described in Revelation 2-3 and the events of nearly 2,000 years of Church history.³⁶ This is the approach in this work.

The Church began on the day of Pentecost, a Sunday, in 31 CE. About a century later this period of the first Christians ended at about the time of the Bar Kokhba Revolt (132-135 CE).³⁷ From its founding in the days of the apostles, there has been only one Church of God, with a single body of doctrine taught by the apostles and their successors.

The Royal Stoa

The Church of God began with the descent of the Holy Spirit (or the Spirit of God) on the day of Pentecost in 31 CE. The single surviving account

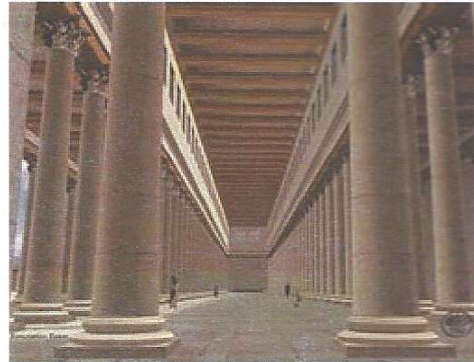
³⁶ As set forth by Alan Johnson in his discourse on Revelation in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* some "have suggested that the churches selected were prophetic of the church ages throughout history" (Frank E. Gaebelein, general editor, 1981) citing J. A. Seiss' *The Apocalypse* (Seiss, 1957, p. 64) and the *Schofield Reference Bible* at Rev. 1:20 at note 3 (*The Scofield Study Bible*, 1996, p. 1331). He further clarifies "For example, Ephesus would represent prophetically the apostolic period until the Decian persecution (A.D. 250), followed by Smyrna, which represents the church of martyrdom extending until the time of Constantine (A.D. 316). However, after this initial agreement identifications become more difficult except for the last church. All agree that Laodicea is the final period of lukewarm apostasy" (Frank E. Gaebelein, general editor, 1981, p. 419 [Vol. 12]) *The Churches of God* in general characterize the seven church ages, as telescoping into one another as opposed to abruptly starting and ending beginning with the Ephesian Era (the Apostolic Age) and ending with the Laodicean Era (the lukewarm church at the end of the age).

³⁷ The Bar Kokhba Revolt against the Romans in 132 CE was led by Simon bar Kokhba (Hebrew: כוכבא בר שמעון). He and his followers established a short-lived independent Jewish state which he ruled for three years. The Romans conquered Bar Kokhba and his supporters in 135 CE following a two and half-year war. There is no literary or archaeological evidence that Simon bar Kokhba and his faction were ever able to gain a foothold in Jerusalem. Judeo-Christians rejected him as a false Messiah and supported the Romans. Fed up with Jewish rebellion the Romans then banned Jews from Jerusalem. Judeo-Christians were allowed access to the city.

of the founding of the Church, shortly after the death of Jesus, the evangelist Luke recorded in the Acts of the Apostles.

At the onset of the New Covenant, the apostles and their followers apparently assembled on the Temple Mount (Acts 2:1), in the Royal Portico available for public religious meetings. There God caused the gift of the Holy Spirit to descend upon these devoted disciples of Jesus of Nazareth.

The Exodus account of God giving his Law to the people of Israel records that it was done audibly and visibly (Exodus 19:16-18; 20:18-19, 21). Similarly, Luke related in Acts how God, with no less of a public manifestation of power, or at less a place than the Temple Mount itself, also caused the Holy Spirit to descend both audibly and visibly upon the apostles and their followers. Since



The interior of the Royal Portico on the Temple Mount provided a venue for the followers of Jesus of Nazareth to assemble on the day of Pentecost in 31 CE. There the Holy Spirit descended upon them setting them apart as the begotten children of God.

it was the Feast of Weeks, the festival of Shavuot, many Jews had gathered on the Temple Mount for the activities of the day.

There many heard the loud, curious noise reported to be like a violent and rushing wind. This prompted a crowd to gather to see what was going on. This suggests the apostles were immediately accessible and visible to the public (Acts 2:2, 6). There the crowd observed a unique and dramatic event in the history of the Church—God legitimating Jesus' followers as the new people of God—the *q'bal'el*—the Church of God. Luke's point was that by such an overt and manifest notice God placed a public seal of approval, a mark of authenticity, upon the fledgling Church of God—the New Israel. It was an open affirmation of the consecration of this small group of Jews as the *q'bal'el*. The parallelism was unambiguous and deliberate.



Adjacent to the remnants of the “staircase of the teachers” these ritual purification baths, *mikvaot*, lie at the base of the south wall of the Temple Mount. A BIBARCH™ Photo. These *mikvaot* permitted visitors to the Temple Mount to ritually purify themselves before ascending to the Temple precincts. They served as the venue for the 3,000 baptisms reported by Luke in Acts 2:41. These were uncovered in the excavations completed under the leadership of Professor Benjamin Mazar of Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and with the Israel Exploration Society together with Ambassador College.

Shortly after the Spirit of God descended upon the apostles and their followers, Peter, as the leading apostle and their spokesman, proceeded to speak in public to Jews who had gathered for *Shavuoth* activities.³⁸ Jesus had appointed Simon Peter to be the leading apostle to coordinate their collective work and effort. Thus Peter, later identified as the apostle to the circumcision, came forward and addressed the multitude proclaiming the kingdom of God (Acts 2:14-36).

Following Peter’s lead, all the apostles spoke boldly in the name of Jesus of Nazareth proclaiming to the crowd that God had made Jesus “both Lord

³⁸ Their assembly must have begun fairly early in the morning for Peter began his public address to the crowd of curiosity seekers about nine o’clock in the morning which was “the third hour of the day” (Acts 2:15). This suggests that the group knew the special significance of this particular Day of Pentecost but were unaware of the specific hour God would pour out the Holy Spirit. It appears that they met very early in the morning perhaps even before Sunrise which was about 5:00 a.m. Jerusalem time.

and Christ” (Acts 2:36). Some, but not everyone, asked Peter and the rest of the apostles what they should do (Acts 2:37). Peter replied (Acts 2:38-39 NIV), “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”³⁹ Three thousand Jews were then baptized (Acts 2:41) presumably in the ritual pools at the southern wall of the Temple Mount.⁴⁰ These ritual purification baths, *mikvaot*, were for Jews to ceremonially cleanse themselves before ascending the Temple Mount.⁴¹ Following the founding of the Church on Pentecost we find the house of Mary the mother of John Mark to be a meeting place of God’s people on Jerusalem’s western hill known today as Mount Sion.

The House of Mary on Jerusalem’s Western Hill

Mary, the mother of John Mark, has but a single reference, a common Hebrew name, in the New Testament. It appears at Acts 12:12 where a number of the Jerusalem brethren gathered together at her house for a prayer vigil on Peter’s behalf. Mary appears as a woman of means, probably a widow, and the possessor of a large house. She is mistress, it would seem, of a

³⁹ The context requires “the gift of the Holy Spirit” to be the indwelling of the Holy Spirit within the repentant-baptized believer. Such conversion, however, results in the believer receiving spiritual gifts and bearing spiritual fruit in their lives.

⁴⁰ The excavation of this site, between 1969–1975, was by an expedition under the direction of Professor Benjamin Mazar of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem supported by Ambassador University in conjunction with Hebrew University and the Israel Exploration Society (Israel Exploration Society 1975:25). Scores of students and faculty from Ambassador University, then Ambassador College, assisted Mazar and his associates, albeit little public exposure was given to their efforts. The erection of a sign in commemoration of Ambassador’s efforts at the excavation site, later transformed into the archaeological park, as promised by Israeli political authorities was never done in spite of frequent assurances and rhetoric to the contrary. Nearby, however, in Liberty Bell Park officials placed a modest memorial to Ambassador’s founder “H. W. Armstrong”, located at the children’s playground near a memorial to Hubert Humphrey. Armstrong’s memorial later became abandoned and vandalized when funding for the park’s maintenance from the Ambassador Foundation ceased.

⁴¹ The ritual purification baths were for facilitating the required submersion in a pool of fresh water to ceremonially purify the visitor before he or she could ascend into the Temple precincts. According to Jewish law, a *miqva’ot* must contain not less than forty seah of non-drawn water (that is, rain water).

household sufficiently affluent to have a young domestic servant (probably a slave-girl), bearing the Greek name Rhoda, keeping the door (cf. John 18:17). She may have been Luke's source concerning the Acts 12 account of Peter's coming to her house upon his ca. 43 CE escape from prison and for other episodes in the early life of the Jerusalem church as well (Marshall 1980:209-10).

Imprisoned by Herod Agrippa, just prior to the ca. 43 CE Passover, Peter awaited trial and summary execution at Jerusalem. For several days the Jerusalem Church congregation engaged in fervent prayer, in this case group prayer, for his release (Acts 12:5). Peter, well-known in Mary's household, late at night goes directly to her house as a matter of course on his supernatural escape from prison (Acts 12:14) to inform the group assembled there of his release and to request that they so inform James [understood to be the brother of Jesus (Mark 6:3)] and others.

Mary's son John Mark, later the author of the second Gospel, is a cousin, in the sense of a cousin first removed, of Barnabas (Colossians 4:10) which would make her either the sister or sister-in-law of one of Barnabas' parents. At this time John Mark was probably in his early twenties. The basis of this inference is the account of John Mark, presumably about himself when about 10-12 years old, concerning the presence of a certain "young man" who escaped naked from the scene of Jesus' arrest in CE 30 (Mark 14:50-51).

Her house, a meeting place for Jesus' followers inside the city walls of Jerusalem, is of special interest. It apparently had a convenient location, an entrance-way separating the main house from the street, and a room large enough for many people to assemble. In fact, the location was in an aristocratic section of Jerusalem on the western hill where the priestly families dwelled. The implication is that John Mark was a Levite and possibly of a father who was a priest. We presume that his father had died some time before the Crucifixion.

