

ARE JEWS AND CHRISTIANS



AT ODDS WITH JESUS CHRIST?

About the Cover: Old Testament prophecies, such as found in Isaiah 53, were fulfilled by Jesus Christ; however, most Jews reject Him as the Messiah. New Testament statements by Jesus Christ about keeping the law of God, such as found in Matthew 5, have been rejected by those who falsely claim to be His followers. This booklet explains why they are both wrong!

This booklet is a free educational service, provided by the "Church of the Eternal God" in the United States of America, in collaboration with the "Global Church of God" in the United Kingdom and the "Church of God, a Christian Fellowship" in Canada. Printed in the USA 2021. This booklet is not to be sold.

Scriptures in the booklet are quoted from the New King James version ((c)1988 Thomas-Nelson, Inc. Publishers) unless otherwise noted.

Authors: Brian Gale and Norbert Link

Editorial Review Team: Norbert Link, Dave Harris, Rene Messier, Brian Gale, Michael Link, Margaret Adair, Johanna Link and Dawn Thompson.

Graphic Design: Shelly Bruno; Cover image: Shelly Bruno

Contents

Introduction	1
Part 1	
Chapter 1 The Pharisees	3
They Were a Small but Influential Group	3
They Accepted Both the Written and the ‘Oral’ Law	5
They Were Rebuked by Jesus on a Number of Occasions	6
They Falsely Accused, and Tested Jesus, About Many Things	6
They Were Instrumental, Along With Others, in Plotting Jesus’ Death	8
Chapter 2 The Sadducees	11
They Did Not Believe in the Resurrection	11
They Acknowledged Only the Written Torah as Binding	12
Political Power Was Important to Them	13
They and the Pharisees Mentioned Together in Just Eight Verses	13
A Clash Was Inevitable With Jesus About the Resurrection	14
Jesus Did Recognize Their Authority in the Temple Service	15
They Kept Pentecost on the Correct Day, Unlike the Pharisees	16
Chapter 3 The Scribes	19
The Origin, Role and Function of the Scribes	20
They Were Well Educated and Highly Trained Professionals	20
The Process for Creating Copies of the Torah and Other Books	21
They Later Added Many Man-Made Traditions	22
They, and Others, Questioned Jesus’ Authority	23
Jesus Said That Scribes and Pharisees Were Hypocrites	24
Chapter 4 The Elders	27
Jesus Challenged About “Transgressing” the “Tradition of the Elders”	28
Elders, and Others, Had Evil Intentions Towards Jesus	29
Elders Involved With Bribery and Opposition to Early Christianity	30
Stephen Accused of Blasphemy and Stoned to Death	31
The Office of “Elder” Within the Church of God	32
Chapter 5 The Sanhedrin	35
The Sanhedrin Could Arrest and Convict But Not Execute the Death Penalty	35
The Sanhedrin Was Abolished in 66–70 AD	36
The Pharisees and Sadducees Were United in Their Opposition to Jesus	37
Nicodemus, Gamaliel and Joseph of Arimathea were Council Members	38
Was the Apostle Paul a Council Member?	38
The Trial of Jesus by the Sanhedrin Was Illegal	40
Jesus Was Murdered	42
Chapter 6 The Essenes, Zealots and Herodians	43
The Essenes	43
The Essenes Were Regulated by Strict Rules	43
The Essenes Have Gained Fame Through the Discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls	43

The Essenes Believed in the Immortality of the Soul	44
The Zealots	45
The Zealots Favored Armed Rebellion Against Rome	46
One of Jesus' Disciples Was Simon the Zealot	47
The Herodians	48
The Herodians Were a Political Party Rather Than a Religious One	48
Conclusion	51
Part 2	
Chapter 1 Most Jews in Denial	55
A Few Jews Did Believe Him Then, But Most Did Not.....	55
The Jews Killed Jesus Because of Ignorance	56
The Jews Do Not Believe That Jesus Fulfilled the Messianic Prophecies	58
The Jewish Idea of the Mashiach Is That of a Great Human Leader	59
Proof That Jesus Did Exist.....	59
Chapter 2 The Jews Question the Accuracy of the New Testament Scriptures..	63
The New Testament is an Accurate Record of Jesus' Life on Earth	63
Failed Human Messiahs	64
Jesus Commanded His Followers to Be Peacemakers, Not Warlords	65
Judaism Misunderstands the Old Testament Messianic Prophecies.....	66
Mathematical Probability That Jesus Is the Christ.....	67
There Are Hundreds of Old Testament Prophecies That Jesus Fulfilled.....	69
Chapter 3 The Messianic Idea in Judaism	71
The Jews Believe That the Human Mashiach Will Be Anointed as King in the End of Days.....	72
Isaiah 53 Refers to the Birth of Jesus, Not to the Jewish Nation	72
Jesus' Return to Earth Will Be as the Supernatural Son of God	73
The Ruling Messiah Could Not Be a Human Being	74
An Imposter Will Arise at the End Time Claiming to Be God.....	76
Chapter 4 According to the Jews, When Will the Mashiach Come and What Will He Do?	79
The Bible Shows That the Return of Jesus Can Be Delayed or Accelerated.....	79
The Jews Believe That the Human Mashiach Will Arise When Most Needed....	81
The Human Jewish Mashiach Will Bring About Political and Spiritual Redemption	83
Olam Ha-Ba: The Jewish Messianic Age	83
The World Will Recognize That God Is a Family.....	84
The Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord Precede the Second Coming of Jesus.....	85
There Will Be False Christs at the End Time Deceiving People.....	86
Conclusion	87
Part 3 Nominal Christianity at Odds with Jesus Christ	89
Nominal Christianity Today Is Not the Same as Apostolic Christianity	89
Heaven and Hell	90
Hell and Purgatory Are Not Biblical Concepts	91
The Kingdom of God Has Not Yet Come	91
The Law of God Is Still In Full Force and Effect Today.....	92

The Weekly and Annual Sabbaths Are Still to Be Kept Today	92
The Only Sign That Jesus Gave Was That He Would Be In the Grave for 3 Days and 3 Nights.....	94
The Holy Trinity Is Unbiblical	95
Jesus Did Not Have an Immortal Soul; Nor Do We.....	96
Jesus Will Return Visibly When All Who Are Alive Shall See Him	97
Traditional Christianity Does In Fact Reject the TRUE Jesus of the Bible	98
Conclusion.....	99

Introduction

Why was the religious establishment usually at odds with Jesus when He was here on earth? Why are the Jews still waiting for their version of a Messiah, and is that expectation biblical? And why is traditional Christianity rejecting Jesus Christ?

In the first part of this booklet, we will endeavor to answer this question, by discussing the different religious groups who were all part of the Jewish establishment at the time of Jesus.

When we read the New Testament, it becomes obvious even to the most casual reader, that Jesus was constantly being followed and questioned by those members of the different religious groupings within the Jewish race during His ministry almost two thousand years ago.

As we will see, they never once got the upper hand with Jesus; He was always a match for their trickery and cunning. He challenged and denounced their false behavior, telling the people: "Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, *that* observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do" (Matthew 23:3).

He was very straightforward in His approach. The world has a notion that Jesus was just "meek and mild" and that was true, but He also had a steely determination to preach the Truth and call out the phony religious doublespeak of those who should have known better. Many of the religious establishment were hypocrites, and Jesus was not negligent in pointing that out to them. In Matthew 23, He pulled no punches as He addressed them eight times, saying "woe to you scribes and Pharisees," and in verse 27 He said: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead *men's* bones and all uncleanness."

Being on the end of such rebukes and not having the humility to see that what Jesus said was true, they followed Him trying whenever they could to trap Him with clever words. We know that they never succeeded and were never likely to, because their self-serving and

self-righteous attitudes were no match for the Savior of mankind.

They were jealous that He spent so much of His time with the lowly and needy and not with them; they resented the fact that He spoke with such authority, and they questioned how He was able to forgive sins. The Jewish religious leaders of that time were also in fear of losing their power and authority, and they reasoned that Jesus was someone who could cause an uprising against the Romans, but they totally misunderstood what He stood for and what He preached.

Eventually they succeeded in having Jesus put to death and thought that that was the end of the matter. But Jesus died, according to the Scriptures, so that we might live. John 3:16, which is probably the most famous verse in the Bible, sums it up perfectly: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

The death of Jesus was for everyone, including the Jewish establishment of that time, and one day, in the resurrection, they will see the One who died for all humanity, including themselves, as King of kings and Lord of lords over all the earth. That could be quite a reunion!

Philippians 2:9–11 sums it up in this way: "Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

The second part of this booklet will address the modern Jewish perspective, as it is related to Jesus and the biblical teaching about the coming of the Messiah; and the third part will ask and answer the puzzling question as to whether traditional Christianity believes and accepts the true Jesus, or whether they are embracing a counterfeit, thereby rejecting the Jesus Christ of the Bible.

Part 1

Chapter 1

The Pharisees

Young's Analytical Concordance has this to say about the Pharisees: "From the Hebrew – *separate*. The largest of the... Jewish sects; noted for their self-conceit and long prayers; [they] fasted often, made broad their phylacteries, held to [their own] traditions..."

Josephus, who was himself a Pharisee, said of them in *Antiquities of the Jews*:

"A cunning sect they were, and so elevated to a pitch of open fighting and doing mischief. At the time of Christ, the Pharisaical 'fraternity' was comparatively small."

They Were a Small but Influential Group

In fact, the group numbered about 6,000 members, but it was nevertheless very influential.

Emil Schurer, *A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ*, states:

"Contact with non-Pharisees was avoided wherever possible. All others were unclean."

Bible History Online explains:

"Even with the changes of government under the Romans and Herodians, the Pharisees maintained their spiritual authority. Although the Sadducean high priests were at the head of the Sanhedrin, the decisive influence upon public affairs was in the hands of the Pharisees."

Josephus also wrote that "The Pharisees have delivered to the people a great many observances by succession from their fathers, which are not written in the laws of Moses; It was the voice of the Pharisees that was heard on behalf of the people, whether it was before the high priest or the king."

Schurer writes in this regard:

“They had the bulk of the nation as their ally, and women especially were in their hands. They had the greatest influence upon the congregations, so that all acts of public worship, prayers, and sacrifices were performed according to their injunctions. Their sway over the masses was so absolute that they could obtain a hearing even when they said anything against the king or the high priest, consequently they were the most capable of counteracting the design of the kings. Hence, too, the Sadducees, in their official acts, adhered to the demands of the Pharisees, because otherwise the multitude would not have tolerated them.”

Some of the Pharisees were also a political group. They created laws to build a wall around the biblical injunctions to prevent their violation, as they realized that especially because of the transgression of the Sabbath, the house of Israel and the house of Judah went into captivity. But in doing so, they made a yoke out of the Sabbath.

The Pharisees consisted of several groups. The most important were:

- the religious liberal school of Hillel;
- the somewhat more religious conservative group of Shammai.

Both were engaged in devising new applications of the law in response to new conditions;

– the arch-conservative religious group of Haberim; it was also called Table-Fellowship group or even table worshippers.

In addition, the Zealots (discussed later) were also sometimes counted as part of the Pharisees. They were fanatically conservative and considered all Gentiles as unclean. They were a political group with a religious background and were founded in the school of Shammai. They sought to stir up Jews to overthrow or revolt against Rome.

On the “*difference between*” website, differences are shown between the Pharisees and Sadducees. As this particular chapter is about the Pharisees, we quote the following information:

“The Pharisees and Sadducees were influential Jewish sects with conflicting philosophies in regards to the implementation of the *Torah*. Pharisees and Sadducees also had conflicting views about the role of government in the lives of Jewish citizens. The Pharisees believed that God had punished the Jews by allowing oppressive Pagans like the Romans to rule over them because the Jews refused to uphold

the statutes of the *Torah*... This is why they supported the creation of distinctive laws which would keep the Jews from further offending God by adopting the lifestyles of non-Jews.

"... the Pharisees were members of middle-class Jewish families... Leaders among the Pharisees were referred to as *Rabbi*... The Pharisees believed that God did not just provide the Jews with the Written Law, but also the Oral Law...

"The Written Law was the *Torah*, while the Oral Law comprised of oral traditions and revelations that were given to Jewish prophets who came after Moses... The Pharisees also differed from the Sadducees in the matter of the afterlife....

"The Pharisees believed that God would send the Jews a messiah who would bring peace to the world and rule from Jerusalem. They also believed that all circumstances that affected the lives of Jews were divinely ordained...

"The Pharisees... regularly took part in traditional forms of worship in the temple. They rejected foreign ideologies and philosophies such as *Hellenism*, and created numerous laws to keep the Jews from interacting with gentiles on a daily basis."

They Accepted Both the Written and the 'Oral' Law

In regard to the "Oral Law," we must appreciate that Christianity is not the same as Judaism. The Jews do today many things that are not in conformity with Scripture. In fact, even at the time of Christ, the Jews were DIVIDED amongst themselves as to how to apply Scripture. While the Pharisees accepted both the written and the 'oral' law—a collection of Jewish traditions—the Sadducees only accepted the written law, but they did not understand that correctly, either, as Christ had to point out to them on several occasions (compare James Hastings, "Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics," under "Sadducees"). Many have taught for doctrine (which should be God's doctrine) the doctrine of men. Matthew 15:9 records the statement of Jesus in this regard:

"And in vain do they worship Me, Teaching as doctrine the commandments of men." Jesus also instructed His own disciples about the problems inherent within Judaism at that time. Note this quote in Matthew 16:12: "Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees."

Paul also warned of the possible wrong influences from Judaism in Titus 1:14: "... not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth."

In regard to the many Pharisaic traditions, rules and regulations, which were contrary to the Bible, please read our free booklet, *"God's Commanded Holy Days."*

In light of all the foregoing comments, we can already see why the Pharisees rejected Jesus, and why Jesus rebuked them. To emphasize this, the following biblical passages about the Pharisees are interesting.

They Were Rebuked by Jesus on a Number of Occasions

There are around 84 verses about the Pharisees in the first five books in the New Testament. They are mentioned several times in the gospel records as being on the receiving end of Jesus' rebukes. Please note the following words by Jesus:

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves" (Matthew 23:15).

"... Now you Pharisees make the outside of the cup and dish clean, but your inward part is full of greed and wickedness" (Luke 11:39).

"And Jesus said, 'For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind.' Then *some* of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these words, and said to Him, 'Are we blind also?' Jesus said to them, 'If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, "We see." Therefore your sin remains'" (John 9:39-41).

They Falsely Accused, and Tested Jesus, About Many Things

They said that Jesus cast out demons by the ruler of the demons (Matthew 9:34 and 12:24); they wanted a sign that He was the Messiah (Matthew 12:38-40); they accused Jesus of breaking the Sabbath (according to their own traditions) but they were rebuked for this (Matthew 12:1-8); Jesus told His disciples to beware of their doctrine (Matthew 16:6-12); they tested Him over divorce (Matthew 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-9); they tested Him about paying tribute to Caesar (Matthew 22:15-21, Mark 12:13-17 and Luke 20:22-25); they tested Him about a woman caught in adultery (John 8:3-4); and they tested Him

on His healing on the Sabbath (Luke 6:6–11).

God's Word First International writes:

“Appearing overall as a rather peaceful and pious group when viewed from the outside, in contrast their confrontational actions, public austere and arrogant ‘better than thou’ attitudes and their ‘behind closed doors’ hatred of their perceived enemies spoke volumes concerning the spiritual darkness within their hearts... This explains a lot about how they were frequently confrontational with Christ and his disciples then ultimately sought to bear false witness in framing him and have him put to death. After the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD Pharisaic beliefs became the basis for Rabbinic Judaism, which ultimately produced the basis for all contemporary forms of Judaism with what is known today as modern Hasidic Judaism being the oldest core foundational belief.”

Matthew 23 is a chapter where Jesus is particularly hard on both the scribes and the Pharisees. He tells His audience to “observe whatever they tell you but do not do as they do” (verse 3) because of their hypocrisy. They liked to be seen by men and loved the best places at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues (verses 5–6). They loved greetings in the market-place and to be called Rabbi (verse 7). Then follow eight woes aimed at the scribes and Pharisees (verses 13–29).

In fact, verse 27 is a particularly strong condemnation of their actions: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead *men's* bones and all uncleanness.”

The *Pulpit Commentary* has this to say about this verse:

“Once a year, about the fifteenth of the month Adar, the Jews used to whitewash the tombs and the places where corpses were buried, partly out of respect for the dead, but chiefly in order to make them conspicuous, and thus to obviate the risk of persons incautiously contracting ceremonial defilement by touching or walking over them (Numbers 19:16). To such sepulchres our Lord compares these Pharisees, because their outwardly fair show concealed rottenness within (compare Acts 23:3). Indeed, it might be said that their seeming exceptional purity was a warning of internal corruption, a sign post to point to hidden defilement. Obtrusive religiousness, emphatic scrupulosity, are marks of pride and

self-righteousness, utterly alien from real devotion and holiness.”

In verse 33, Jesus called them “Serpents, brood of vipers!”

John the Baptist had also had some strong words for the Pharisees: “But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, ‘Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?’” (Matthew 3:7).

We also know that the apostle Paul was a Pharisee, and he persecuted the early Christians before he was struck down by Christ. He then rejected Judaism of his time and preached the gospel of the Kingdom of God while proving from Scripture that Jesus was the Christ (Acts 9:20–22).

They Were Instrumental, Along With Others, in Plotting Jesus’ Death

There is little wonder that the Savior of mankind was at odds with the religious people of His time, including and especially the Pharisees, and that they called for His death which was achieved by illegal means.

However, His death and the manner of His death did fulfill many prophecies in the Old Testament. This means that we have a Savior who died in our place. The Savior of mankind would be a sacrifice for our sin (Isaiah 53:5–12). In verse 12, we read: “Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, And He shall divide the spoil with the strong, Because He poured out His soul unto death, And He was numbered with the transgressors, And He bore the sin of many, And made intercession for the transgressors.”

In Romans 5:6–11, where the sub-heading in the *New King James Bible* is “Christ in our place,” we read:

“For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only *that*, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.”

Once the Pharisees are resurrected in the Second Resurrection and

are given the opportunity to repent, obtain forgiveness and accept Christ's Sacrifice and Christ as their personal Savior, they too may be able to enter the Kingdom of God.

However, when Jesus walked this earth as a human being, the Pharisees rejected Him and did not accept Him as their Savior, because He did not behave and teach in accordance with their expectations and ideas. The other groups of the religious establishment were no different.

Chapter 2

The Sadducees

Another important influential religious group at the time of Jesus were the Sadducees.

Young's Analytical Concordance has this to say about the Sadducees: "A sect of the Jews, denying the resurrection and the existence of angels and spirits, who derived their origin from Sadok, a follower of Antigonus of Socho B.C.250, a President of the Sanhedrin."

A review of the Sadducees will give us some insight into the sort of religious environment that Jesus was born into and with what He had to endure during His ministry.

The website of "*difference between*" points out the following:

"While the Sadducees believed in the authority of the *Torah*, they were also more supportive of prevailing rulers... This is because they understood that they could benefit, in a political and economic sense, from maintaining peaceful relations with the ruling government.

"The Sadducees... were exposed to a more secular education than the Pharisees, and even acknowledged *Hellenism* (*Hellenism* is the term used to describe the influence of Greek culture on the peoples the Greek and Roman Empires conquered or interacted with). The main difference between the Pharisees and Sadducees concerned the understanding of the function of the *Torah* in Jewish society. Most of the Sadducees operated as priests and were members of the *Sanhedrin*... The Sadducees maintained that the first five books of the Bible, otherwise known as the *Torah*, were the greatest authority on God's will for the Jews. For the Sadducees, all other laws or texts outside the sacred *Torah* could not be counted as part of the Law...

They Did Not Believe in the Resurrection

"The Sadducees did not believe that man would experience resurrection after physical death... They endeavored to preserve their

priestly caste, and actively took part in political discourse to maintain their influence over their fellow Jews... The Sadducees held political power and religious clout as an integral part of temple government...

"Their founder, Tzadok (or sometimes spelled Zadok, in Hebrew meaning 'Righteous'), was a priest descended from Eleazar the son of Aaron, who aided King David during the revolt of his son Absalom, and was consequently instrumental in bringing King Solomon to the throne.

"After Solomon's building of The First Temple in Jerusalem, Zadok was the first High Priest to serve there. In any event, the name Tzadok could be indicative of their aristocratic status in society in the beginning of their existence due to their close relationship with the monarchy and King Solomon. The Sadducees derive their name from the Hebrew name of Tzadok, the 'Tz' is pronounced with an 's' sound. Sadducees would then roughly mean, 'The righteous ones of Tzadok'..."

According to Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, the Sadducees were a hereditary and ancient priestly class. They constituted the nobility of the Jewish people and thus we find many high priests coming from the Sadducean party. Annas was a Sadducee.

The website of "*difference between*" continues:

"The Sadducees believed that the souls of men died with their bodies. They did not believe in the resurrection of the body nor retribution in a future life. Neither did they believe in predestination, but 'that good and evil are the choice of man who can do one or the other at his discretion' and consequently that God exercises 'no influence upon human actions, and that man is therefore the cause of his own prosperity and adversity.'"

They Acknowledged Only the Written Torah as Binding

Emil Schurer, *A History of the Jewish People*, confirming the foregoing, states the following:

"In addition to the doctrinal differences between the Sadducees and the Pharisees over the immortality of the soul, there was a fundamental difference over what constituted the law of the Jews. The Sadducees acknowledged only the written Torah as binding and rejected the entire traditional interpretation as well as the further development that the law had undergone during the course of centuries at the hands of the scribes."

Political Power Was Important to Them

James C. McRuer, *The Trial of Jesus*, writes this:

“It is not unfair to say that the Sadducees were really more concerned with the political power that their ecclesiastical offices gave them than with the spiritual affairs of the people. To make themselves secure in this power during the Herodian-Roman period, it was necessary for them to accommodate their views to those of the Pharisees.”

There are 13 verses where the Sadducees are mentioned, as opposed to around 84 for the Pharisees, and only five of the verses mention just the Sadducees [sometimes together with a reference to priests or the High Priest], which are as follows:

Matthew 22:23: “The same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him and asked Him...”

Mark 12:18: “*some* Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him...”

Luke 20:27: “Then some of the Sadducees, who deny that there is a resurrection, came to Him...”

It is interesting that the three Scriptures quoted above are about the resurrection which they denied, and these are the only ones in the four gospel accounts where only the Sadducees were noted as those asking the question.

In addition, the following two verses refer to the Sadducees in conjunction with the high priest:

Acts 4:1: “Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them...”

Acts 5:17: “Then the high priest rose up, and all those who *were* with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation...”

These last two references show the concern that they had about the message that the apostles were preaching, and arrests and imprisonment were the outcome.

They and the Pharisees Mentioned Together in Just Eight Verses

In the remaining eight verses, the Pharisees are also mentioned as well as the Sadducees.

The first of these verses is in Matthew 3:7: “But when he [John the Baptist] saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his

baptism, he said to them, 'Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?'"

In spite of the Pharisees being mentioned much more often than the Sadducees, they were both reprimanded in no uncertain terms. In this regard, note the following four passages:

Matthew 16:1: "Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing Him asked that He would show them a sign from heaven."

Matthew 16:6: "Then Jesus said to them [His disciples], 'Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.'"

Matthew 16:12: "Then they understood that He did not tell *them* to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees."

Matthew 22:34: "But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together."

Both sects wanted to see a sign, but Jesus warned His disciples of their leaven, meaning their doctrine.

Note also the last three verses:

Acts 23:6: "But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, 'Men *and* brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!'"

Acts 23:7: "And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the assembly was divided."

Acts 23:8: "For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection—and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both."

Again, in these three verses, the difference in doctrine is clear with the Pharisees believing in the resurrection and the existence of angels and demons, and the Sadducees denying all of it.

A Clash Was Inevitable With Jesus About the Resurrection

It is obvious from the foregoing that Jesus would have to clash with the viewpoints of the Sadducees on numerous occasions. He upheld God's Word which teaches the resurrection from the dead and the existence of holy and fallen angels, and He emphasized that the entire Old Testament was godly inspired... not only the first five books of Moses or the Torah. But even then, He refuted their argument that there is no resurrection from the dead, when quoting from the Torah.

We would like to make the following observations about Matthew 22:23–30 where Jesus answered the Sadducees who did not believe in the resurrection.

As the Sadducees did not believe in the inspiration of the Old Testament apart from the first five books of Moses, Jesus quoted, as proof for a resurrection, from the first five books of Moses, mentioning the burning bush episode, as recorded in the book of Exodus. He continued to say that God was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and that God was not the God of the dead, but of the living.

Some commentaries erroneously conclude that Jesus was saying here that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were ALIVE when Jesus spoke these words—and that Jesus was therefore upholding the concept of the immortal soul which teaches that the immortal soul goes to heaven when man dies—a teaching which the Sadducees rejected.

However, Jesus did not believe in the false concept of the immortal soul. He taught that death was a sleep out of which man must be awakened (compare John 11:11–14, 43–44). He said to the Sadducees that God is a God of the living, because He will awaken Abraham, Isaac and Jacob out of their sleep of death through a resurrection from the dead. Remember, Jesus answered the Sadducees who did not believe in the resurrection. He proved that there is a resurrection from the dead by saying that God is the God of the living.