These factors favor its later evolution into a house-church and a center of life of the early church at Jerusalem. Later writers believed the house, which supposedly escaped the destruction which Titus visited upon Jerusalem in 70 CE, was atop Mt. Sion and a meeting place for Jesus' disciples from the time of the Ascension to Pentecost (Epiphanius, *de Pond. et Mens.* c. 14; Cyril of Jerusalem. *Catech* 16 [note 35]). Today many believe that this site

is that of the present day Cenacle and the pseudo-Tomb of David but the archaeological evidence is inconclusive. If the site of the Cenacle is the basic location of Mary's house it would have been, as one of the highest spots in Jerusalem, a prestigious location. The archaeological evidence regarding the Cenacle site would require the destruction of the original structure in the aftermath of the First Jewish Revolt.

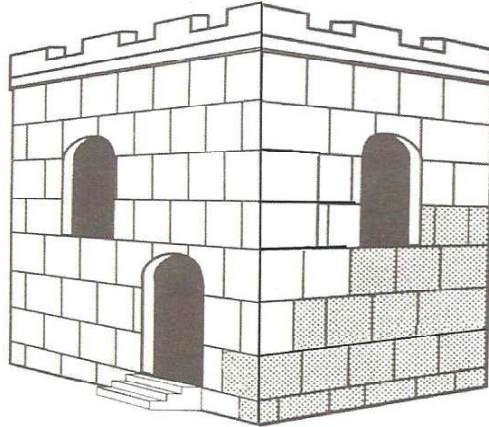
The fables persist, and they are merely myths, that Mary's house was the venue of the Acts 2 Pentecost events, the upper room where the disciples stayed, and the upper room of the first Christian Passover. The derivation of these myths apparently is from the observation and speculation of Gentile Christians, particularly the Byzantines, concerning the practices of Judco-Christians in their synagogue on Mt. Sion, now the site of the Cenacle/Tomb of David, then known as the Church of the Apostles. The two groups were not in fellowship with each other. Today the Chapel of the Holy Spirit in the Cenacle and countless tour guides perpetuate these legends. Tour guides, poorly informed but well-meaning, consistently explain to thousands of Christian pilgrims and other tourists that the Cenacle is the traditional venue of these events. In fact, the group met on the Temple Mount presumably in the Royal Stoa (rendered as Solomon's Colonnade, Portico or Porch in different translations of Acts 5:12) as it was available for public meetings and there is no evidence that either of the "upper room" locations were at Mary's house or at the venue of the Cenacle.

While the work of the apostles in Judea continued, the persistent persecution after Stephen's death caused the withdrawal of many church members into the broader Syro-Palestine area. While these fled, the apostles remained at Jerusalem (Acts 8:1). Their apparent ability to stay in Jerusalem suggests that the main thrust of the persecution was against Christian Jews who were Hellenists, that is those who were Greek speaking but of Jewish descent, and originating outside the Roman province of Judea, and not the Mishnaic Hebrew speaking natives of Judea and Galilee.

The Synagogue on Sion

Following the Roman War with the Jews a number of Judeo-Christians, presumable members of the headquarters church who had fled the war, returned to Jerusalem, settled and built a small Christian synagogue on Mount

Sion. Today on Jerusalem's western hill, just outside the Zion Gate of the old city near the crest of Mount Zion,⁴² often called Christian Sion, lie the partial remains of that ancient Judeo-Christian synagogue consisting of a niche, walls, floors, and foundations. These have been incorporated into a building now venerated by both Jews and Christians and known today as the "Tomb of David," albeit a pseudo-tomb. The location of the real tomb of David is unknown.



A tentative reconstruction of the ancient church-synagogue on Mt. Sion in Jerusalem as it would have appeared in ca. 75 CE. The shaded blocks remain *in situ*.

The first-century name of this ancient synagogue is not known. In the fourth and fifth centuries, however, Christian Greco-Romans referred to the building in a variety of ways. Eusebius called it the "Holy Church of God" (Eusebius *The Proof of the Gospel* 6.18; (Ferrar, 1920, p. b:30); (Ferrar, 1981, p.

b:30). Cyril said it was the "Upper Church of the Apostles" (Cyril of Jerusalem *Catechetical Lectures* 16.4; Schaff and Wace 1989a:116). Egeria usually referred to it as "On Sion" (Wilkinson, 1971, p. 294). Epiphanius, who alluded to it in its second century context, said that at the time Hadrian visited *Colonia Aelia Capitolina*, ca. 131/132, it was a small "Church of God" (Epiphanius *De Mensuris* 14; (Koester, 1989, p. 93). Theodosius said it was Holy Sion which is the "*mater omnium ecclesiarum*" or the Mother of all Churches (Theodosius *The Topology of the Holy Land* 7(b); Wilkinson 1977:66).

This small Church of God, whose remnants lie on the southern part of Mt. Sion in the southwestern portion of Jerusalem, observed by Hadrian and

⁴² In Herodian Jerusalem this was the Upper City on the city's western hill. Present-day Mt. Zion often appears in the literature as Mt. Sion. Herein Mt. Sion refers to Jerusalem's western hill and Mt. Zion to the eastern hill. The western hill became known as Mt. Zion in medieval times when erroneously identified as the Citadel of David.

called by Theodosius (ca. 530) the Mother of All Churches, was the seat of the Judeo-Christian community at Jerusalem from 73-381 CE.



The ancient synagogue as it appears at the end of the third century as shown in the Basilica of St. Pudentiana in Rome. Take note of the balustrade. At the top of the mosaic is a representation of Eleona Church on the Mount of Olives.

The architectural proportions of the synagogue were those of the Solomonic Temple with the height one-half of the sum of the length and width. The synagogue itself was quite small. Its orientation allowed for sunlight to enter through rather thick walls. The roof had a balustrade suggesting the roof top was for use as an Upper Room as well as an area where

people could meet for festival meals.

Sometime before the fourth century the congregation enlarged the synagogue to about double its original size. In the apse of the Basilica of St. Pudentiana in Rome artists created a mosaic representation of the synagogue as it was in ca. 390 CE. Greco-Roman Orthodox Christians added an adjacent memorial chapel after they seized the building in 381 CE following the decree of Emperor Theodiosus I.

Distinctive Teachings

There were three major distinctions, and many minor ones, between the apostolic Church of God and that of first-century Judaism. These irrevocably separated the two communities. The apostles taught that:

1. The Old Covenant national system ended at Jesus' death and being replaced by a new and better one wherein God writes His laws in the minds and hearts of his people (Hebrews 8:8-10).
2. Jesus of Nazareth, truly God and truly man, is God incarnate in whom the divine and human natures are perfectly and inseparably united.
3. Salvation and life eternal is the gift of God, by God's grace, only through faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Christ, or Messiah, sent

from God to be the savior and redeemer of humanity (John 1:29; 3:15-17; Acts 4:12).

The first covenant, the Old Covenant, ended in order to establish the second, the New Covenant (Hebrews 8:7, 8, 23; 9:10, 15; 10:9). At the death of Jesus of Nazareth the Messiah all the children of Israel by fleshly descent were cut off from God and had become spiritual Gentiles (that is, strangers to the New Covenant). A continuing relationship with God must be based upon faith in Jesus Christ and not on the administrations of the Old Covenant.

Jesus is the eternal Word, through whom and for whom God created all things. Before his human birth, Jesus existed eternally with God and as God (John 1:1-2, 14; Revelation 1:8). God created everything in the universe by and through Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:16); John 1:3). Jesus is the Christ, or Messiah, sent from God to be humanity's Savior and redeemer (John 1:29; 3:15-17; Acts 4:12). Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God, the only begotten of the Father, engendered in the human flesh of the virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:34-35). Jesus ascended into heaven as humanity's High Priest and Mediator.

The Apostle Paul taught that Jesus made atonement for the whole human race (Romans 5:8-11) and that God has given him a name which is above every name (Philippians 2:9-11). In Jesus Christ, the whole sinful world became reconciled to God but only through Jesus Christ (Galatians 4:4-5; 3:13; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19). The purpose of the incarnation of the Son of God was that he might become the Mediator between God and humanity. He was God manifest in the flesh for the world's salvation. The offering of Jesus freely made on the cross was the perfect and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, redeeming humanity from all sin, requiring no other satisfaction. Eternal salvation is only through Jesus' death on the cross.

The early church uncompromisingly sought to live by the commandments of God. The codification of God's spiritual law as the Ten Commandments, sometimes called the Law of Christ (1 Corinthians 9:21; Galatians 6:2), since in the Hebrew Scriptures these commandments were detailed in a form which a physical, carnal nation could understand and obey, resulted from both the Old and New Covenants common underlying spiritual

policy.⁴³ The Ten Commandments, now written on the tablets of their hearts, enabled God's people to live by the underlying spiritual principles of his law. Framed by God, but only reflected in the physical administration of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:3-17; Deuteronomy 5:7-21), Jesus of Nazareth incorporated into the New Covenant (Matthew 5:21-48).⁴⁴

The Ten Commandments, now amplified to include their full spiritual purpose, dealt with the common everyday acts and deeds making up human behavior. Violation of this Law physically or spiritually is lawlessness (1 John 3:4). The New Covenant involves the internalizing of the law of God (Hebrews 10:16; 2 Corinthians 3:3). This does not mean that the Law of Moses (that is the statutes and judgments),⁴⁵ as national laws for the physical nation of Israel which ceased at Jesus' death were no longer instructive and of use in the affairs of the Church of God. They demonstrate the very mind of God in dealing with the realities of everyday human affairs and life. As Moses had allowed some variance with the underlying spiritual intent of God's law, such variance did not become incorporated into the New Covenant, but the apostles, understood that often the matters included in the Law of Moses also had application in the New.

The members of the mother church at Jerusalem took part in some aspects of temple worship but no longer needed to participate in animal sacrifice, as Jesus of Nazareth (*Yeshúa Ha-Notsri*) had been the supreme

⁴³ A spiritual policy, one of "love," underlays the Ten Commandments and the statutes and judgments. In the context of the ancient nation of Israel, they reflect the mind of God in dealing with the affairs of unconverted people. In today's world national and local laws reflect what is known as social policy. Behind each piece of legislation, or judge made law, there exists a social policy. In the ancient kingdoms of Israel and Judah their governmental structure reflected spiritual policy (for God) and social policy (for society).

⁴⁴ True religion was not the mere profession of faith in Jesus. According to Luke's gospel Jesus said "And why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord' and do not do what I say?" (Luke 6:46). Matthew quoted Jesus as saying "Not every one who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21).

⁴⁵ The statutes and judgments were contained in the Book of the Law of Moses (Joshua 8:31) which Joshua read before the assembly of Israel (Joshua 8:35) and wrote on an altar of uncut stones (Joshua 8:32). The Book of the Law of Moses was kept with the Ark of the Covenant, which contained the two tablets of stone upon which the Ten Commandments had been inscribed by God (Deuteronomy 10:5), and it was to remain there as a "witness" in perpetuity (Deuteronomy 31:26).

sacrifice.⁴⁶ The first-century Church of God taught that no one needed to offer animal sacrifice since the Old Covenant ended with the death of Jesus of Nazareth but they could do so if they wanted too. The Apostle Paul wrote that “It [that is, the entire old covenant system of statutes and judgments including the sacrificial law] was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator [in the person of Moses (John 1:17)],⁴⁷ until the seed [that is, Jesus Christ] should come to whom the promise had been made” (Galatians 3:19).⁴⁸ Stephen, in his defense before the Sanhedrin as reported by Luke in Acts, confirmed that God gave the statutes and judgments to the ancient Israelites through the agency of angels. He said, “you who received the law as ordained by angels, and *yet* did not keep it” (Acts 7:53). The author of Hebrews later wrote that “the word spoken through angels (that is, the statutes and judgments) proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense, . . .” (Hebrews 2:3).

The Church readily used the name of God thereby rejecting the *halakhic* tradition and custom of not vocalizing God’s name. While the gospel of Matthew remained sensitive to the use of God’s name, as it was originally written for a Judean audience in an earlier version,⁴⁹ the other writers of the New Testament freely employed God’s name.

⁴⁶ James advised Paul to purify himself in Temple rites with three others who were completing vows (Acts 21:23-24). Nevertheless, Christians were to be living sacrifices having surrendered themselves to God (Romans 12:1) with Jesus of Nazareth being the ultimate sacrifice for all humankind (Hebrews 10:1-10). The sacrificial system was to point the people of Israel and Judah to the necessity of a sacrifice whenever there was sin thereby directing them to the necessity of the Messiah’s sacrifice pursuant to the forgiveness of sin.

⁴⁷ The Law was given through Moses as a mediator.

⁴⁸ “Added” to God’s relationship with the people of Israel was an entire national system of government known as the Old Covenant often simply referred to as Torah. The purpose of the system was as a schoolmaster until the Messiah should come. The system itself provided for its own enforcement adapted to promote realization of the covenant. Note Stephen’s opinion of the nature of the people of Israel as reported in his defense before the Sanhedrin “You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did” (Acts 7:51). By implication, the Church of God, as the saints and the new Israel, do not need a national political government and the New Covenant in Christ does not provide for such as the Christian aligns his or her character, motivation, and heart with God’s way of life and repents of sin.

⁴⁹ The early version of Matthew, called Proto-Matthew by Harold Riley, was presumably written in Mishnaic Hebrew about CE 43. Proto-Matthew was one of the source documents

Biblical Feasts, Holy Days, and Their Symbolism

PERSONAL REDEMPTION

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| Nisan | 1 | Beginning of the sacred year (not a Holy Day) at the new moon. |
| | 14 | Passover (<i>Pesab</i> or <i>Pesach</i>)—the sacrifice of the Messiah for the remission of sin. |
| | 15-21 | Days of Unleavened Bread (<i>Chag Hamatsot</i>)—symbolic of repentance and putting sin out of one's life (first and last days are the first two of the annual Holy Days) |

ECCLESIAL REDEMPTION

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|------------------------------|---------------|---|
| Sivan | Day Varies | Feast of Weeks (<i>Shavuot</i> , <i>Shavuoth</i> or <i>Shabbu'oth</i>), or Pentecost, on the 50th day—the giving of the Holy Spirit and the founding of the Church (the third Holy Day). |
| Tammuz Lyar Ab Elul | } | No Holy Days— the Age of the Church —representing the time of the Church of God (<i>qehal'el</i>) sojourning in the world with the history of the Church developing in seven successive periods or eras. |

WORLDWIDE REDEMPTION

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| Tishri | 1 | Feast of Trumpets (<i>Rosh Ha Shana</i> meaning “head or beginning of the new year”) marking the beginning of the Civil Year—Christ comes to planet earth's atmosphere for the saints who then follow him to God's throne (the fourth Holy Day). Anciently it marked the traditional anniversary of creation. |
| | 10 | Day of Atonement (<i>Yom Kippur</i>)—placing Satan into restraint and reconciliation of humanity with God (the fifth Holy Day)—Marked by fasting. |
| | 15-21 | Feast of Tabernacles (<i>Sukkot</i>)—worldwide redemption during the millennial rule of the Messiah (the first day is the sixth Holy Day). |

AGES-ENCOMPASSING REDEMPTION

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| Tishri | 22 | Last Great Day (<i>Simchath Torah</i>)—the general resurrection of the dead, the Great White Throne Judgment and the destruction of the incorrigible wicked (the seventh and last Holy Day). |
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The apostles proclaimed a future one-thousand-year reign of the resurrected Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah.⁵⁰ This was to follow his return, in a second coming, and the resurrection, or regeneration, to eternal life of those of his followers who had died in the faith or who remained alive at his

for the Gospel of Matthew, a document from about 65 CE, preserved in the Christian Scriptures. See Riley 1992:69.

⁵⁰ See Revelation 20:3-7 and also Hebrews 4:1-6 and 2 Peter 3:8.

return.⁵¹ They believed that the return of Jesus the Messiah was symbolized by the Feast of Trumpets. For the apostles this High Sabbath, or Holy Day, symbolically pictured the next event in the redemptive plan of God—when Jesus is to return in the clouds, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

According to the Apostle Paul, Jesus' return and the resurrection was to be "at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead [saints] will be raised incorruptible [with eternal life], and we [Christians who are alive] shall be changed [as well]" (1 Corinthians 15:52). The Church of God, would then be immortal. Under Jesus Christ as King of Kings, the resurrected and glorified saints, then Sons of God, would rule the physical nations of the world (Revelation 2:26-27; 3:21; 5:10; 20:4-6) as God brings about worldwide redemption (Revelation 11:15).⁵² As kept by the early church, the Feast of Tabernacles was an annual testimonial symbolic of this yet-to-be great event in history. Moreover, Acts reports that Paul believed that "there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked" (Acts 24:14-15).

Following the one thousand years, also called the Millennium, would occur the general resurrection of the dead for judgment.⁵³ This Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11-12) foreshadowed by the great Day of the feast or the Last Great Day, symbolizing a massive resurrection of humanity.⁵⁴ All of those who died without encountering God through a personal calling in this age would by resurrection of the dead be returned to physical life and given their chance to encounter God through Jesus Christ. This is to be an ages-encompassing redemption for the early church believed

⁵¹ See 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; I Corinthians 15:50-53; Matthew 19:28; 22:31-32; 25:31-34; and Luke 13:28

⁵² The apostles were premillennialists in that they taught that Jesus Christ would return before the one thousand year millennial reign on earth. Today premillennialists generally believe that Christ will return to the earth with a cataclysmic judgment of the whole world. Following the Millennium he would separate the surviving unbelievers from the believers, with the unbelievers proceeding directly into judgment.

⁵³ See John 5:29 Revised English Bible and Isaiah 65:20. This does not include Christians in this age, as judgment is now on the house of God (1 Peter 4:17), nor those converted in the Millennium.

⁵⁴ See Leviticus 23:34, 36.

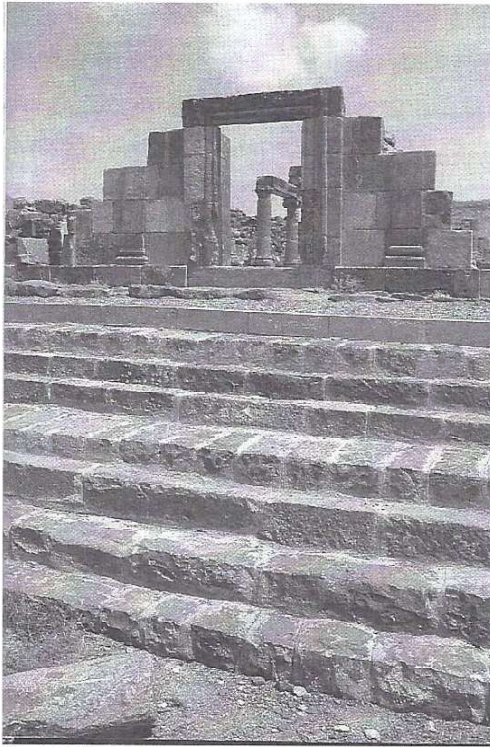
in global redemption. They rejected the hopeless view of the Sadducees that at death a person “is no more” and “has left us forever” for they held a wider hope for all humanity when after the Millennium salvation would be open to those who died in spiritual ignorance without encountering God in their first lifetime (Hebrews 11:35; Revelation 20:5).