The dead will live because God WILL RAISE them up in the resurrection (compare John 5:25, 28–29)—and God looks at future events, which are certain, as if they had already occurred. (Compare Romans 4:17, in the *Living Bible*: “That is what the Scriptures mean when they say that God made Abraham the father of many nations. God will accept all people in every nation who trust God as Abraham did. And this promise is from God himself, who makes the dead alive again and speaks of future events with as much certainty as though they were already past.”)

Jesus Did Recognize Their Authority in the Temple Service

On the other hand, Jesus recognized that the Sadducees were in charge of the Temple service, and that they were correct in their understanding as to when to sacrifice the Passover lamb. While they did so at the beginning of the 14th of Nisan, the Pharisees sacrificed it

one day too late, at the end of the 14th or the beginning of the 15th of Nisan. Most Jews follow today the wrong lead of the Pharisees and keep the Passover one day too late, by confusing it with the Night to Be Much Observed.

We also read that the Passover lamb was to be slain “at twilight” on the 14th day of Nisan (Exodus 12:6). The Hebrew for “at twilight” is “ben ha arbayim” or “beyn haarbayim,” and means, literally, “between the two evenings.” Many commentators are confused on this phrase and conclude that it refers to the time between afternoon and sunset. This is wrong. Rather, the phrase refers to the time between sunset and dark (compare *Moffat* and the annotation of the German *Menge Bible*) or between sunset and complete darkness (compare the *Imperial Bible Dictionary*). The *Revised English Bible* says that it means, “between dusk and dark.”

Remember that the Passover had to be slain on the 14th day of Nisan, “at twilight, at the going down of the sun.” Since days begin and end with sunset, according to the Hebrew calendar, this had to happen AT THE BEGINNING of the 14th day, in order to be a PART of the 14th day. If it had occurred at the end of the 14th day, as the Pharisees observed and most Jews believe today, then in actuality, it would have occurred AFTER the 14th day had ended (after sunset, before nightfall); that is, at the beginning of the 15th day, after sunset. But the Bible says, it occurred on the 14th day; that is, “BETWEEN the two evenings”; i.e., AFTER sunset, but before nightfall.

The biblical evidence from both the Old and the New Testament shows overwhelmingly that the Passover was to be and must be kept at the beginning of the 14th day of Nisan—not at the end of the day. Those who keep it at the beginning of the 15th day, do not keep the “Passover of the LORD,” nor do they follow Christ’s example as to when to keep it (1 Corinthians 11:23–26).

They Kept Pentecost on the Correct Day, Unlike the Pharisees

The Sadducees also determined correctly when to keep Pentecost, while the Pharisees kept Pentecost many times on the wrong day. Many Jews today follow the wrong Pharisaic thought and keep Pentecost often on the wrong day as well.

There was a controversy, according to the Jewish historian

Josephus of the first century, between the Pharisees and the Sadducees. While the Sadducees counted the 50 days correctly from the Sunday which falls within the Days of Unleavened Bread and which follows the WEEKLY Sabbath, the Pharisees counted it from the day after the ANNUAL Sabbath—the first day of Unleavened Bread. But we should note that the Temple service was entrusted to the Sadducees, not the Pharisees. Their determination as to when to celebrate Pentecost was conclusive and decisive for the public celebration, as long as the Second Temple existed.

However, modern Judaism has adopted the view of the Pharisees, thereby celebrating Pentecost ALWAYS on the SIXTH DAY OF SIVAN (which could fall on any day of the week).

gotquestions.org summarizes nicely as to why Jesus would be at odds with the religious establishment, including the Sadducees:

“Jesus had more run-ins with the Pharisees than with the Sadducees, probably because of the former’s giving pre-eminence to oral tradition. ‘You ignore God’s law and substitute your own tradition,’ Jesus told them. Because the Sadducees were often more concerned with politics than religion, they ignored Jesus until they began to fear He might bring unwanted Roman attention and upset the status quo. It was at that point that the Sadducees and Pharisees set aside their differences, united, and conspired to put Christ to death (John 11:48–50; Mark 14:53; 15:1).”

Chapter 3

The Scribes

According to *Young's Analytical Concordance of the Bible*, there are a total of 114 references to the word "scribe"; 53 in the Old Testament and 61 in the New Testament; i.e., 19 in the book of Matthew, 22 in Mark, 15 in Luke, 1 in John and 4 in the book of Acts.

The first mention of the scribes in the Bible is in 2 Samuel 8:17 where Seraiah was the scribe in King David's administration which was around 3,000 years ago.

biblestudy.org states the following:

"As in other parts of the world, scribes were considered honored professionals whose modern day equivalent would be judges or lawyers. They were generally the most educated men in the nation and as such became influential. In fact, since writing was practiced only by those with a certain level of intelligence, scribes were often considered wise men (1 Chronicles 27:32). They were also eligible to be elected to the Sanhedrin (the supreme and highest council of the Jews)."

The *Encyclopedia Britannica* adds:

"In the 1st century, scribes and Pharisees were two largely distinct groups, though presumably some scribes were Pharisees. Scribes had knowledge of the law and could draft legal documents (contracts for marriage, divorce, loans, inheritance, mortgages, the sale of land, and the like). Every village had at least one scribe. Pharisees were members of a party that believed in resurrection and in following legal traditions that were ascribed not to the Bible but to 'the traditions of the fathers.' Like the scribes, they were also well-known legal experts: hence the partial overlap of membership of the two groups. It appears from subsequent rabbinic traditions, however, that most Pharisees were small landowners and traders, not professional scribes."

The Origin, Role and Function of the Scribes

The *Encyclopedia Judaica* gives a very comprehensive description of the origin, role and function of the scribes. We can see from the quotes below that the scribes had adopted and followed many human traditions which were not derived from the Bible. The scribes had the responsibility to copy the Old Testament Scriptures:

“... the scribe was a professional expert in the writing of Torah scrolls... These have to be written with a feather quill in indelible ink, in straight lines, and on specially prepared parchment... The profession of scribe was indispensable to the Jewish community, and according to the Talmud... a scholar should not dwell in a town where there is no scribe... The scribe writing a Torah scroll must devote utmost attention and care to the writing; he is forbidden to rely on his memory and has to write from a model copy... His guide is the professional compendium for scribes... which contains the traditional text of the Torah, the specific rules concerning the decorative flourishes... on certain letters, the regulations as to the spacing of certain Torah sections... and the rules for writing Torah scrolls in which each column begins with the Hebrew letter *vav*... Only the Scroll of Esther may be adorned with artistic illustrations but not the Torah scroll...

“When writing a Torah scroll a scribe must especially prepare himself so that he writes the names of the Lord with proper devotion and in ritual purity. It is, therefore, customary that he immerse himself in a ritual bath... before beginning his work...

“Scribes also acted as recording clerks and court secretaries... They wrote legal documents such as bills of divorce and contracts... there are established rules as to who pays the scribe’s fee...”

Even though they went far beyond the command of God to copy the Holy Scriptures (Exodus 17:14; Deuteronomy 17:18; 31:24–26; Joshua 8:32; 24:26; Hosea 8:12), their methodology guaranteed that the Old Testament was preserved unaltered throughout all generations (Isaiah 40:8; 1 Peter 1:23). For further information in this regard, please read our free booklet, *“The Authority of the Bible,”* and especially chapters 3–5.

They Were Well Educated and Highly Trained Professionals

God’s Word First International adds the following:

“Scribes in ancient Israel belonged to an elite class of wealthy families. As such, they were well educated in language and mathematics. Whereas the working class folks had the equivalent of a modern 6th grade education, the Scribes were college level graduates.

“Scribes were distinguished professionals who copied all types of documents, not just the holy scrolls. Sometimes they would also exercise higher functions we would associate with lawyers, government ministers, judges, or even bankers.

“As highly trained, well paid, and respected professionals, they generally had an over inflated sense of self-worth. As such, they were pompous and frequently displayed in public an arrogant righteousness.

The Process for Creating Copies of the Torah and Other Books

“The Jewish scribes used the following process for creating copies of the Torah and other books in the Tanakh.

- “1. They could only use clean animal skins, both to write on, and even to bind manuscripts.
- “2. Each column of writing could have no less than forty-eight, and no more than sixty lines.
- “3. The ink must be black, and of a special recipe.
- “4. They must say each word aloud while they were writing.
- “5. They must wipe the pen and wash their entire bodies before writing the most Holy Name of God, YHVH every time they wrote it.
- “6. There must be a review within thirty days, and if as many as three pages required corrections, the entire manuscript had to be redone.
- “7. The letters, words, and paragraphs had to be counted, and the document became invalid if two letters touched each other. The middle paragraph, word and letter must correspond to those of the original document.
- “8. The documents could be stored only in sacred places (synagogues, etc.).
- “9. As no document containing God’s Word could be destroyed, they were stored or buried.

“Scribes still exist today. Known as a ‘Sofer’ they are among the few scribes that still perform their trade by hand on parchment. Renowned

calligraphers, they produce the Hebrew Torah scrolls and other holy texts by hand to this day.”

gotquestions.org writes this:

“Scribes in ancient Israel were learned men whose business was to study the Law, transcribe it, and write commentaries on it. They were also hired on occasions when the need for a written document arose or when an interpretation of a legal point was needed. Ezra, ‘a teacher well versed in the Law of Moses,’ was a scribe (Ezra 7:6).

“The scribes took their job of preserving Scripture very seriously; they would copy and recopy the Bible meticulously, even counting letters and spaces to ensure each copy was correct...

“In the New Testament era, scribes... were widely respected by the community because of their knowledge, dedication, and outward appearance of Law-keeping.

They Later Added Many Man-Made Traditions

“The scribes went beyond interpretation of Scripture, however, and added many man-made traditions to what God had said. They became professionals at spelling out the letter of the Law while ignoring the spirit behind it. Things became so bad that the regulations and traditions the scribes added to the Law were considered more important than the Law itself. This led to many confrontations between Jesus and the Pharisees and scribes... Jesus shocked His audience by declaring that the righteousness of the scribes was not enough... He thoroughly condemned the scribes for their hypocrisy... They knew the Law, and they taught it to others, but they did not obey it...”

Encyclopedia.com adds:

“At the time of Christ many of the scribes adhered to the teachings of the Pharisees... With the chief priests, Sadducees, and Pharisees, the scribes composed the Jewish aristocracy of the time; and many were members of the Sanhedrin.

“The scribes... are also associated with the chief priests and elders in causing Jesus’ death... The lawyers condemned in Luke 11:45–52 for their hypocrisy are also to be identified with the scribes. Their spiritual descendants were the rabbis whose teachings are recorded in the Talmud.”

From the many references in the New Testament to the scribes,

we can see the attitude that they had towards Jesus. The scribes were among Christ's most watchful and determined opponents. Their many accusations were continually recorded in the gospel accounts. Let us review some of these.

Note Matthew 16:21: "From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day."

The same warning is repeated in Mark 8:31 where Jesus predicted His death and resurrection. We read: "And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again."

Mark 2:16 says: "And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eating with the tax collectors and sinners, they said to His disciples, 'How is it that He eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners?'" (Also see Luke 5:30, 15:2).

When Jesus forgave and healed a paralytic, we read in Mark 2:6-7: "And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, 'Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?'"

Mark 3:22 states: "And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, 'He has Beelzebub,' and, 'By the ruler of the demons He casts out demons.'"

It is obvious from the record that whatever Jesus did, they would find fault in some way. They were like many today, those who are just waiting to be offended! They would persecute Jesus because He did not live and behave in the way that they thought He should, based on their traditions. They even accused Him of blasphemy and of being possessed by Satan.

They, and Others, Questioned Jesus' Authority

The scribes and others questioned Jesus' authority, as we read in Mark 11:27-28: "Then they came again to Jerusalem. And as He was walking in the temple, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders came to Him. And they said to Him, 'By what authority are You doing these things.'" Jesus knew that they were bent on mischief and

answered them with a question which they were not prepared to answer (compare verses 29–33).

After Jesus had cleansed the Temple, we read in Mark 11:18: “And the scribes and chief priests heard it and sought how they might destroy Him; for they feared Him, because all the people were astonished at His teaching.”

Because Christ opposed the human unbiblical traditions which were practiced in the Temple, they were willing to destroy Him, as He knew, and they waited for an opportune time, fearing the people who held Christ in high esteem.

Luke 6:7 says: “So the scribes and Pharisees watched Him closely, whether He would heal on the Sabbath, that they might find an accusation against Him.”

When He did perform a miracle on the Sabbath, Luke 6:11 tells us: “But they were filled with rage, and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus.”

Again, they were willing to kill Him because He did not keep the Sabbath in accordance with their traditions.

Later, after Jesus had been arrested and brought before Herod, Luke 23:10 tells us: “And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him.”

John 8:3,6 reads: “Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst... [they tested] Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear.”

They were trying to test or tempt Him so that they could accuse Him of violating the Law. But they themselves were guilty as they had not brought the adulterous man to Jesus—just the woman—and as they were not without sin and therefore unwilling to cast the first stone. This is what the Savior of mankind had to contend with as He taught the Truth to tax collectors and sinners, cleansed the Temple and healed people, and yet His authority was continually questioned.

Jesus Said That Scribes and Pharisees Were Hypocrites

In Matthew 23:2–3, Christ said: “The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that

observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do.”

Here we read that Jesus acknowledged their authority to teach God’s Word to the people; however, they were not to follow their example which was contrary to their teaching. Jesus acknowledged as well that they would many times not teach God’s Word, but their own contradictory traditions; He did not tell the people to follow them in that regard, but only insofar as they taught the Word of God. No wonder Jesus called them hypocrites!

In the following verses in Matthew 23, Jesus finally utters a series of eight woes on both the scribes and the Pharisees (verses 13, 14, 15, 16, 23, 25, 27 and 29). In fact, this chapter is an expose on their appalling behavior as religious teachers!

After Christ’s resurrection, we read in the book of Acts that “the rulers, elders, scribes and others” (Acts 4:5–6) heard the testimony of Peter and “commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus” (verse 18). However, Peter and John refused (verse 20). We read further in Acts 6:12 that the elders and scribes seized Stephen. They were certainly opponents of Jesus in His lifetime and after His death.

We have already seen the constant hostility from the Pharisees and Sadducees that Jesus had to deal with, and the scribes were a further part of the religious life of the Jews who were bent on His destruction.

gotquestions.org says:

“The scribes, whose stated goal was to preserve the Word, actually *nullified* it by the traditions they handed down... the scribes were hypocrites at heart. They were more interested in appearing good to men than they were in pleasing God... The lesson every Christian can learn from the hypocrisy of the scribes is that God wants more than outward acts of righteousness. He wants an inward change of heart that is constantly yielding in love and obedience to Christ.”

Chapter 4

The Elders

There are many references in the Bible to elders both in the Old Testament and the New Testament. In the Old Testament references, the word elder is translated as “old, aged, aged as to days, bearded and grey headed.” The inference seems to be that with age and maturity, there is wisdom to be had.

We read in Genesis 50:7: “So Joseph went up to bury his father; and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders (old, aged, bearded) of the land of Egypt.”

We read in Numbers 11:16–17: “So the LORD said to Moses: ‘Gather to Me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them; bring them to the tabernacle of meeting, that they may stand there with you. Then I will come down and talk with you there. I will take of the Spirit that is upon you and will put *the same* upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, that you may not bear *it* yourself alone.’”

Here we read that the elders would receive from God some of the same Spirit that was given to Moses in order to help them in the duties that they were chosen to perform. (The word “elder” is again translated as “old, aged and bearded.”)

desiringgod.org points out:

“In general, then, we can say that, while through the long history of Israel the role of the elder no doubt changed, they were the older men of the community who, because of their wisdom in counsel and the natural honor due to them (Leviticus 19:32), became the official administrators or leaders of the community.

“In the Judaism of Jesus’ day the elders of Israel were still dominant. The most frequent use of the word ‘elder’ in the New Testament refers to the Jewish elders who opposed Jesus during his lifetime. Within the gospels and Acts ‘elders’ are most often viewed as forming a closely

knit group with the 'chief priests.' Again and again we read of 'the chief priests and elders of the people' (Matthew 21:23; 26:3,47; 27:1 etc.). The term elder was probably very broad and would include members of the scribes as well as the Pharisees and Sadducees (cf. 'traditions of the elders' (Matthew 15:2; Acts 22:6))."

biblestudy.org writes the following:

"In the New Testament, elders (of the people, of Israel, etc.) were older men who represented the people and who exercised a certain amount of authority over them. Existing at least as far back as the time of Moses, they were the governing foundation of different groups in the Bible. Elders were the first ones told, by Moses, about God's plan to free the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage (Exodus 3:16). The Old Testament elders asked the prophet Samuel to place a human king (instead of God) over all the people (1 Samuel 8:5).

"Old Testament elders could represent a city or town (Deuteronomy 19:12, 1 Samuel 16:4), the people of a particular tribe (Numbers 22:7, Deuteronomy 31:28, 2 Samuel 19:11), a family (2 Samuel 12:17) or a country (Joshua 9:11). They were eligible to sit on the Sanhedrin, or properly the Great Sanhedrin, which met in Jerusalem and was the supreme council of the Jews.

"The word translated as elder in the New Testament is the Greek word *Presbuteros* (*Strong's Concordance* #G4245), which generally is used to refer to older men respected by others as leaders and role models. The elders of the people were some of the most vehement adversaries against Jesus and his teachings. It was known, in advance, that the elders would play a big part in causing the suffering and death of Jesus (Matthew 16:21, Mark 8:31, Luke 9:22). They, along with the chief priests and scribes, challenged Jesus' authority just days before the crucifixion (Matthew 21:23, Luke 20:1-2)."

Jesus Challenged About "Transgressing" the "Tradition of the Elders"

In Matthew 15:1-11 and Mark 7:1-13, Christ is challenged with the question as to why His disciples were "transgressing" the "tradition of the elders," referring to eating clean meat with ritually "unwashed" hands. Christ responded by asking them why they were transgressing God's commandment and making it "of no effect," so that they could uphold their own traditions. He specifically referred to the tradition

of “Korban” which allowed them to dishonor their parents.

Bible.org states the following:

“Jesus and his disciples had violated the ‘traditions of the elders’... as if those traditions were now authoritative and could be sinned against... the traditions of men had been elevated to the status of Scripture, so that one could be guilty of violating them...”

“They could pronounce a vow on their things with the word, ‘*Korban*,’ meaning it is a gift... If because of greed, for example, a man did not want to help support his aging parents, he would announce ‘*Korban*.’ That would mean the money was frozen, and could not be used for taking care of the parents. Thus, they could use their traditions to get out of taking care of their father and mother (which the Law required). Then, they might find a way of nullifying the vow so they ended up keeping the money...”

Elders, and Others, Had Evil Intentions Towards Jesus

Let us review additional Scriptures that clearly show that the involvement of the elders (and others) was complicit in accusations of and evil intentions towards Jesus, leading to His torture and murder.

Matthew 26:3–4 reads: “Then the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders of the people assembled at the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, and plotted to take Jesus by trickery and kill *Him*.”

This was just before the Passover where they were assembled together at the High Priest’s palace and where they tried to devise ways in order to kill Jesus. You do have to wonder what their “religion” really meant to them when they proposed to trick Jesus Christ and looked to have Him killed. This is even more remarkable as they would be keeping the Passover which should have reminded them as to how God saved the Israelites from death in Egypt. Those were hardly the actions of good and righteous men, even if they did disagree with His teaching. Rather, it showed their incredible hypocrisy and their spirit of murder.

Judas Iscariot “with a great multitude with swords and clubs, came from the chief priests and the elders of the people” (Matthew 26:47). However, it went even further than that as we read in Matthew 27:3–4: “Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, ‘I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.’”

And they said, 'What is *that* to us? You see *to it*.'

After they had agreed with Judas to betray Jesus, they tried to deny any responsibility.

In Matthew 27, we read about the release of Barabbas when Pilate offered to free a prisoner: "But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitudes that they should ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus" (Matthew 27:20).

In addition, we read in Matthew 27:41–42: "Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders, said, 'He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him.'"

Here we have the scenario of someone dying in agony on the cross, and they, having been part of the conspiracy to murder Him, mock, incite and ridicule Him. Their religious approach was so open to ridicule by those who would expect better from their religious leaders!

Elders Involved With Bribery and Opposition to Early Christianity

Within a short space of time, they were further compounding their previous errors with bribery. Matthew 28:11–15 states: "Now while they were going, behold, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all the things that had happened. When they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, saying, 'Tell them, "His disciples came at night and stole Him *away* while we slept." And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will appease him and make you secure.' So, they took the money and did as they were instructed; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day."

In a very short space of time, the elders, along with the scribes and Pharisees, were involved in trickery, releasing a criminal, paying 30 pieces of silver for information, mocked a dying man who was in agony on the cross and then paid money to bribe soldiers to lie about Christ's disciples and to deny Christ's resurrection. That is a shocking list of actions from supposedly "religious" men.

Their opposition to early Christianity didn't stop there, and they continued their opposition by taking every opportunity that they could to destroy the early Christian movement. In Acts 4:5–7, we read: "And it came to pass, on the next day, that their rulers, elders, and scribes, as

well as Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the family of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem. And when they had set them [the early apostles] in the midst, they asked, 'By what power or by what name have you done this [that is, healing a sick man]?'"

The apostle Peter then addressed the "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel" (verses 8–12). Subsequently, the apostles were forbidden to speak in the name of Jesus (verse 18.) "But Peter and John answered and said to them, 'Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard'" (verses 19–20).

Stephen Accused of Blasphemy and Stoned to Death

We read in Acts 6 that Stephen was accused of blasphemy, and we see the religious hierarchy, including the elders, inciting those prepared to lie and accuse: "Then they secretly induced men to say, 'We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God.' And they stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes; and they came upon *him*, seized him, and brought *him* to the council. They also set up false witnesses who said, 'This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law'" (Acts 6:11–13).

In the following chapter, after his address, we see that Stephen was stoned to death. The religious leaders may have felt vindicated with the result, even though they clearly understood that even by human standards, they committed murder, but it is something that they will have to answer for in the judgment.

Perhaps just one more example will again show how much the elders were involved in the persecution of the early Christians. In Acts 23, we read of a plot against the apostle Paul, who himself had persecuted the early church but had repented of that course of action after his conversion on the road to Damascus.

Some Jews "banded together and bound themselves under an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul" (verse 12). In verse 14, we read: "They came to the chief priests and elders, and said, 'We have bound ourselves under a great oath that we will eat nothing until we have killed Paul.'" The elders and the chief priests were the ones they approached. The elders continued to be

among those who persecuted the people of God after the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The discussion of the hypocritical “religious elders” at the time of Jesus must not be confused with the office of an ordained elder in the Church of God.

The Office of “Elder” Within the Church of God

Addressing now the word “elder” within the confines of the Church of God, Peter called himself a “fellow elder.” But he was also an apostle. In addition, John, who was also one of the original apostles, called himself “the elder” (2 John 1; 3 John 1). However, we also read about a clear distinction, at times, between apostles and elders (Acts 15:4, 6, 22, 23; 16:4).

On the other hand, the word “bishop” simply means “overseer.” The Greek word is “*episkopos*” and is applied to “elders” (compare again Acts 20:17 with Acts 20:28, and Titus 1:5 with Titus 1:7, describing “elders” as “bishops” or “overseers”—in Greek, “*episkopos*.”). 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:7 describe the qualification of a “bishop” or an “overseer”—that is, an elder. In its ultimate sense, the word “bishop” is also applied to Jesus Christ (as is the word “Apostle”; compare Hebrews 3:1), as we read about Christ’s FUNCTION as a “Bishop” in 1 Peter 2:25: “For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and OVERSEER [Greek, “*episkopos*,” i.e. Bishop] of your souls.”

Paul and Peter fulfilled several functions, roles and responsibilities, including the function of “prophet,” “preacher,” “teacher” and “elder.”

James 5:14 states: “Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.”

Acts 14:23 writes: “So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.”

Compare also 1 Timothy 5:17 and 1 Peter 5:5; and note 1 Timothy 4:14, referring to “the laying on of hands of the eldership.”

Regarding the office and function of an elder in the church, we need to explain that the original definition of being “old, aged, aged as to days, bearded and grey headed” does not necessarily apply. Rather,

the emphasis is on spiritual maturity, not being a novice in the faith (1 Timothy 3:6). For instance, Christ who was called an elder, was only 30 years old when He began to preach publicly. Paul warns that members should not despise the evangelist Timothy because of his youth (1 Timothy 4:12). It does not appear that any of the early apostles were "grey headed or aged." When He was dying, Christ asked that His mother Mary would be treated by John as his mother.

Returning to the religious "elders" at the time of Christ who opposed Christ so that they could uphold their own traditions, this should be a warning to all of us in God's true Church today, and especially elders in the ministry, not to replace God's Law with our own concepts and ideas which are based on man's philosophies and customs. One area where this could happen might be the commandment of God to keep the Sabbath. Our free booklets, *"God's Commanded Holy Days,"* and *"How to Keep the Sabbath,"* explain in detail how to observe God's weekly and annual Sabbath Days, while avoiding falling into the trap of human traditions and ideas.

Chapter 5

The Sanhedrin

The Sanhedrin was also opposed to Jesus and His teachings. Depending on the Bible translation, the Sanhedrin is also referred to as the “Council.”

According to *Young’s Analytical Concordance* under “council,” we read that “Sanhedrin” means “a sitting together.”

The *Wikipedia Encyclopedia* elaborates:

“The Sanhedrin (... Greek... *synedrion*, ‘sitting together,’ hence ‘assembly’ or ‘council’) were assemblies of either twenty-three or seventy-one elders... appointed to sit as a tribunal in every city in the ancient Land of Israel.