The early church believed that this age was not “the only day of salvation” but “a” day of salvation. The rendering of the Apostle Paul’s quotation at 2 Corinthians 6:2 from Isaiah 49:8 should be “a day of salvation” for the Hebrew he quoted is not “the day” but “a day.” Moreover, Alfred Marshall in the *NASB-NIV Parallel New Testament in Greek and English* so literally renders it (Marshall 1986:528).⁵⁵ The resurrected Sons of God,⁵⁶ who then would be in the Kingdom of God, would participate in the judgment process with Jesus Christ. With this judgment human life on earth would come to a conclusion immediately followed by a final resurrection for condemnation of the incorrigible wicked to a second death. The result of “unpardonable sin”—the rejection of the Messiah Jesus of Nazareth”—the second death would consist of the complete annihilation of the incorrigible without any further resurrection. The parable of Lazarus and the rich man illustrates this apostolic teaching. The fate of the rich man in the parable (Luke 16:19-31) was the second death in a hell (*Gebenna*) of fire (Matthew 5:22) or a “furnace of fire” (Matthew 13:49-50).⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Due to their predisposition the exegesis of the translators resulted in their use of “the” instead of “a” in both the NASB and the NIV. See *NASB-NIV Parallel New Testament in Greek and English* (Marshall 1986).

⁵⁶ Persons brought back to life in the resurrection of the righteous dead, according to Jesus statement in Luke’s gospel at Luke 20:35-36 (see also the parallel accounts at Matthew 22:30 and Mark 12:25), are to be neither male nor female and will not be marrying nor given in marriage. Many examples in the New Testament portray the symbols of the traditional relationships in the human family unit in order to describe the relationship between God and the Church. No offense should be taken to these gender-specific references and examples. As recorded they were simply a means of using the common language and culture of the day to explain quite complex concepts to ordinary people.

⁵⁷ At the last resurrection (Revelation 20:13-15) God would destroy in the second death the life essence of the wicked (Matthew 10:28) in a “lake of fire” (Revelation 19:20; 20:10, 14-15; 21:8). Those who face the second death at the last resurrection would be those who have rejected Jesus Christ as the source of life (Acts 4:12). The judgment of angels is, according to Jude, to be on the “judgment of the great day” which the Apostle Paul believed would involve the resurrected saints (1 Corinthians 6:3).



A partially restored synagogue from the third or fourth century CE at Corazin located above the northern end of the Sea of Galilee. A BIBARCH™ Photo by Rodrigo Silva.

For the apostles it was by means of the Great White Throne Judgment that the vast majority of people who have lived on earth would be given their opportunity to receive salvation. These had died in their sins, and through no fault of their own had not responded to a gospel they had never heard. This was to be their first opportunity to hear and understand the truth of God and to learn of God's way of life (Ezekiel 37) for a period possibly as long as a full century (Isaiah 65:20). This was the apostles' answer to those who wondered about "a wider hope."

Until then the masses must await in the grave for their salvation, for according to the Apostle Peter "there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Matthew's gospel records that Jesus taught that among others in this future "day of Judgment" Sodom and Gomorrah (Matthew 10:15), the men of Nineveh from the time of Jonah (Matthew 12:41), the Queen of the South from Solomon's day (Matthew 12:42), and the people of Corazin (Matthew 11:21-22) and Capernaum (Matthew 11:23-24), would be there together along with people of Jesus' generation (Matthew 12:42).⁵⁸

In their ministry the apostles did not attempt to convert the world but rather to provide a witness to it and to reach with the gospel message such as God called to be saints. For the apostles some people were to be called in

⁵⁸ This is consistent with Job 14:14-15 wherein Job awaits in the grave until God's resurrecting call.

this age and some were to be called in the next. Each person was to await his or her calling and personal encounter with God in his or her own order. This helps to clarify the perception of death, likened to sleep, in the New Testament. No doubt because the dead were to “awaken” in a resurrection wherein families would again be united.

The community saw itself as aloof from worldly society, whether of Jewish or gentile character.⁵⁹ The early church apparently took little no part in politics nor in the political affairs of the world, but concentrated exclusively on its own operations.⁶⁰ While the sanctity of human life was a historic component in Jewish teaching, the church went further by rejecting any resort to violence against human beings. They held a pacifist ideology and took no part in war, which led to difficulty in the 66-73 CE and 132-135 CE Jewish nationalistic attempts to free themselves from Roman rule, for they appeared as traitorous by Jewish zealots and their supporters.

The early church, viewing itself as an eschatological community awaiting the institution of the Kingdom of God, maintained a strong belief in the imminent return of Jesus. Until about 60 CE, the apostles expected the Messiah to return to set up his kingdom during their lifetime. The Apostle Paul, during the decade of the fifties, taught that Jesus of Nazareth would return in the lifetime of that generation. “Behold,” he wrote to the Corinthian church ca. 55 CE, “I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet” (1 Corinthians 15:51-52).

Confirmation of this teaching was in his ca. 51 CE first epistle to the Thessalonians. “Then we who are alive and remain,” Paul wrote, “shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and Thus we shall always be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians. 4:17).⁶¹ In the sixties the apostles appear to have realized that Jesus was not to return until long after their deaths which presumably prompted them to initiate the

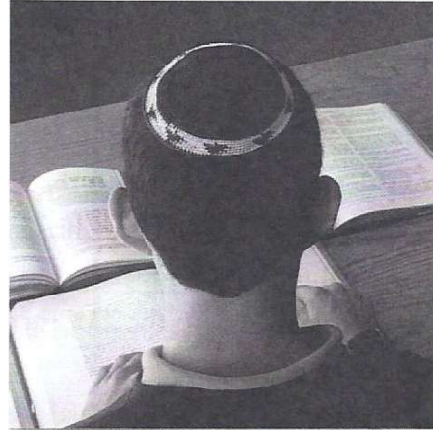
⁵⁹ See James 1:27; 4:4; and 1 John 2: 15-17.

⁶⁰ See Romans 12:2; 2 Peter 2:20.

⁶¹ There is no sense of a rapture. The rapture is the erroneous teaching that Christ may at any moment return in the air to take the saints prior to the Great Tribulation, after which Christ will come to earth with the saints, and rule for a thousand years.

assembly of a compendium of Christian writings for future generations, which became known in later times as the New Testament, as the apostolic complement to the Hebrew Scriptures.

The men wore short hair (1 Corinthians 11:7, 14) and the women long hair (1 Corinthians 11:10, 15). Paul freely discussed the length of men's and women's hair in his first epistle to the church at Corinth. He made it plain that hair comprised a covering for the head (1 Corinthians 11:7, 10-11, 13-15). A woman's hair was her emblem of femininity and she was to keep it at sufficient length to demonstrate her submissiveness to authority.⁶² Paul did not discuss the Arabic-type veil worn by Moslem



A "covering" known as a yarmulke or kippa, that is a skull cap, is a symbol of contrition to be worn by observant Jewish men until restoration of the sacrifices and a yet to be Third Temple. A BIBARCH™ Photo by Stacey Lindsey Silva.

women centuries later, nor hats or scarves. The epistle was written to the Church of God of Corinth. In this Roman colonial city in Greece the veil simply was neither part of the culture nor the custom of the times.

Similarly, Paul's reference to men praying with their heads covered referred to the length of their hair. Except for the Nazarite vow, it was shameful for men to look like women. For a man to wear long hair was a shame—it made him appear effeminate and less than the role model he was to be. A man's short hair was his emblem of masculinity and symbolic of his primacy in the family unit.

After the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Second Temple in CE 70, observant Jews began praying and living with a covering known as a

⁶² Paul wrote ca. 62 CE to Timothy, who was then serving as an overseer of the churches of Ephesus, that he wanted "women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly garments..." (1 Timothy 2:9). The issue was simply feminine modesty within extant Greek culture. Peter, who encouraged married women to have chaste and respectful behavior, wrote to them "let not your adornment be external only—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, and putting on dresses;..." (1 Peter 3:3).

kippa (Hebrew) or *yarmulke* (Yiddish), a skull cap),⁶³ on their heads. This covering was to comprise a sign or symbol of contrition and humility until the restoration of the Temple as the Third Temple.⁶⁴ This was not the practice of the Church of God.

The Judeo-Christian Perspective

Overall, the cultural heritage of the Church remained predominantly of Jewish character until the First Jewish War with the Romans (66–73 CE). During this Judeo-Christian Period (31–73 CE)⁶⁵ the greater Church looked to the headquarters congregation at Jerusalem for leadership. The period closed with the 73 CE collapse of the First Jewish Revolt at the fall of Masada.

By then Christianity had lost its literal “mother of all churches,” that being the headquarters congregation at Jerusalem and its synagogue, and witnessed the deaths of the apostles James, Peter and Paul. From this point forward Christianity as a whole became increasingly divided in faith and praxis, nearly devoid of any centralized form of leadership or ecclesiastical authority. The Apostle John made his final headquarters at Ephesus where he died in the late 90s.

⁶³ Today this is often referred to as a *kippa*, a covering, from *kippur*.

⁶⁴ When the sacrifices ceased, upon the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans, observant Jews were left without the proper forum for achieving the atonement of Leviticus 16-17. The high priest was to make annual atonement for “all the assembly of Israel” (Leviticus 16:17). The wearing of the *yarmulke* (Yiddish) or *kippa* (Hebrew) in the synagogues and at holy sites, such as the Western Wall, formerly called the “Wailing Wall,” at the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, was an invention of the rabbis in response to the observant Jew’s need for the *kippur*, “covering” or “atonement” associated with the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:29). By this means Jews sought to demonstrate through a symbolic “covering” their contrition and humility until the sacrifices recommence with a yet future Third Temple.