“There were two classes of Jewish courts called Sanhedrin, the *Great Sanhedrin* and the *Lesser Sanhedrin*. A lesser Sanhedrin of 23 judges was appointed to each city, but there was to be only one Great Sanhedrin of 71 judges, which among other roles acted as the Supreme Court, taking appeals from cases decided by lesser courts. In general usage, ‘The Sanhedrin’ without qualifier normally refers to the Great Sanhedrin, which was composed of the *Nasi*, who functioned as head or representing president, and was a member of the court; the *Av Beit Din* or chief of the court, who was second to the *nasi*; and sixty-nine general members (*Mufla*)...

“In the Second Temple period, the Great Sanhedrin met in the Temple in Jerusalem, in a building called the Hall of Hewn Stones. The Great Sanhedrin convened every day except [during] festivals and the sabbath day (Shabbat).”

The Sanhedrin Could Arrest and Convict But Not Execute the Death Penalty

The website of *learnreligions.com* explains:

“During the time of Roman governors such as Pontius Pilate, the

Sanhedrin had jurisdiction only over the province of Judea. The Sanhedrin had its own police force that could arrest people, as they did Jesus Christ. While the Sanhedrin heard both civil and criminal cases and could impose the death penalty, in New Testament times it did not have the authority to execute convicted criminals. That power was reserved for the Romans, which explains why Jesus was crucified—a Roman punishment—rather than stoned, according to Mosaic law...”

In other words, at the time of Christ, the Sanhedrin could find a person guilty and give the death sentence, but they could not carry it out. Only the Romans could put a person to death.

Continuing with *learnreligions.com*:

“Caiaphas was the high priest or president of the Sanhedrin at the time of Jesus’ trial and execution. As a Sadducee, Caiaphas did not believe in the resurrection. He would have been shocked when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. Not interested in the truth, Caiaphas preferred to destroy this challenge to his beliefs instead of supporting it...”

The Sanhedrin Was Abolished in 66–70 AD

“The Great Sanhedrin was comprised not only of Sadducees but also of Pharisees, but it was abolished with the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple in 66–70 A.D.”

Since that time, there has been no Jewish high priest, for national sacrifices ceased with the destruction of the Second Temple. However, the Bible reveals that sacrifices will be given again shortly before Christ’s return, and a Third Temple will be built.

The *Wikipedia Encyclopedia* states:

“The Sanhedrin is traditionally viewed as the last institution which commanded universal authority among the Jewish people in the long chain of tradition from Moses until the present day. Since its dissolution in 358 CE, there has been no universally recognized authority within Jewish law (Halakha).”

The website of *reasonableherology.com* adds:

“Despite their small numbers, the Sadducees were able to maneuver themselves politically to positions of power within the Sanhedrin... and allied themselves with the Romans...”

The Pharisees and Sadducees Were United in Their Opposition to Jesus

jewelsofjudaism.com has some interesting comments about the Pharisees and Sadducees uniting with their disagreements with Jesus, stating as follows:

“The majority of the [71] seats of the Sanhedrin were filled by Sadducees with a minority filled by the Pharisees... because the Pharisees had the majority of the Jewish population under their influence, the Pharisees often swayed the decisions in the Sanhedrin....

“Even though the Sadducees and Pharisees were diametrically opposed to each other regarding their belief system within Judaism, they were forced to work together... One person that united these two factious groups was the person of (Jesus).

“... the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, ‘What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs. If we let Him go on like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.’ But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, ‘You know nothing at all, nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish.’ Now he did not say this on his own initiative, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that (Jesus) was going to die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but in order that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. So from that day on they planned together to kill Him. – John 11:47–53....

“In the above scenario, we read about the chief priests and the Pharisees. The chief priests would be from the group of the Sadducees. Therefore, when we read about the chief priests and the Pharisees working together we are actually reading about the Sadducees and Pharisees working together. We also see the connection between the priests and the Sadducees explained in context in the book of Acts: ‘But the high priest rose up, along with all his associates (that is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with jealousy’ (Acts 5:17). The priests and those associated with the priests were generally from the sect of the Sadducees...”

It so often happens that when a situation arises, former adversaries

can put aside their personal differences in order to achieve a common aim. This was certainly the case with the religious opponents of Jesus.

Nicodemus, Gamaliel and Joseph of Arimathea were Council Members

The Website of *neverthirsty* writes:

“The Sanhedrin Council was also called the ‘Senate,’ *gerousia*, which means ‘the Council of the Elders.’ The Council was the supreme political and religious body of Israel. In John 3:1 we are introduced to a man called Nicodemus, a Pharisee. In that verse he is called a ‘ruler of the Jews.’ Then in verse 10 of the passage he is called ‘the teacher of Israel.’... Both passages reveal that Nicodemus was a political ruler of Israel and a religious teacher. This reveals the Council was a political and religious body...

“The Sanhedrin Council is referred to twenty-one times in the New Testament... Luke 22:66 reveals that the Sanhedrin Council at the time of the New Testament... included [the elders,] the chief priests and scribes. Acts 23:1–7 reveals that the Council was composed of Pharisees, Sadducees and chief priests...

“Acts 5:34–35 indicates that the famous rabbi Gamaliel was a member of the Council and made an eloquent plea for justice for Peter and the apostles. The only other members of the Council named in the New Testament... are Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea...

“The gospel records... report that the Council tried to force Christ to lie. We assume that Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea did not or were not in attendance. One wonders if the great rabbi Gamaliel attended this mockery of a trial...”

Nicodemus, a Pharisee and a member of the Sanhedrin, is mentioned in three places in the Gospel of John. He first visits Jesus one night to discuss Jesus’ teachings (John 3:1–21). In Luke 23:50, we learn that Joseph of Arimathea was a part of the Council or Sanhedrin as well. However, we read that Joseph was opposed to the Council’s decision and was in fact a secret follower of Jesus.

Was the Apostle Paul a Council Member?

We may wonder whether Paul, named Saul before his conversion, was a member of the Sanhedrin.

Bible Questions Answered [*bibleq.net*] states:

“... it [is] likely that Paul was at one time, a member of the Sanhedrin Council: Paul ‘cast his vote against’ the saints [Acts 26:10–11]... Paul consented to the execution of Stephen, a decision made by the Sanhedrin [Acts 20:22]... Paul advanced in Judaism beyond many of his own age [Galatians 1:13–14].”

As the Sanhedrin consisted of Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes and elders, it is no surprise that they conspired together to kill Christ.

Below are a few examples of the word “Sanhedrin” being used in the *New International Version (NIV)*, but, generally, the word is translated as “Council”. There is no doubt that they were one and the same.

Matthew 26:59 states: “The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death” [NIV].

Mark 14:55 adds: “The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death, but they did not find any” [NIV].

Acts 6:12 reads: “So they stirred up the people and the elders and the teachers of the law. They seized Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrin” [NIV].

Acts 6:15 states: “All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel” [NIV].

As Jesus faced the Sanhedrin (the subtitle in the *New King James Bible*), we read in Mark 14:55: “Now the chief priests and all the council sought testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, but found none.”

And in Mark 15:1, we read: “Immediately, in the morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council; and they bound Jesus, led Him away, and delivered Him to Pilate.”

In both of the above Scriptures, the word “council” is translated “Sanhedrin” in the *NIV*.

We read that Jesus appeared before the council or Sanhedrin in Matthew 26:59–68; Mark 14:55–65; Luke 22:66–71 and John 18:19–24.

The “trial” of Jesus Christ was without legal precedent. He was convicted and executed even though Pilate found Him innocent! Let us notice many of the outstanding reasons why the arrest, “trial,” and conviction of Jesus were illegal.

The Trial of Jesus by the Sanhedrin Was Illegal

1. There was no legal basis for Jesus' arrest, because no one had presented a formal charge of any crime; He was simply taken. Moreover, those who went with Judas to have Jesus arrested included the priests and elders—His judges (Luke 22:52)—among whom were the ones who bribed Judas!
2. Jesus was subject to a secret preliminary examination at night (John 18:12–14, 19–23). Jewish law permitted only daylight proceedings.
3. The indictment against Jesus was illegal, because the judges themselves brought up the charge without any prior testimony by witnesses. The Sanhedrin was not allowed by law to originate charges.
4. The Sanhedrin illegally proceeded to hold its trial of Jesus before sunrise so that no one would be available to testify on His behalf.
5. The trial began on a day before an annual Sabbath (John 18:28) even though Jewish law did not permit the trial of a capital offense to begin on a Friday or on the day before an annual Sabbath. Jesus was arrested and tried on the 14th of Nisan, the day before the first annual Sabbath, the Feast of Unleavened Bread.
6. Jesus' trial was concluded in one day. Jewish law says: "If a sentence of death is to be pronounced, it [a criminal charge] cannot be concluded before the following day" (Mishna, "Sanhedrin" IV, 1). This was done to allow sufficient opportunity for any witnesses in support of the accused to present themselves. Jesus' trial was conducted in private and completed in less than nine hours!
7. Two false witnesses charged Jesus with saying He would destroy the temple made with hands (Mark 14:58); yet He was condemned by the court on another false charge—that of blasphemy. He was condemned on His own testimony (Luke 22:67–71). But according to Jewish law, a person could not be condemned on his own testimony.
8. The merits of Jesus' defense were not considered. Despite Deuteronomy 13:14, the high priest did not "inquire, and make search, and ask diligently" to see whether Jesus' statement was blasphemous. The law in the Mishna says, "The judges shall

weigh the matter in sincerity of their conscience" (Sanhedrin IV, 5). Instead, the court pronounced a sentence instantly and unanimously!

9. Those who would have voted against condemnation were apparently not at Jesus' trial. Joseph of Arimathea was a member of the court, yet he had not consented to the verdict (Luke 23:50–51). Jesus' opponents had made sure that only those who hated Him would be there.
10. The sentence was pronounced in a place forbidden by law. The trial took place at the high priest's house (Luke 22:54). According to the law, a death sentence could be pronounced only in the court's appointed place.
11. Most of the judges were not legally qualified to try Jesus. Some had bought their way into office, according to Josephus. Since they were known enemies of Jesus, Jewish law required that they disqualify themselves so He could be tried by impartial judges.
12. The court illegally switched the charges from blasphemy to treason before Pilate. Jesus' opponents wanted Him killed. So they charged Him with treason (Luke 23:2)—a Roman crime—so the Romans would be responsible for His death. No evidence was presented (John 18:29–30). Pilate, after a brief interview, saw that Jesus was not guilty (John 18:38; 19:4; Matthew 27:18). Fearing the crowd, however, he allowed the crucifixion of an innocent man. Pilate did not even pronounce Him guilty; He merely turned Him over to the soldiers. In fact, as Pilate pronounced Him to be innocent, He had to be released, according to the law, at that moment.

What a mockery of justice this trial was! All this illegality, in addition to His crucifixion, Jesus willingly suffered to pay the penalty of sins in our stead!

In the foreword in the book *"The Trial of Jesus"* by J C McRuer, Chief Justice of the High Court for Ontario, Canada, the following comments are made about the author: "Never have I seen the evidence of injustice in the trial of Jesus so well collated and united, and the cumulative effect of violation after violation of injustice and illegality is most profound."

Jesus Was Murdered

In our free booklet, *“Jesus Christ—a Great Mystery!”*, under Part 4, we discuss numerous additional reasons which show that His arrest, “trial” and crucifixion were illegal and that He was murdered by the Romans and the Sanhedrin. For instance, even after the sentence had been issued, the Sanhedrin had the legal duty to reconvene if a new witness in favor of the accused showed up. Judas was that new witness. He said, “I have betrayed innocent blood.” The Sanhedrin, however, violated that legal duty as well.

Quoting from our above-mentioned booklet, we say this:

“The Bible confirms that Christ was *murdered*. It was not an execution of a legally charged and legally convicted person. It was a state-approved and state-commanded murder. His disciples were not afraid to say so.” We then quote among other passages Acts 5:27–30 and Acts 7:51–52, where Peter and the apostles and Stephen accused the *Sanhedrin* of having murdered Jesus.

But we also explain in great detail WHY Christ was willing to be wrongfully captured and accused by the Sanhedrin, tortured and subsequently murdered, and what this means for you and for me.

In conclusion, we read in *The Wikipedia Encyclopedia*:

“Over the centuries, there have been attempts to revive the institution, such as the Grand Sanhedrin convened by Napoleon Bonaparte, and modern attempts in Israel. In October 2004... a group of rabbis representing varied Orthodox communities in Israel undertook a ceremony in Tiberias, where the original Sanhedrin was disbanded, in which it claimed to re-establish the body according to the proposal of Maimonides and the Jewish legal rulings of Rabbi Yosef Karo... As of March 2010, that effort is ongoing and is supported by The Temple Institute.”