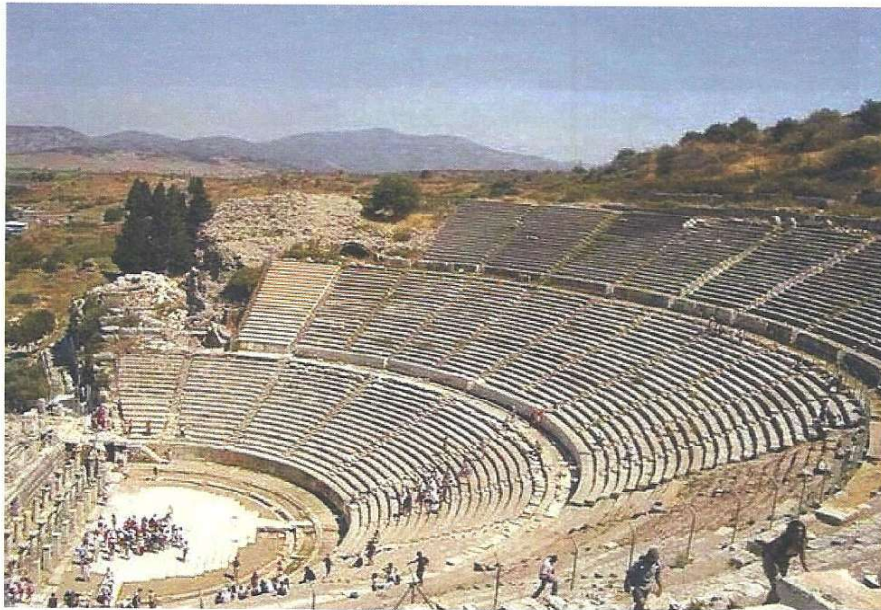
⁶⁵ Codex W [Washingtonianus or Washingtonensis, designated by W or 032 in Gregory-Aland numbering], contains the earliest recorded chronology of apostolic times. In all four Gospels the birth of Jesus of Nazareth is placed in 750 AUC (our 4 BCE) and the Crucifixion in 784 AUC (our 31 CE). AUC stands for *Anno Urbis Conditae* that is “from the founding of the city” of Rome. To convert AUC to CE, subtract 753 or to BCE years subtract 754. Flavius Josephus in his *Antiquities of the Jews* (17.6.4 §164), tells of a lunar eclipse in the final year of Herod’s life. The only eclipse that meets Josephus’ description and allows for the 4 BCE birth of Jesus of Nazareth occurred January 9/10 in 1 BCE (1721066 JD). Josephus further reports that Herod’s death occurred before a spring Passover (*Antiquities* 17.9.3 §213) placing Herod’s death between January 9-March 1.

Ephesus

In 55 CE the Apostle Paul planned to spend the winter in Corinth (1 Corinthians 16:5-8) after going through Macedonia, which is what he in fact did (Acts 20:2-3; 2 Corinthians 2:13; 7:5; 8:1; 9:2-4), but he intended to remain at Ephesus until Pentecost CE 56 (1 Corinthians 16:8). When a great riot occurred at Ephesus instigated by one Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Diana, Paul nearly lost his life (Acts 19:23-41).

Paul wanted to go to the theater to address the rioting people but some of the officials of the Roman province of Asia, who were his friends, restrained him from doing so (Acts 19:30-31). Presumably Paul left Ephesus after Pentecost in 56 CE but we cannot rule out his leaving before Pentecost due to the riot.

He undertook a short trip to Macedonia, perhaps to finalize arrangements for the coming Feast of Tabernacles, and possibly Philippi on his way to Corinth (Acts 19:21, 20:1, 1 Corinthians 16:8). From Ephesus he and his party first traveled to Troas where he expected Titus to meet him but Titus did not come.



The ancient theater at Ephesus was the scene of a major disturbance instigated by the silversmith Demetrius protesting the teachings of the Apostle Paul. The town clerk (grammateus) quieted the crowd which then disbursed (Act 19:38-41). After the uproar ceased, Paul called the disciples to himself, embraced them, and departed to go to Macedonia (Acts 20:1).

Paul and his party suffered unpleasant experiences after he left Ephesus. He says “We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life” (2 Corinthians 1:8). Some speculate on the basis of 2 Corinthians 4:16 and 5:10 that this was an illness. Paul, however, seems to be referring to literal events that occurred on this Ephesus to Troas leg of his trip.



The site of ancient Pella. Some ancient sources report that a remnant of the Jerusalem headquarters church, the mother of all churches, relocated to Pella prior to the First Jewish Revolt. Pella was a Greek city in the Decapolis, located east of the Jordan River, in what is now the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

The Nazarenes

In the first Christian century the Jews of Judea and Galilee referred to the followers of Jesus of Nazareth as Nazarenes. They preferred, however, to refer to their fellowship as the Church of God, presumably in Hebrew *qahal 'el*, the contraction of *qahal 'elohim* (“Congregation of God” or “Assembly of God”) understanding it to be the company elect of God and determined by God to be the center and crystallization-point of eschatological Israel (Roloff, 1990, p. 1:412). Their tendency was to preserve established traditions, ways and doctrines. Their everyday language was Mishnaic

Hebrew.⁶⁶ The early Christians known as Hellenists were their Greek-speaking counterpart.

Sometimes confused with the Nazarenes was the heretical sect of the Ebionites. The sect was an obscure Messianic Jewish cult extant from apostolic times to the fifth century. The sect was an early heresy that broke with the Nazarenes, i.e., the Church of God centered at Jerusalem while the Apostle James served as its overseer, ca. 49 CE, in the matter of keeping Torah including practicing ritual circumcision and observing the whole Law of Moses. Presumably they left the fellowship of the Church of God (the Nazarenes) soon after the Apostle Paul met with the apostles Peter, John and James about the applicability of the law of Moses to Gentile Christians and whether or not Gentiles had to first become Jews to be real Christians as set forth in Acts 15.

The Ebionites insisted on strict compliance with the Mosaic code and the ritual circumcision of males. They refused to accept the divine nature of Jesus, seeing him simply as an ordinary human being, the biological issue of Mary and Joseph, preferring to keep the early community of Jesus' followers in the context of first-century Judaism.

The Ebionites met in synagogues, as did the Nazarenes. In a fourth century discussion of the Ebionites, Epiphanius wrongly identifies the Ebionites as the successors of the Nazarenes. He states that "they have elders and archisynagogues, and they call their church a synagogue and not a Church and honor Christ in name only" [Epiphanius, *Panarion* 30:18, 2 as set forth in *Patristic Evidence for Jewish—Christian Sects* by (Klign, 1973, p. 187). By the time of Epiphanius Gentile Christians generally referred to their own meeting places as churches (Latin: *ecclesia*; Greek: *ἐκκλησία*) not synagogues.

⁶⁶ The common language of the people of the land (*Am ha-Aretz*) of Israel in Herodian times was Mishnaic Hebrew not Aramaic as so many Protestant scholars assume. Most scholars in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries regarded Aramaic as the common language of Judea during the first century. See (Reicke, 1968, pp. 10, 63) and (Eerdman, 1978, p. 28). With the discovery of the Bar-Kochba letters the evidence suggests that Mishnaic Hebrew was the prevalent language of a Judean bilingual society wherein the population likely spoke fluent Mishnaic Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. Note that Paul spoke to the people, after being taken into custody by the Roman military guard, in the Hebrew language (Acts 21:40) and that Papias held that Matthew first wrote his gospel in Hebrew (Eusebius 39.10, Boyle 1955:127) as held Pantaenus (Eusebius 5.10, Boyle 1955:190).

Rejecting the Apostle Paul, the Ebionites appear to have split off from the Nazarenes not later than the time of writing of Paul's epistle to Titus ca. 62 CE. Paul referred to "those of the circumcision" (Titus 1:10) teaching for "sordid gain" in reference to collecting the tithes and offerings of the people. When Paul wrote to the church at Philippi ca. 61 CE and warned them to "beware of the false circumcision, for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh" (Philippians 3:2-3) he appears to have been dealing with this same group.⁶⁷

The Hellenists

The Hellenists were the Church of God, the *ekklesia tou Theou* (Congregation of God), in the Hellenistic Diaspora (or the Dispersion centered in Asia Minor) characterized by more tolerant views and less inclined to adopt or retain Jewish culture. The Hellenists at Antioch of Syria were the first to be called Christians. These congregations were in the general region first ministered to by the Apostle Paul and his associates.

The Apostle Paul, originally known as Saul of Tarsus, is generally considered one of the most important figures of the Apostolic Age. The New Testament introduces him as one of Christianity's most zealous enemies, but handpicked by Jesus Christ to become one of the gospel's most committed messengers. Paul traveled extensively and tirelessly through the ancient Greco-Roman world, taking the message of salvation to the Gentiles. In the mid-30s to the mid-50s, he founded several churches in Asia Minor and Europe. Paul used his status as both a Jew and a Roman citizen by birthright (Acts 22:28) to advantage in his ministry to both Jewish and Roman audiences.

Paul described himself as "a Hebrew born of Hebrews," a Pharisee (Philippians 3:5) and one who advanced in Judaism beyond many of his peers.

⁶⁷ This Ebionite, or Christianized Pharisee faction of Messianic Jews appear to be the "so-called circumcision" to whom Paul refers in Ephesians 2:11 and "those of the circumcision" among the trouble makers at Crete (Titus 1:1, 14). While the evidence is yet inconclusive as Christianized Pharisees, the Ebionites, had more compelling reasons to raid Judeo-Christian congregations than non-believing traditional Jews. They also would have had more knowledge of and ready access to Judeo-Christian assemblies.

He was a native of the free city of Tarsus, the capital city in the Roman province of Cilicia (located in present-day southern Turkey). His father was of the strictest sect of the Jews, a Pharisee, of the tribe of Benjamin (Acts 23:6; Philippians 3:5). We learn nothing regarding his mother. We read of his sister and his sister's son (Acts 23:16), and of other relatives (Romans 16:7, 11-12). There is no indication that he was ever married.

According to Jewish custom, however, he learned a trade before entering on the more direct preparation as a rabbinical teacher. The trade he acquired was the making of tents from goats' hair cloth, a trade which was one of the most common in Tarsus. His preliminary education completed, he was sent, when about thirteen years of age, to a Pharisaic Rabbinical school in Jerusalem led by the well-known rabbi Gamaliel. Here he became a pupil (Acts 22:3) and spent many years in an elaborate study of the Scriptures and of the many questions concerning them with which the rabbis dealt. Many today consider Gamaliel one of the greatest teachers of Pharisaic Judaism.

Paul's first appearance in the Bible is as a zealous young Pharisee who witnesses the stoning of Stephen, the first Christian martyr (Acts 6:8-7:60). He leads a major persecution against Christians in Jerusalem then travels to Damascus to search out and arrest still more believers. He zealously persecuted the early followers of Jesus of Nazareth and violently tried to destroy the newly forming Church. Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus changed the course of his life.

While traveling to Damascus Paul was struck blind and he heard the voice of Jesus asking why he was fighting his conscience and persecuting believers. This encounter led him to repent of his sins and, through baptism and the laying on of hands (Acts 9:17), to become a Christian. He soon began preaching the gospel so powerfully that, to avoid his own murder, he had to flee to Arabia. There he spent nearly three years, by himself, in the Arabian Desert. During this period, Jesus Christ personally taught him the truth and ways of God.

From Arabia, Paul returned to Damascus, the city where certain Jews had wanted him dead just three years before. Learning of another plot to take his life, he fled to Jerusalem. There his thirty-five year evangelistic career began. At Jerusalem he sought to fellowship with others but they were fearful of him due to his reputation of persecuting the people of God. Barnabas, a

man known for being encouraging, took him personally to the apostles and vouched for his character. The church then welcomed him warmly.

Paul vigorously preached that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. His leadership, influence, and legacy led to the formation of scattered Christian communities dominated by Gentile groups in Asia Minor. Paul authored fourteen of the twenty-seven books in the New Testament and approximately half of the Acts of the Apostles deals with Paul's life and works.

The Apostle Paul's ministry included three apostolic tours in the regions of Asia Minor and Greece where he evangelized, established congregations, and ordained elders.⁶⁸ Under civil arrest he was taken to Rome in 60 CE where he remained a civil or political prisoner for two years (ca. February 60 to ca. February 62). Upon his release he apparently traveled to Spain and on to Roman Britain.

The book of Acts and Paul's writings contain an underlying chronological path which helps trace the growth and the development of the Church in the regions Paul served through 60 CE. After his release from his Roman civil imprisonment we can only infer a soft chronology based on his epistles. Historians have attempted to detail this period of Paul's ministry and they have given us several alternatives. Presumably he sailed from Rome to Spain and then traveled on by boat to Roman Britain. Leaving Britain he returned to the Mediterranean region visiting several cities before the Romans arrested him in Greece on criminal charges.

Whether he traveled by boat from Britain along the Atlantic Coast to the Mediterranean or took an overland trade route across Europe as did the Bordeaux pilgrim in 333 CE is unknown. A spurious document known as the *Sonnini Manuscript* or more popularly *The Lost Chapter of the Acts of the Apostles* (Capt, 2009) purports to be an account of the Apostle Paul's journey into Spain and Britain but it is a non-canonical fraud as there is no evidence of authenticity.

⁶⁸ In the literature these tours are usually called "missionary journeys" but the Apostle Paul was not a missionary. The word missionary has anachronistic overtones. Therefore we use the phrase "apostolic tours" as they served evangelistic purposes.

Placement of the Pauline Epistles

First Division: Letters to the Seven Churches

Romans—The great problem of human sin and reconciliation with God.

1 and 2 Corinthians—Concerning all sinful practices and pertaining to repentance and the true way of God.

Galatians—Spiritual weakness and the error of reversion.

Ephesians—Unity of the Jews and Gentiles in the true temple of Christ (the Church).

Philippians—Love, knowledge and wisdom, and serving without vanity.

Colossians—Overcoming and dealing with false teachings.

1 and 2 Thessalonians—Warning of the mystery of iniquity (lawlessness), the Second Coming, Resurrection, and Judgment

Second Division: Letter to the Church-at-Large

Hebrews—Superiority of the Priesthood under the New Covenant and Christ's return and millennial rule.

Third Division: Letters to Individuals

1 and 2 Timothy—Pastoral administration, warnings of apostasy, and remaining steadfast.

Titus—Church government and organization, and a warning concerning Jewish fables and the commandments of men (presumably a reference to the Ebionites).

Philemon—Handling a problem in the Church with love, tact, and diplomacy.

For the canonical edition of the New Testament the Apostle Paul arranged the order of his epistles commencing with the first principles of the apostles' doctrines of repentance, faith, baptism, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. As you read from Romans through 2 Thessalonians you find intensive instruction about the nature of the faith once delivered. Each successive epistle presupposes the previous material. Each epistle successively builds upon the material preceding it.

After 2 Thessalonians Paul placed a redacted version of an epistle we call Hebrews, with the prescript⁶⁹ removed, thereby making a letter originally written to a specific congregation applicable to the church at large. The epistle of Hebrews summarizes, in the first six chapters, the material on being a Christian. It then proceeds into far more mature doctrinal subject matter focusing upon the superiority of the priesthood of Jesus Christ, the Levitical priesthood, and Christ Jesus's return and Millennial rule. Paul summarized the subject matter of these first six chapters in Hebrews 6:1-3 as repentance,

⁶⁹ Customarily, in the prescript of his epistles, Paul identifies himself as the author, or coauthor, designates recipients, and provides a greeting with a thanksgiving appearing immediately thereafter. As preserved, Hebrews contained neither the prescript nor the thanksgiving. The omission was obvious and deliberate. As preserved in the Scriptures, Hebrews commences with the body opening and concludes in the normal fashion of Paul's other epistles.

faith, baptism, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment to which he refers as “elementary teaching” (I Hebrews 6:1).

Paul’s travels took him to Asia Minor, Syria, Greece, Italy, presumably Spain and Roman Britain, and elsewhere. He evangelized countless cities and prepared others to do so such as Timothy, Luke and Silas. His intense dedication to the calling God gave him, however, came at great cost. He ended up spending at least five total years of his ministry as a prisoner, was whipped five times and beaten three times with rods. He also survived a stoning and endured a shipwreck in the Mediterranean. He remained faithful to God to the very end of his life, where he suffered martyrdom by beheading at the hands of the Romans during Nero’s reign. Paul’s impact on Christianity and Christian beliefs was enormous. He was a remarkable man used by God! He died as a martyr in ca. 68 CE during Nero’s reign.

On June 8, 68 CE, the Roman Senate recognized Galba and unseated Nero. On June 9 Nero committed suicide. Shortly before Nero’s death the Apostle Paul suffered execution by beheading. Tradition suggests that Roman Senator Rufus Pudens (the Rufus of Romans 16:13 and Pudens of 2 Timothy 4:21), his wife Claudia Rufina and her brother Linus (the Claudia and Linus of 2 Timothy 4:21) claimed the body and buried him in the Pudens family cemetery at a location on the Ostian Way.⁷⁰ Her brother Linus was presumably the first elder/pastor of the congregation at Rome.

To where Luke and Timothy traveled upon Paul’s death is unknown. Presumably they carried the news of his martyrdom and information concerning his completion of the canonical edition of his writings to various churches. The Apostle Peter’s associate John Mark brought the news of Paul’s death to him. John Mark’s apparent task was to leave Rome with the edited manuscripts of the fourteen canonical epistles of Paul for transfer to Peter in Babylon of Mesopotamia.

In Peter’s first epistle, written shortly after Paul’s death, John Mark is found with him (1 Peter 5:13). Babylon was the main city from which the apostles in the east operated. Peter names the provinces of Asia Minor from east to west (Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia), further

⁷⁰ Not all church historians accept the association of Pudens, Claudia and Linus with Roman Senator Rufus Pudens.

corroborating that the letter was sent from Babylon. The physical and political geography of the region reflects the route to be taken by a traveler in 68 CE.

The death of the Apostle Paul ca. 68 CE prompted Peter to write 1 Peter. The epistle of 1 Peter distinctly exhibits the concepts and language of the Apostle Paul. When Peter wrote, he obviously felt the impact of Paul's writings, and there needed to be no conscious attempt to copy or quote. How could Peter himself have become thoroughly acquainted with Paul's letters within a brief time after Paul's death? Inspired by the contents of the Pauline epistles and taking note of their powerful doctrinal character, Peter simply employed some of Paul's thoughts and expressions.

But even the use of phrases reminiscent of Paul conveyed the compelling character of Paul's writings assisted in the mission of the epistle to comfort the exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia (1 Peter 1:1). Paul's writings, making an impression on Peter, reflect strongly in 1 Peter, for they were fresh on his mind when he wrote.

The epistle underscores the unity of the Petrine-Pauline theology expressing the harmony and solidarity present in the affairs, doctrines, and understanding of first-century church leadership. Nearly two decades after Paul had made his private trip to Jerusalem with Barnabas and Titus to confer with Peter and James, for confirmation that the gospel which he preached among the Gentiles was the apostles' doctrine, the Petrine-Pauline theology remained indistinguishable (Galatians 2:1-10).