It would be interesting if such a Grand Sanhedrin would be re-established prior to Christ’s return, as most Jews will reject Christ when He returns. So will professional Christianity as well.

Chapter 6

The Essenes, Zealots and Herodians

In this chapter, we will discuss additional influential groups at the time of Jesus, as spoken about in the Bible and also in archaeological and historical records, namely the Essenes, the Zealots (and in passing the tax collectors) and the Herodians.

The Essenes

The Essenes are not mentioned directly in the Holy Bible. However, their existence has been well established, and from what we know about them, it is clear that they would have been at odds with Jesus, His teachings and His practices. Contrary to the opinion of some “experts,” Jesus was most definitely NOT a member of the sect of the Essenes.

The Essenes Were Regulated by Strict Rules

The Essenes have been described as a “Jewish mystical sect somewhat resembling the Pharisees... They originated about B.C. 100, and disappeared from history after the destruction of Jerusalem” (M.G. Easton M.A., D.D., *Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, Third Edition).

The *Smith’s Bible Dictionary* says this about the Essenes:

“It seems probable that the name signifies seer, or the silent, the mysterious... There were isolated communities of Essenes, which were regulated by strict rules, analogous to those of the monastic institutions of a later date. All things were held in common, without distinction of property; and special provision was made for the relief of the poor... Slavery, war and commerce [trading] were alike forbidden. Their best-known settlements were on the northwest shore of the Dead Sea.”

The Essenes Have Gained Fame Through the Discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls

The *Wikipedia Encyclopedia* states:

“The Jewish historian Josephus records that Essenes existed in large numbers, and thousands lived throughout Roman Judaea ... The Essenes lived in various cities but congregated in communal life dedicated to voluntary poverty, daily immersion, and asceticism (their priestly class practiced celibacy). Most scholars claim they seceded from the Zadokite priests... The Essenes have gained fame in modern times as a result of the discovery of an extensive group of religious documents known as the Dead Sea Scrolls, which are commonly believed to be the Essenes’ library. These documents preserve multiple copies of parts of the Hebrew Bible untouched from possibly as early as 300 BCE until their discovery in 1946.”

The *Encyclopedia Britannica* adds that “The Essenes, a quasi-monastic dissident group, probably [included] the sect that preserved the Dead Sea Scrolls. This latter sect did not participate in the Temple worship at Jerusalem and observed another religious calendar, and from their desert retreat they awaited divine intervention and searched prophetic writings for signs indicating the consummation.”

We should note that the Dead Sea Scrolls do not contain many Old Testament passages, while including other writings which were not inspired. About 40% are copies of texts from the Hebrew Scriptures. The books of Esther and Nehemiah were not included at all. Approximately another 30% are texts from the Second Temple Period which ultimately were not canonized in the Hebrew Bible, like the Book of Enoch, the Book of Jubilees, the Book of Tobit, the Wisdom of Sirach, Psalms 152–155, and others.

It has been claimed that the biblical writings contained in the Dead Sea Scrolls are completely identical with the Hebrew Bible, as we have it today, but that is not true. There are differences, and we must not replace the Bible with the Dead Sea Scrolls. As we pointed out previously in this booklet, God used the scribes to preserve the Hebrew Bible, not the Essenes.

The Essenes Believed in the Immortality of the Soul

The Early Church by Henry Chadwick, pages 13–14, adds the following comments:

“They were a rigidly separatist society... Their life was frugal... Although they did not condemn marriage as wrong, they expected

full members of the community to be celibate. They practiced very frequent ritual washings, and had a sacred common meal to which the uninitiated were not admitted..."

Josephus wrote in "*The Jewish War*" that the Essenes "ritually immersed in water every morning and studied the books of the elders, preserved secrets, and were very mindful of the names of the angels kept in their sacred writings." *Wikipedia* adds that "Their theology included belief in the immortality of the soul and that they would receive their souls back after death."

They also believed apparently in the coming of two Messiahs. *PBS* informs us that "Some of their writings talk about a Messiah of David that is a kind of kingly figure who will come to lead the war. But there's also a Messiah of Aaron, a priestly figure, who will come to restore the Temple at Jerusalem to its proper purity and worship of God."

Jesus did not belong to the Essenes. For example, *Quora.com* points out that Mark 7 "records an incident in which Jesus is challenged by the Pharisees because some of his followers do not wash their hands [in a ritual way] before they eat... The Essenes were even stricter about handwashing than the Pharisees, so a lack of concern over this issue reveals a very un-Essene-like philosophy."

In addition, Jesus did believe in trading and commerce (Matthew 25:14–16), and He did not uphold the concept of secluded "monasteries" (He sent His disciples *into* the world); and He upheld the Hebrew calendar. The apostle Paul, reflecting the teachings of Christ, spoke strongly against "asceticism" (Colossians 2:21) and the "worship of angels" (Colossians 2:18). Both Christ and Paul rejected the concept of mandatory celibacy (Hebrews 13:4; 1 Timothy 4:3). They most certainly did not believe in the immortality of the soul (Matthew 10:28). Some feel Jesus had at times encounters with the Essenes. If so, it is obvious that such encounters would not have manifested substantial agreement between them.

The Zealots

Another group at the time of Christ were the Zealots. We have briefly referred to them in chapter 1, dealing with the Pharisees. As we mentioned, the Zealots were a political group with a religious background.

The Zealots Favored Armed Rebellion Against Rome

thornjournal.com states:

"The New Testament speaks little of the friction between Rome and the Jews. We do know that one of Jesus' disciples was a [former] zealot. The zealots favored armed rebellion against Rome. They believed that God would deliver Israel with the sword. Their reasoning went back to the days of David. When there was a gentile problem, what did David do? He got out his sword and dealt with it, and God was on his side. Surely, God would raise up a new Son of David who would do the same."

We hasten to add here that David SINNED when he fought in war. Regarding this often-misunderstood truth, please read our free booklet, "*Should YOU Fight in War?*" and our free booklet, "*Obeying God Rather than Men.*"

Continuing with the quote from the above-mentioned source:

"It is interesting that one of Jesus' disciples, Simon, was a zealot (Luke 6:15, Acts 1:13). Considering the fact that Jesus opposed violent rebellion against Rome, many probably wondered why Jesus would choose such a fellow. The irony increases when we add the fact that Matthew was a tax collector. Tax collectors were very much in league with Rome. There were probably no two groups of Jews in Palestine who hated each other more than the tax collectors and the zealots. Yet, Jesus chose one of each. Most people probably would have been afraid that these two fellows would kill each other. The Lord wasn't. He knew the kingdom of God was more powerful than the hatred of men. The very fact Jesus chose two men so opposite in their worldviews was a demonstration of its power."

God's Word First states this:

"The term 'zealot' in Hebrew means one who is zealous on behalf of God. The term derives from Greek (*zelotes*), 'emulator, fanatic, admirer or follower.' Zealots were known in the time of Jesus as... fanatics who defended the Law of Moses and... the national life of the Jewish people relentlessly opposing any attempt to bring Judea under the dominion of idolatrous Rome... radicalized zealots were a dangerous, unorganized, unpredictable sect... More like revolutionists, many members of this party bore also the name Sicarii, from their custom of going about with daggers ('*sicae*') hidden beneath their cloaks, with

which they would stab anyone found committing a sacrilegious act or anything provoking anti-Jewish feeling...

"The Zealot sect traces its roots back to the Maccabean revolt about 150 BC, about the same time the Pharisees began. The Zealots objected to Roman rule and violently sought to eradicate it by generally targeting the Romans, their Jewish collaborators, and the Sadducees, by raiding for provisions and other activities to aid their cause...

"Some of the more notorious were untrustworthy as they were known to take monetary bribes from the enemy to back off and at times do evil to their own people under deception in order to incite them to engage in action, riot or war whatever the prevailing situation might warrant..."

The *Encyclopedia Britannica* adds that the Zealots "were aggressive revolutionaries known for their violent opposition to Rome and its polytheisms."

One of Jesus' Disciples Was Simon the Zealot

Regarding Simon the Zealot, *amazingbibletimeline.com* states the following:

"The apostle named Simon the Zealot was mentioned only four times in the Bible, and the Synoptic Gospels (the books of Matthew, Mark, and Luke) named him as one of the Twelve ([Matthew] 10:4; Mark 3:18; and Luke 6:15). Readers find him again in the book of Acts (1:13) after the death of Jesus and his ascension to heaven where Simon and his fellow apostles gathered together to elect a replacement for Judas Iscariot... In some versions of the Bible, Matthew 10:4 and Mark 3:18 (NRSV) both mentioned him as 'the Cananaean,' while Luke tagged him as 'the Zealot'... Why he was nicknamed as 'the Zealot' is still being debated... Perhaps he was involved at some point in his life with the Zealots, a group of nationalistic Jews (sometimes bordered on fanatical) who actively sought independence from Roman rule. They—along with the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Idumeans—actively participated in the Roman-Jewish War of the 1st century. It was unclear whether Simon participated as a fighter for them or that he was simply a religious [or political] enthusiast."

The Bible does not report any encounters between Jesus and the Zealots, but it is clear that they would have known each other (Simon

the Zealot being one of His first disciples), and their philosophies on violence, war and peace were diametrically opposite. Jesus NEVER resorted to violence, and He never preached that we should be engaging in violence in any way (John 18:36). Jesus was most certainly not a zealot, as Herod and Pilate recognized (Matthew 27:24; Luke 23:4, 14–15; John 18:38). He had to teach His disciples, however, not to engage in violence either (Matthew 26:51–53). For some of them, this was more difficult to understand than for others, and contrary Jewish influence and traditions had to be eradicated in all of them.

The Herodians

Another group with whom Jesus did have encounters, according to the Bible, were the Herodians.

Wikipedia tells us:

“The Herodians (*Herodiani*) were a sect of Hellenistic Jews mentioned in the New Testament on two occasions—first in Galilee, and later in Jerusalem— being hostile to Jesus (Mark 3:6, 12:13; Matthew 22:16; cf. also Mark 8:15, Luke 13:31–32, Acts 4:27). In each of these cases their name is coupled with that of the Pharisees who began to plot against Jesus in response to his actions in healing on the Sabbath day, and drew the Herodians into their conspiracy.”

The *Jewish Encyclopedia* adds about the Herodians:

“Priestly party under the reign of King Herod and his successors; called by the Rabbis ‘Boethusians,’ as adherents of the family of Boethus, whose daughter Mariamne was one of the wives of King Herod, and whose sons were successively made high priests by him. They followed the Sadducees in their opposition to the Pharisees, and were therefore often identified with the former... According to the Gospels, their plot against the life of Jesus was supported by the Pharisees... wherefore Jesus warned his disciples, saying ‘Beware of the leaven [i.e., the teaching] of the Pharisees and of the leaven of Herod’ (Mark viii. 15; Matt. xvi. 6 has ‘Pharisees’ and ‘Sadducees’)...”

The Herodians Were a Political Party Rather Than a Religious One

Some claim that the Herodians were a religious party, while others contend, perhaps more accurately, that they were strictly public political supporters of King Herod the Great. As such, they had strong

teachings, which were detrimentally opposite to Jesus' teachings.

Wikipedia tells us that "Like the Pharisees, the Herodians wanted political independence for the Jewish people. Unlike the Pharisees, who sought to restore the kingdom of David, the Herodians wished to restore a member of the Herodian dynasty to the throne in Judea."

gotquestions.org adds:

"The first appearance of the Herodians in Scripture is Mark 3:6, 'Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.' Jesus had been doing miracles, which caused some of the people to believe in Him for salvation, and that threatened the power and position of the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Herodians. The Herodians again joined with the Pharisees to challenge Jesus, to see if they could trap Jesus in His words by a trick question, to either discredit Him or to get Him to stop preaching (Matthew 22:16).

"Jesus regarded the two groups as in unity against Him and warned His followers against them. . . Many scholars believe that the Herodians looked to Herod as a messiah, a savior of sorts who would put the Jewish land in favor with the Roman Empire and bring blessings to them. Jesus' presentation of Himself as the Messiah was a threat to the Herodians' attempt to make Herod the influential political power in the land."

Christ was also rejected by the Herodians because He did not engage in politics, in support of King Herod or any other human ruler. Even though He taught to pay taxes and not to engage in violent rebellion against the government, He did not "accommodate" Herod (who wanted to kill Him and whom He called a fox; Luke 13:31–32) when He was asked to perform miracles for Herod's entertainment (Luke 23:8).

Conclusion

In the first part of this booklet, we have looked at the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Scribes, the Elders, the Sanhedrin, the Essenes, the Zealots and the Herodians. There were other religious groups at the time of Jesus, but these were the principal players at that time.

J C McRuer states:

“Whatever may have been the theological and philosophical differences between the Pharisees and Sadducees [and the other groups which we discussed herein], Jesus’ early ministry arrested the attention of the leaders of both [rather, all] parties. They saw in His teaching new concepts of human values and human obligations – concepts that, if allowed to take root and grow, would destroy not only much of the power they wielded in religious [and political] affairs, but many of the vested interests which were the source of their great wealth. From the early days they were united in one thing – the determination that Jesus’ ministry should be of short duration...”