Undertaking the Great Commission

Jesus, according to Matthew's gospel, told his followers that he would set up his Church (Matthew 16:18). During his three and one half year ministry, he carefully educated his disciples for this task. He taught them the gospel message, instructed them by his example, and prepared them through his own ministry. He then commissioned his followers to complete the most exceptional charge ever given to human beings. He directed them to preach the "gospel of the kingdom of God to the whole world" (Matthew 24:14; Mark 16:15).

To outsiders, particularly the Romans, the fledgling Church of God appeared to be another small Jewish sect due to the ethnic identity of its

members. Imperial Roman authorities, often confused by the divergence of the sectarian groups forming first-century Judaism, at first simply saw the early Church of God as another annoying religious splinter group of the Jews. For the Romans to see the Church as no more than a minor faction of Judaism worked to the advantage of the apostles. The *religio licita*, or “legal religion,” sanction granted by Julius Caesar to the Jews permitted the apostles and their followers to freely engage in evangelistic activity throughout the Roman Empire for many years.

Jesus’ commission to the apostles was to “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20 NKJV). Moreover, he specifically instructed the apostles to go to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 10:5-6).

The Gospel and the Lost Tribes of Israel

Jesus of Nazareth was born of the tribe of Judah. He came to his own people, to the Jews living in the Roman province of Judea, and they rebuffed him (John 1:11). The Judean Jews, in rejecting him, said, “We will not have this man to reign over us” (Luke 19:14). According to the Apostle John, writing late in the first century, Jesus said, “And I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they shall hear My voice; and they shall become one flock *with* one shepherd” (John 10:16).

Presumably the apostles understood this reference to “other sheep” to be the scattered twelve tribes in the Diaspora or, as it appears in some modern literature, the Dispersion.⁷¹ In the culture of today’s world few people know that the ancient people of Israel were actually made up of twelve tribes.⁷²

⁷¹ Technically this reference was to all thirteen tribes as the “tribe” of Joseph consisted of two tribes namely Ephraim and Manasseh.

⁷² Under the reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon the twelve tribes of Israel formed a single nation through the union of the tribes. This confederation ended at the death of Solomon when the tribes separated into two independent states. The northern Kingdom of Israel separated itself from the Kingdom of Judah at the beginning of the reign of Solomon’s son Rehoboam. The northern tribes formed the Kingdom of Israel. The tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi made up the Kingdom of Judah to the south. In 722 BCE the Kingdom of Israel fell

The “other sheep” could not have referred to Gentiles. In the Hebrew Scriptures as well as in the New Testament only the descendants of Jacob, who had his name changed to Israel by *YHWH*, were known as “sheep.” The Gentiles could secure salvation through Jesus Christ of Nazareth (Ephesians 2:11-13) but there is no scriptural reference to them nationally as “sheep.”

Where Did the Twelve Apostles Go?

Simon, called Peter, in his capacity as chief apostle traveled to many regions including Egypt and Mesopotamia where he coordinated the work of the other apostles.

Andrew, Peter’s brother, sent to Scythia, Cappadocia, (Upper) Galatia and Bithynia [the districts to which Peter sent two of his letters]. Andrew preached in the region of Asia Minor that Paul bypassed.

James, son of Zebedee, brother of John was martyred early.

John, James’ brother, was sent to Gaul (the area of modern France) for some time [He is buried at Ephesus].

Philip was assigned Scythia and Upper Asia (meaning Asia Minor). He is buried at Hierapolis with his two daughters.

Bartholomew shared with Thomas the same vast plains, and spent part of his time in neighboring Armenia and a portion of Upper Phrygia in Asia Minor (this was the same area to which Andrew carried the Gospel, and to which Peter sent two of his letters).

Thomas was sent to Parthia then he preached to the Medes, Persians, Carmans, Hyrcani, Bactrians and the neighbor nations. These lands are known today as Iran (or Persia) and Afghanistan as far as western India.

Matthew, the publican, was first sent into Parthia and then Aethiopia, that is the Asiatic Aethiopia, lying near to India.

James, the son of Alphaeus, went to the western parts, and particularly into Spain (possibly Britain and Ireland) where he “planted Christianity.”

Jude, also named Lebbaeus Thaddaeus, had part in the ministry in Assyria and Mesopotamia.

Simon the Zealot traveled through North Africa, he was sent toward Egypt, then to Cyrene and Africa throughout Mauritania and Libya and eventually Britain.

Matthias was designated Dacia (the area of modern Romania) and Macedonia (north of Greece).

to the Assyrians. By order of its conquerors the substantial majority of its inhabitants relocated in Assyria as exiles. This was the original Diaspora. Some members of the northern tribes, however, fled to the south and joined themselves to the Kingdom of Judah. This kingdom which later fell to the Babylonians in 587 BCE added the Jews, that is the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi, and the small refugee remnant of the northern tribes to the Diaspora. When Jewish exiles returned to Judea during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah not all did so. Those who did not go back remained part of the Diaspora which by then not only extended throughout the Roman Empire but to regions and lands far beyond.

Under *Pax Romana*, with its assurance of protection throughout the Roman Empire, established trade routes facilitated travel and commerce. This permitted the free movement of the apostles, who after Pentecost, 43 CE withdrew from the Syro-Palestine area, to travel into those regions to which they were to evangelize. Greek tradition suggests that the apostles did not leave the Syro-Palestinian region until the end of a twelve years' ministry in Syria-Palestine (Hook, 2010). The destinations of the twelve apostles as preserved in ancient tradition are set forth by in the table above as taken from the traditions set forth in William Cave's *Antiquities Apostolicae* (Cave, 1836).

In the first Christian century there were large populations of Jews in Egypt and North African and in Mesopotamia. While Judeo-Christian communities existed in those regions as well, little is known about them. Tradition has Simon the Zealot traveling through North Africa being sent toward Egypt, then to Cyrene and Africa throughout Mauritania and Libya and eventually Britain. John Mark and Barnabas went to Egypt.

The classical writers refer to the mining and trading of tin in southwestern Britain suggesting significant commercial activity as tin was necessary for the making of bronze across the Empire. The Bronze Age, visible in the archeological record at about 3500 BCE at ancient Ur of Mesopotamia, began with advances in technology including the adding of tin to copper to produce bronze. Tin is a necessary ingredient for the making of Bronze. Bronze was easier to cast than copper and desired by artisans for the creation of artistic objects and after hammering bronze was a significantly harder metal for manufacturing weaponry than beaten copper. So from the dawn of the Bronze Age the mining of tin remained in demand.

Southwest Britain in the area of Cornwall had plenteous accessible deposits of tin. About 500 BCE the Greek historian Hecataeus knew of islands beyond Gaul where tin was obtained. Pytheas of Massalia travelled to Britain about 325 BCE where he found a flourishing tin trade, according to the late report of his voyage. Posidonius referred to the tin trade with Britain around 90 BCE.



A map of the Roman Empire during the Year of the Four Emperors (69 CE). Blue areas indicate provinces loyal to Vespasian and Gaius Licinius Mucianus. "Roman Empire 69" by Steerpik and Andrei. Licensed under via Wikimedia Commons.

Late in the first century BCE the Greek historian Diodorus Siculus, of Agrigium in Sicily, described ancient tin mining in Britain as follows:

They that inhabit the British promontory of Belerion by reason of their converse with strangers are more civilised and courteous to strangers than the rest are. These are the people that prepare the tin, which with a great deal of care and labour, they dig out of the ground, and that being done the metal is mixed with some veins of earth out of which they melt the metal and refine it. Then they cast it into regular blocks and carry it to a certain island near at hand called Ictis for at low tide, all being dry between there and the island, tin in large quantities is brought over in carts.

Undoubtedly the tin trade involved Jewish merchants and traders. Along such established trade routes the apostles and their associates labored and there is every reason to believe the evangelization of the British Isles occurred early in the first century. In any case the Apostle Paul most likely traveled to the British Isles after 62 CE on a fourth apostolic tour. As Jews had settled

all over the Roman Empire there is no reason to doubt that there were Jews living in Roman Britain some of whom the Apostle Paul evangelized.

The first and second Christian generations brought the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to villages and cities throughout the Roman World. They particularly worked to reach to the remnant of the ancient Ten Tribes of Israel, known as Celtic peoples, scattered across the European continent from the Anatolian Plateau of Asia Minor, to Northern Italy and Gaul, and across the English Channel into ancient Britain, Ireland and Scotland.

Postwar Christianity

The New Testament records little about the travels of the Apostle Peter. As an apostle to the circumcision (the Jewish people) one would expect he evangelized among the large Jewish diaspora populations of Egypt and Mesopotamia. The epistle of 1 Peter places him in Babylon of Mesopotamia⁷³ as well as various places throughout Syria-Palestine but we have no specific evidence of his traveling to Egypt or anywhere else.⁷⁴

Biblical historians generally place Peter's death no later than 68 CE. Upon his death the Apostle John, residing at Ephesus, had oversight of the greater Church of God. This was the postwar world. The first Jewish war ended with the fall of Masada in 73 CE. Jesus did not return before Jerusalem fell to the Romans, though many believed he would in reliance on Matthew 24 and Luke 21, in spite of the apostles explaining in the 60s that Christ's return would be at the time of another generation.

When Peter wrote the epistle of 2 Peter, he knew his death was near. As to the time and manner of his death, Peter said it would be "just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me" (2 Peter 1:14). There is no extant evidence that the Apostle Peter ever visited Italy let alone Rome. Peter did not die in Rome under Nero's reign. Interestingly, his death may have been at Jerusalem. In 1953, Italian archaeologist Bellarmino Bagatti excavated an ancient cemetery

⁷³ The city of Babylon was not a cypher for Rome until it was symbolically identified as such in the book of Revelation which dates to the late 90s CE. When the Apostle Peter penned his first canonical epistle it was about 67 CE.

⁷⁴ Many myths exist in an attempt by later Christians to identify themselves with apostolic origin.

on the Franciscan monastery site called, *Dominus Flevit* in Jerusalem where he found an ossuary dating to the first century CE bearing an unusual charcoal Hebrew inscription reading *Shimon Bar Yonah* translated Simon son of Jonah paralleling the Greek Simon Bar-Jonah of Matthew 16:17. There is some difficulty in discerning the last four characters (Finegan 1992:368-369). The names of Mary and Martha were found on another ossuary and adjacent to it one with the name of their brother Lazarus (Peterson 1962, Bagatti and Milik 1959). The weight of the evidence would suggest that this is the place of interment of the great Apostle.

The prevailing scholarly assumption is that his death occurred before 70 CE based on the “structure of the writings” found on ossuaries found in the tomb but it could have been and probably was later. The point is that the death of Peter may have occurred after 70 CE whether or not *Dominus Flevit* was the venue of his tomb. Perhaps the location of the tomb in relation to the Roman siege lines could provide additional data.

The New Testament shows Peter in residence at the headquarters congregation at Jerusalem before the First Jewish War and from there making visits to other areas where there were large populations of Jews. It would be reasonable for Peter to have returned to Jerusalem following the fall of the city in 70 CE to assess the condition of the Church in the Jewish homeland and to strengthen the faith of the brethren but inadvertently getting caught up in the confusion of the times and becoming a Christian martyr. He probably died at the hands of the Roman government as an enemy of the state. One must remember that the war continued on until the fall of Masada in 73 CE.

John’s Gospel records Jesus’ words to Peter, “‘when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish.’ This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God” (John 21:18-19). John’s Gospel does not tell us where or how Peter died—just that he would get old and his death would glorify God.

The words “stretch out your hands,” as expressing symbolically the personal surrender previous to being girded (either binding him or preparing him for what was to come) by another. The expression carrying him to a place where he did not want to go evidently refers to the place of execution.

Thus Jesus' prophecy regarding Peter showed that the apostle would die a martyr's death but there is no indication of the manner of his death.



A scribe was a person who copies documents, especially one employed to do this before the invention of printing. Ancient scribes made multiple copies of the writings of the apostles and later of the entire New Testament. They wrote on vellum (parchment) and on papyrus. Sometimes a scribe would serve as an *amanuensis* (one who took dictation and made copies of manuscripts).

Understand that at the writing of 2 Peter sufficient time had passed for scribes to make codex copies of the epistles of Paul and for people to become aware that the set of Pauline epistles, as they appear in the NT today, were understood to be Scripture for the Church. The sense of 2 Peter is that there had been time for Christians to have read them or heard them read in Sabbath services, which means that some by then had both misunderstood and twisted the message they conveyed. This suggests that placement of Paul's death could be understood as up to two or three years earlier than Peter's death.

In 2 Peter the apostle went on to disclose his intent to bequeath the Church a legacy far greater than his two short canonical epistles. "Moreover," he wrote, "I will see to it that after I am gone you will have means of remembering these things at all times" (2 Peter 1:15 NEB). By then the

leading apostles (Peter, John and Paul) had come to understand that the resurrection of the righteous dead and Christ's return at the end of the age were many centuries future (2 Peter 3:8). This led them to preserve their basic teachings for future generations.

| Growth Projections 30-135 | | | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------|---|--|--|---|
| Year | Decade n | Number of Christians at a 1/3 (33.3%) per decade growth rate beginning 30 CE | Number of Christians of Jewish Stock at a 23.3% per decade growth rate beginning 40 CE | Derived Number of Christians of Gentile Stock beginning 40 CE | % Jewish Ethnicity Total Christians in the Roman Empire |
| 30 | 0 | P ₀ =3,500 | 3,500 | 0 | 100% |
| 40 | 1 | 4,667 | 4,667 | 0 | 100% |
| 50 | 2 | 6,222 | 5,754 | 468 | 92% |
| 60 | 3 | 8,296 | 7,095 | 1,202 | 86% |
| 70 | 4 | 11,062 | 8,748 | 2,314 | 79% |
| 80 | 5 | 14,749 | 10,786 | 3,963 | 73% |
| 90 | 6 | 19,665 | 13,299 | 6,366 | 68% |
| 100 | 7 | 26,220 | 16,398 | 9,822 | 63% |
| 110 | 8 | 34,960 | 20,218 | 14,741 | 58% |
| 120 | 9 | 46,613 | 24,929 | 21,684 | 53% |
| 130 | 10 | 62,150 | 30,738 | 31,413 | 49% |
| 140 | 11 | 82,867 | 37,900 | 44,967 | 46% |
| 150 | 12 | 110,489 | 46,730 | 63,759 | 42% |

In his last days we find the Apostle Peter compiling a permanent collection of apostolic teachings regarding the New Covenant to inform future generations of God's way of life. This collection of writings would serve to protect the Church (2 Peter 1:15 cf. Hebrews 13:7; John 14:6). God's people were to rely on this set of writings as authentic and sanctioned as Scripture for the Church. As Scripture these writings would shield and protect the Church from false letters and spurious documents and preserve the apostles' doctrine for all ages.

The Apostle Peter warned the people of God to be on guard and vigilant. He perceived that spurious teaching and apostasy would come and spread. He wrote "there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them,

bringing swift destruction upon themselves” (2 Peter 2:1). Peter foresaw troublesome and tumultuous times coming on the Church.

At the time Peter wrote his second epistle there were statistically about 10,000 professing Christians of Jewish ethnicity and perhaps about 2,000 of Gentile ethnicity. All Jews in the Greco-Roman world had been Hellenized to some degree. It would appear that gentileization of Christianity resulted in the outright rejection of all forms of Judeo-Christianity. Gentiles became the majority about 225 CE. In third century the history of Christianity shows Gentile Christians following many different Christianities. Nevertheless, the steady rise of the Greco-Roman Orthodox brought them to prominence.

Peter did not want the people of God to be ignorant of the Truth but rather to know the facts relating to the ministry and teaching of Christ Jesus and the work of the apostles. “For we did not follow cunningly devised fables” he wrote, “when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but [we apostles] were eyewitnesses of His majesty” (2 Peter 1:16).

Peter called his readers attention to dissident pseudo-Christian groups who circulated cleverly devised fables (1:16) and false words (2:3). Today we know of many such spurious works including, but not limited to, *The Didache* (Owles, 2014), *Epistle of Barnabas* (Epistle of Barnabas, 2009), *The Gospel of Judas* (Meyer R. K., 2008), *The Gospel of Peter* (Pick, 2010), *The Gospel of Thomas* (The Gospel of Thomas with the Greek Gospel of Thomas, 2009), *Letter of Peter to Philip* (Meyer, 1981), and *The Shepherd of Hermas* (The Shepherd of Hermas, 2003).

The Gospel Goes to Egypt

Presumably Christianity first came into Egypt in 31 CE. Egyptian Jews (probably some from Alexandria) were in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:8-11). Some were witnesses to the events of the time and the gospel which they took back to Egypt. The apostles undoubtedly baptized some (Acts 2:31). The book of Acts further tells of Apollos, a Jew from Alexandria who knew the baptism of John (Acts 18:24-25). According to Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History* 2.16) (Boyle, 1987, p. 65), John Mark was the first who

was sent to Egypt, where he preached the gospel that he had written, and established churches in Alexandria.⁷⁵

Luke tells of Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:36-40) parting ways at Antioch of Syria, dating to 50 CE, following the critical Acts 15 Jerusalem Conference. Barnabas was a Levite from the island of Cyprus and a cousin of John Mark.⁷⁶ Barnabas took John Mark to Cyprus with him and they presumably traveled on to Alexandria. Travel and trade between Cyprus and Alexandria were well established at that time. It would have been a natural route for Barnabas to travel. See *Cambridge Ancient History* (Turner, 1984, pp. 131, 164). The implication from the NT epistles is that John Mark spent time with his cousin Barnabas evangelizing the Jews in Egypt and later became an aide to the Apostle Peter.

A large number of Jews had settled in a region in ancient Egypt's Nile delta known as the Land of Onias. Located in the nome of Heliopolis the Land of Onias included the city of Leontopolis.⁷⁷ While accounts differ on the details, it is known that the Jews of Leontopolis had a functioning Temple, presided over by *kohanim* of the family of Onias IV (for whom the "Land of Onias" was named). Like its predecessor the Jewish Temple at Elephantine (destroyed in the 4th century BCE), the Temple at Leontopolis was the only Jewish sanctuary outside of Jerusalem where Jews could offer sacrifices.

Realize that in the period 31-73 CE there were more Jews in Egypt than anywhere else in the world—including the Holy Land itself. Why would Peter the apostle to the circumcision not evangelize among them? If so, it suggests how John Mark may have become an aide to the Apostle Peter. They worked together with the Apostle Barnabas in Egypt.

Josephus reports that following the First Jewish War (66-73 CE), the Roman emperor Vespasian considered that the Leontopolis temple might

⁷⁵ John Mark appears to have brought a copy of his Gospel, completed about 69 CE in Antioch of Syria, with him to Egypt where he completed some editing and re-penning of pages in Aun, Egypt in 73 CE. He then finished the canonical edition in 97 CE in Ephesus presumably closing the canon of the New Testament with the Apostle John.

⁷⁶ Barnabas was not the uncle of John Mark as portrayed in some commentaries.

⁷⁷ Located about 180 stadia from Memphis. A Roman stadia was about 1/8 mile.

become a new center for Jewish rebellion. He therefore ordered the governor of Egypt, Lupus, to demolish it. Lupus died in the process. The task then fell upon his successor Paulinus thereby dating the event roughly from March to August 73 CE.