“In the synagogues of Galilee, Jesus’ voice was heard as one with a mission. ‘For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the *righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven’ (Matthew 5:20) were strong words, revolutionary words, revolutionary words that preached rebellion not against the power of Rome but against special privilege in everything religious. He was a humble man, a carpenter’s son. To the crowds that came to hear him he taught as a man of astonishing knowledge and as one who had authority – not as their scribes.”

In “*From Sabbath to Sunday*” by Samuele Bacchicchi, we read the following on page 34:

“Our story provides a fitting example of this prevailing perversion, by contrasting two types of Sabbath-keepers. On the one side stood Christ ‘grieved at the hardness of the heart’ of his accusers and taking steps to save the life of a wretched man (Mark 3:4–5). On the other side stood the experts of the law who even while sitting in a place of

worship spent their Sabbath time looking for faults and thinking out methods to kill Christ (Mark 3:2,6). The contrast of attitudes may well provide the explanation to Christ's questions about the legitimacy of saving or killing on the Sabbath (Mark 3:4), namely that the person who is not concerned for the physical and spiritual salvation of others on the Sabbath is automatically involved in destructive efforts or attitudes."

This sums up the massive difference between the approach of Jesus Christ and the religious (and political) leaders nearly 2,000 years ago and what our Savior had to contend with during His earthly ministry.

It is interesting to note that while the common denominator of the different religious (and political) groups at that time was the destruction of Jesus, there was apparent disunity between the various sects of Judaism at that time on many other issues. Today, we have disunity between the very many different groups in mainstream Christianity, all of whom have considerable differences with apostolic Christianity which is the basis for the understanding of the true Church of God.

It is also an interesting exercise to review the religious environment that Jesus was born into, and His teaching seemed revolutionary to many at that time. It was certainly in sharp contrast to the mainstream Judaic beliefs, and this was deemed to threaten the position and standing of the ruling religious elite.

In the end, they seemed to have succeeded when Jesus was crucified but, instead of that being the end of His teaching, it was, in fact, just the beginning as we see down through the events of the last 2,000 years.

However, the same sort of situation is also prevalent today. The true Church of God which teaches apostolic Christianity without any additions or deletions is criticized and accused by the mainstream churches of today. What an apt comparison that is, but nothing really changes!

When Jesus Christ does return to set up the Kingdom of God on earth (not in heaven as many mainstream churches seem to believe), the people of God, baptized faithful and loyal spiritually-begotten members of the Church that Jesus founded nearly two millennia ago, will become born-again members of the God Family. They will teach the Truth during the Millennium and the Great White Throne Judgment period, which have generally been discarded today and seen as in error by mainstream Christianity, which itself, as we will see in

Part 3 of this booklet, is full of errors and syncretism and, at last, “the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Habakkuk 2:14).

Part 2

Chapter 1

Most Jews in Denial

In this second part, we will discuss the indisputable fact that most of today's Jews are in denial and therefore also at odds with the true Jesus of the Bible.

As the Jews reject Jesus Christ, they are still waiting for a Messiah. The Jews rejected Jesus when He was on earth, and Judaism has continued with that rejection up until the present time.

A Few Jews Did Believe Him Then, But Most Did Not

Some Jews at the time that Jesus was on earth did believe in Him. In our booklet, *"The Fall and Rise of the Jewish People,"* we read on page 60 the following under the heading "Some Jews Believed in Christ":

"Some Jews believed what Paul taught, as noted in Acts 17:1–4: 'Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ." And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas.'"

We also continue to state on pages 60–61, under the heading, "Most Jews Did Not Believe":

"Most Jews rejected what Paul taught: 'On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul. Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, "It was necessary that the word of

God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles" ... But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region' (Acts 13:44–46, 50).

"Later in his ministry, being a prisoner, Paul was taken to Rome. Nonetheless, he was still able to teach those who came to him. Among those were leaders of the Jews in Rome (Acts 28:17), and Paul spoke to them: 'So when they had appointed him a day, many came to him at his lodging, to whom he explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening. And some were persuaded by the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved' (Acts 28:23–24)."

The Jews Killed Jesus Because of Ignorance

Continuing on pages 61–62 under the heading, "Why the Rejection?":

"Paul explained why most of the Jews rejected Jesus, using the analogy of the veil that Moses had to place over his face, due to the glory of his countenance, following his presence before God: 'But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. Nevertheless, when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away' (2 Corinthians 3:14–16).

"Paul made it clear that the rulers killed Jesus because they did not understand the wisdom of God, as written in 1 Corinthians 2:7–8: 'But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.'

"Christ confirmed this fact, praying to God the Father to forgive His murderers, because 'they do not know what they do' (Luke 23:34).

"On the other hand, it is true that the Pharisees had some knowledge about the person of Christ. Nicodemus, one of the Pharisees, came to Christ by night and told Him: 'Rabbi, we know that You are

a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with Him' (John 3:2).

"Still, most Pharisees rejected Him because they were envious and did not want to lose their positions in the community (Matthew 27:18; John 11:48). They even accused Him of casting out demons through the power of Satan, which caused Christ to give them a stern warning, since they knew better (Matthew 12:22–32).

"The apostle Peter boldly preached to the Jews about Christ, showing again that the Jews were 'ignorant' as to who Christ was:

"The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses... Yet now, brethren, I know that you did it in ignorance, as did also your rulers. But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled' (Acts 3:13–15, 17–18).

"The people did not really understand who Christ was. Christ asked His disciples: 'Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?' The disciples answered: 'Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah, or some of the prophets.' When Jesus asked them: 'But who do you say that I am?', Peter answered: 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Christ responded that this revelation had to come from God the Father; otherwise, he would not have understood this either (compare Matthew 16:13–17)."

We read in John 1:10–11: "He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him." Since that time, this rejection of Jesus as the Messiah has been the approach of most Jews down through the last 2,000 years.

On the website *jewsforjesus*, we read the following:

"[It is for religious] reasons [that] most Jews do not believe in Jesus... Rabbis, religious leaders and religious followers will [say] that Jesus cannot be the Messiah because he did not fulfill the job requirements."

The Jews Do Not Believe That Jesus Fulfilled the Messianic Prophecies

Continuing with the quote:

“Judaism does not believe that Jesus was the Messiah because He did not fulfill any messianic prophecies. ‘Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, nor shall they learn war anymore’ (Isaiah 2:4). Far from establishing world peace, Jesus himself said he came to divide ‘father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother’ (Luke 12:53, ESV). In fact, there has been more bloodshed in the name of Jesus rather than peace. How can anyone argue that Jesus is the promised Messiah according to the Jewish Scriptures?”

It is indeed true that there has been violence down through the ages, but this cannot be justified by quoting the above-mentioned passage in Luke 12. There, Christ did not advocate any violence against others, but He pointed out that His Word—the Truth—is a two-edged sword (Hebrews 4:12; Ephesians 6:17; and Revelation 1:16) which will divide truth from error and cause those who do not believe to persecute those who do.

The quoted website explains this quite succinctly:

“These many atrocities and this tragic legacy are a stain on those who call themselves Christians and identify with those who claim to share the same faith. However, we must ask ourselves, is any of this what Jesus taught his followers to do? Is there a single New Testament writer who advocated violence and called for injury to the Jews? Jesus himself declared, ‘all who take the sword will perish by the sword’ (Matthew 26:52, ESV). Contrary to the early church fathers, Paul declared that God has not rejected the Jews. ‘Has God rejected his people? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite’ (Romans 11:1, ESV). It is clear that this tragic legacy of those who identify themselves with Jesus does not follow the instructions of Jesus or the New Testament writers.”

Today, Judaism rejects Jesus as the Messiah but some Jews claim that they accept Him.

The Jewish Virtual Library estimates that there are 14,707,400 Jews worldwide and the *jewsforjesus* website states that “Statistics of how many Jews embrace Jesus range wildly from 1.7 million Jewish adults to 175,000 Messianic Jews in the US. Some have argued that these

figures represent Jews who are assimilated, disaffected, and otherwise uneducated in Judaism. However, the historical record would disagree. Some who embraced Jesus are among the most educated in Judaism such as Israel Zolle, the chief rabbi of Rome during World War II; Isaac Lichtenstein, district rabbi of Tapio-Szele in Hungary, who after 35 years serving his synagogue, at age 60, publicly declared to his congregation he discovered Yeshua is the Messiah; and Leopold Cohn, the Grand Rabbi of Austria-Hungary. Even today, there are Jews with different degrees of educations and observance, courageous enough to explore whether Jesus is the promised Jewish Messiah in spite of the dictates of traditions and religious authorities.”

However, it is clear from these estimates that the vast majority of Jewish people do not accept Jesus as the Messiah (or even claim that they do), and that is the view of the Judaic faith.

The Jewish Idea of the Mashiach Is That of a Great Human Leader

This information gives us the basis to review the reasons WHY the great majority of the Jews dismiss Jesus as the Savior of mankind. To look at what Jews believe today, we will quote from the website *jewfaq.org* as follows:

“The idea of mashiach (messiah) is an ancient one in Judaism. The Jewish idea of mashiach is a great human leader like King David, not a savior. There is much speculation about when the mashiach will come. The Bible identifies several tasks that the mashiach will accomplish. Jews do not believe in Jesus because he did not accomplish these tasks.”

The article continues:

“Jews do not believe that Jesus was the mashiach. [According to their reasoning, even “assuming” that he existed, and assuming that the Christian scriptures are accurate in describing him (both matters that are debatable [in the eyes of the Jews]), [the Jews believe that] he simply did not fulfill the mission of the mashiach as it is described in the biblical passages cited above. Jesus did not do any of the things that the scriptures said the messiah would do.”

Proof That Jesus Did Exist

Then there are those—Jews and others, including agnostics and atheists—who claim that Jesus never lived. This stance is absurd.

In our booklet *“Jesus Christ—A Great Mystery!”*, this question is immediately addressed under the heading, “Did Jesus Exist?”, beginning on page 1, and below is a brief extract (we recommend, however, to read the entire chapter in our booklet, proving beyond doubt the existence of Jesus):

“Is there any historical proof that a person called Jesus Christ ever existed? Although it is sometimes claimed by atheists and agnostics that the very person of Jesus was an invention by early writers, very few educated people down through history have doubted the existence of Christ. There are more than 1,000 works of literature that were written very early in Church history affirming the existence of Christ, and much of it was written by pagans or Jews—people who acknowledged His existence, but denied that He was, indeed, the Son of God.

“H.G. Wells wrote in *‘Outline of History’*: ‘... one is obliged to say, “Here was a man. This part of the tale could not have been invented.”’ Will Durant, professor of philosophy, and a non-Christian, wrote extensively about Christ’s existence and His effect on society in *‘The Story of Civilization.’* *The Encyclopedia Britannica* refers to Christ more than 20,000 times—more than Socrates, Aristotle, Buddha, Napoleon, Confucius, Mohammed, or Shakespeare. It says in one instance: “These independent accounts prove that in ancient times even the opponents of Christianity never doubted the historicity of Jesus, which was disputed for the first time and on inadequate grounds by the end of the 18th, during the 19th, and at the beginning of the 20th centuries.’

“John Singleton Copley, also known as Lord Lyndhurst, one of the greatest legal minds in British history, once commented in this way on the existence of Christ, His death, and His resurrection: ‘I know pretty well what evidence is: and I tell you, such evidence as that for the resurrection has never broken down yet.’ Also, Lord Chief Justice of England, Lord Darling, once said: ‘no intelligent jury in the world could fail to bring in a verdict that the resurrection story is true.’

“Consider also this brief synopsis of many other *non-Biblical sources* attesting to the historical authenticity of Jesus Christ:

“The Huleatt fragments were written in AD 50 and contain the quote from Matthew 26:7–15, referring to Christ’s anointing with oil.

“Tatian, the Syrian, wrote in AD 170 that, ‘God was born in the form of a man’ (*Address to the Greeks* 21).

“Melito of Sardis wrote in AD 177 about the baptism of Christ and His miracles (Fragment in *Anastasius of Sinai’s The Guide* 13).

“Thallus, a Samaritan historian, wrote in AD 52 about the darkness that occurred at the crucifixion of Christ.

“Mara Bar-Serapion wrote in AD 73 to his son about the death of Socrates, Pythagoras and Jesus.

“Cornelius Tacitus wrote in AD 112 or AD 115 in his *Annal* (15.14) that ‘Christus, the founder of the name, was put to death by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea in the reign of Tiberias.’

“Lucian of Samostasa (AD 115–200) wrote about Christ as ‘the man who was crucified in Palestine because he introduced this new cult into the world.’

“Phlegon wrote in his ‘*Chronicles*’ in AD 140 about the ability of Jesus to foresee future events.

“In addition, Christian authors such as Clement of Rome [AD 30–101], Ignatius [martyred in AD 117], a writer naming himself Barnabas [in the *Epistle of Barnabas*, written between AD 70 and 135], and Justyn Martyr [AD 100–165] wrote about Christ and His followers.

“The Jewish Talmud contains several references to Jesus Christ. It states on one occasion, ‘On the eve of the Passover Yeshu was hanged’ (The *Babylonian Talmud*, vol. iii, Sanhedrin 43a, p. 281). Another quote states, ‘Our rabbis taught: Yeshu had five disciples—Mattai [i.e. Matthew], Nakkai, Netzer, Buni and Yodah’ (from Sanhedrin 43a). Other sources talk about Christians who were following Christ (compare, Aristides, *Apology 16* [AD 140]; Pliny the Younger [AD 112]; and Suetonius [AD 120]).”

That Jesus existed and lived on earth as a human being is beyond the shadow of any doubt. But many Jews who believe in His existence as a human being reject the accuracy of the New Testament Scriptures. That position will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 2

The Jews Question the Accuracy of the New Testament Scriptures

In the previous chapter, we began to look at the fact that the Jews rejected Jesus when He was on earth and Judaism has continued with that rejection up until the present time. One of the reasons why Jews have rejected Jesus is the false notion that He did not even exist. We refuted this claim by looking at the evidence that shows that Jesus did exist with proof from many sources.

As alluded to in the previous chapter, Jews also reject Jesus as the Messiah because they question the accuracy of the New Testament Scriptures, and they state that He simply did not fulfill the mission of the Messiah.

The New Testament is an Accurate Record of Jesus' Life on Earth

Of course, the New Testament is accurate in describing Jesus, His life and His mission. We firmly believe that there are no contradictions in the Bible. However, we would agree that He did not fulfill the mission of the “mashiach”—the Judaic belief which we will show to be in error. We will also show why Jews reject clear Old Testament passages identifying Jesus as the Messiah.

Regarding the many proofs for the infallibility of the original writings of the New Testament, please consult our free booklet, “*The Authority of the Bible*,” chapters 3–6.

In addition, on the website *crosswalk.com*, we read the following:

“We should believe the Bible because Christ believed the Bible. Such reasoning may sound circuitous or circular. It is not. As the British theologian John Wenham argued, Christianity is rooted first and foremost in faith in a person: ‘Hitherto Christians who have been unaware about the status of the bible have been caught in a vicious circle: any satisfactory doctrine of the Bible must be based on the teaching of the Bible, but the teaching of the Bible is itself suspect. The

way out of the dilemma is to recognize that belief in the Bible comes from faith in Christ, and not vice versa.' In other words, confidence in the Bible rests upon confidence in Christ. Is Christ who He said He was? Is He just a great man or is He the Lord? The Bible may not prove to you Jesus Christ is the Lord, but the lordship of Christ will prove to you that the Bible is the very word of God. This is because Christ regularly spoke about the authority of the Old Testament (see Mark 9). He claimed authority for His own teaching by saying, 'I tell you' (see Matthew 5). Jesus even taught that the teaching of His disciples would have divine authority (see John 14:26). If Jesus Christ is trustworthy, then His words about the authority of the Bible should be trusted as well. Christ is trustworthy and He trusted God's Word. So should we. Without faith in Christ, you will not believe the Bible is the self-disclosure of God. With faith in Christ, you cannot help but believe the Bible is God's Word."

We read in Luke 24:44 these words of Jesus: "Then He said to them, 'These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.'" By this, Jesus endorsed the Old Testament Scriptures (which the Jews accepted anyway, at least so they said.)

Failed Human Messiahs

Continuing with the statement from the *website jewfaq.org*:

"On the contrary, another Jew born about a century later came far closer to fulfilling the messianic ideal [as taught and believed in by Judaism] than Jesus did. [We will see later what the (false) Jewish concept of the Messiah really means.] His name was Shimeon ben Kosiba, known as Bar Kokhba (son of a star), and he was a charismatic, brilliant, but brutal warlord. Rabbi Akiba, one of the greatest scholars in Jewish history, believed that Bar Kokhba was the *mashiach*. Bar Kokhba fought a war against the Roman Empire, catching the Tenth Legion by surprise and retaking Jerusalem. He resumed sacrifices at the site of the Temple and made plans to rebuild the Temple. He established a provisional government and began to issue coins in its name. This is what the Jewish people were looking for in a *mashiach*; Jesus clearly does not fit into this mold. Ultimately, however, the Roman

Empire crushed his revolt and killed Bar Kokhba. After his death, all acknowledged that he was not the *mashiach*.

“Throughout Jewish history, there have been many people who have claimed to be the *mashiach*, or whose followers have claimed that they were the *mashiach*: Shimeon Bar Kokhba, Shabbatai Tzvi, Jesus, and many others too numerous to name. Leo Rosten reports some very entertaining accounts under the entry for *meshiekh* in *The New Joys of Yiddish*. But all of these people died without fulfilling the mission of the *mashiach*; therefore, none of them were the *mashiach*. The *mashiach* and the *Olam Ha-Ba* lie in the future, not in the past.”

In this statement above, we read that “another Jew (Bar Kokhba) born about a century later came far closer to fulfilling the messianic ideal than Jesus did.” They further write that “Jesus does not fit into this mold” after discussing “Bar Kokhba (son of a star), and state that he was a “charismatic, brilliant, but brutal warlord.”

Jesus Commanded His Followers to Be Peacemakers, Not Warlords

We should be very happy that Jesus did not fit into such a mold; in fact, His approach for Him, as a Man, and for His disciples was exactly the opposite, as we read in Matthew 26:51–53: “And suddenly, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword, struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. But Jesus said to him, ‘Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?’” (See also Mark 14:47; Luke 22:50–51; John 18:10).

Jesus also sternly rebuked His disciples as we read in Luke 9:54–56 when they wanted to command fire down from heaven to destroy the Samaritans after they had refused to give them shelter. In Matthew 5, we read of Jesus’ approach; verse 9 commands us to be peacemakers, not warmongers, and not even to get angry with your brother without a cause; verses 22–25 talk about reconciliation, and verses 38–42 tell us to “turn the other cheek” (an Aramaic idiom), instead of resorting to violence. These were Christ’s instructions then and for now. Jesus certainly did not fit into the category that the Jews were looking for, that of a human warlord.

As will be shown below, Christ WILL fight when He returns to this

earth, but then He will come as GOD. However, when He became a Man and was here on earth, in the flesh, born of a woman, born under the law, to fulfill His role as a human Messiah and to overcome sin in the flesh and to suffer and die for us, He categorically refused to fight, and He rejected war in any manner, shape or form.

Judaism Misunderstands the Old Testament Messianic Prophecies

The huge mistake in Judaism is that they misunderstand the Old Testament Scriptures Which Clearly Reveal That The Messiah Would Have to come TWICE—first as a human being who would suffer and die for mankind and thereby bring about forgiveness of sin; and second, as God who will establish the Kingdom of God on earth “in the last days” and rule all of mankind with a rod of iron.

While confusing these passages and believing that the Messiah would only come once to fulfill all these Old Testament prophecies at the time when He will appear to rule mankind, many Jews and modern Judaism reject the supreme Sacrifice of Christ and the fact that the Messiah would have to come FIRST to DIE for mankind. (In fact, they do not even believe that the Messiah would come to die for man.) As we will see, they totally pervert Scriptures in the Old Testament which establish this, by giving them a distorted meaning.

Returning to *jeufaq.org*, they give the additional information:

“The following passages in the Jewish scriptures are the ones that Jews consider to be messianic in nature or relating to the end of days. These are the ones that we rely upon in developing our messianic concept:

“Isaiah 2, 11, 42; 59:20

“Jeremiah 23, 30, 33; 48:47; 49:39

“Ezekiel 38:16

“Hosea 3:4–3:5

“Micah 4

“Zephaniah 3:9

“Zechariah 14:9

“Daniel 10:14.”

They certainly apply to the Messiah and the end times, but they see them to be fulfilled by a human warlord as mentioned in the case of Shimeon ben Kosiba who was thought at one time to be the “mashiach,” as well as others, but the reality for them has not yet happened. When

these Scriptures are reviewed, it seems clear that they are all about the time at the end and the beginning of the Kingdom of God on earth when Jesus Christ, as the immortal and eternal GOD BEING, will be King of kings and Lord of lords (see Revelation 17:14 and 19:16).

For example, Isaiah 2 is about the future house of God when “He (that is Jesus who is God) will teach us His ways”—not some human warlord. Zechariah 14:9 speaks about the time when “the LORD shall be King over all the earth,” not some human being. These and many other verses have been explained in a number of our booklets about biblical prophecy.

Before we move on to review further information as to what the Jews are looking for, it is appropriate to explain why we do believe that Jesus Christ, at His first Coming, was indeed the Messiah.

On the website *bibleprobe.com*, a list of 365 Messianic Prophecies is given from Genesis to Malachi that Jesus fulfilled, when He was here on earth during His first Coming as a HUMAN BEING. Of course, space prohibits listing all of these. (In fact, others, like Edersheim, see below, claim that Jesus, when He was here on earth as a human being, fulfilled as many as 456 Old Testament prophecies.)

Mathematical Probability That Jesus Is the Christ

On the website *empower.global*, we read about the “Mathematical Probability” That Jesus Is The Christ And That He Fulfilled the prophecies about Him as a human being during His first Coming:

“A professor at Westmont College has calculated the probability of one man fulfilling the major prophecies made concerning the Messiah. The estimates were worked out by twelve different classes representing some 600 university students. The students carefully weighed all the factors, discussed each prophecy at length, and examined the various circumstances which might indicate that men had conspired together to fulfill a particular prophecy. They made their estimates conservative enough so that there was finally unanimous agreement even among the most skeptical students. However the professor then took their estimates, and made them even more conservative. He also encouraged other skeptics or scientists to make their own estimates to see if his conclusions were more than fair.

“Finally, he submitted his figures for review to a committee of the

American Scientific Affiliation. Upon examination, they verified that his calculations were dependable and accurate in regard to the scientific material presented. For example, concerning Micah 5:2, where it states the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, the professor and his students determined the average population of BETHLEHEM from the time of Micah to the present; then they divided it by the average population of the earth during the same time period. They concluded that the chance of one man being born in Bethlehem was one in 300,000.

“After examining only eight different prophecies, they conservatively estimated that the chance of one man fulfilling all eight prophecies was one in 10^{17} . To illustrate how large the number 10^{17} is (a figure with 17 zeros), the professor gave this illustration: If you mark one of ten tickets, and place all the tickets in a hat, and thoroughly stir them, and then ask a blindfolded man to draw one, his chance of getting the right ticket is one in ten. Suppose that we take 10^{17} silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. They’ll cover all of the state two feet deep. Now mark one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mass thoroughly, all over the state. Blindfold a man and tell him that he can travel as far as he wishes, but he must pick up the one silver dollar that has the special mark on it. What chance would he have of getting the right one? Just the same chance that the prophets would’ve had of writing these eight prophecies and having them all come true in any one man, from their day to the present time.

“In financial terms, is there anyone who would not invest in a financial venture if the chance of failure were only one in 10^{17} ? This is the kind of sure investment we’re offered by God for faith in His Messiah.

“From these figures, the professor concludes the fulfillment of these eight prophecies alone proves that God inspired the writing of the prophecies – the likelihood of mere chance is only one in 10^{17} . Another way of saying this is that any person who minimizes or ignores the significance of the biblical identifying signs concerning the Messiah would be foolish.

“But, of course, there are many more than eight prophecies. In another calculation, the professor used 48 prophecies (even though he could have used Edersheim’s 456), and arrived at the extremely conservative estimate that the probability of 48 prophecies being fulfilled in one person is the incredible number 10^{157} . How large

is 10^{157} ? 10^{157} contains 157 zeros!

“The professor gives an illustration of this number using electrons. Electrons are very small objects. They’re smaller than atoms. It would take 2.5 TIMES 10^{15} of them, laid side by side, to make one inch. Even if we counted 250 of these electrons each minute, and counted day and night, it would still take 19 million years just to count a line of electrons one inch long. With this introduction, let’s go back to our chance of one in 10^{157} . Let’s suppose that we’re taking this number of electrons, marking one, and thoroughly stirring it into the whole mass, then blindfolding a man and letting him try to find the right one. What chance has he of finding the right one? What kind of a pile will this number of electrons make? They make an inconceivably large volume.

“This is the result from considering a mere 48 prophecies. Obviously, the probability that 456 prophecies would be fulfilled in one man by chance is vastly smaller. Once one goes past one chance 10^{50} , the probabilities are so small that it is impossible to think that they will ever occur.

“As the professor concludes, ‘Any man who rejects Christ as the Son of God is rejecting a fact, proved perhaps more absolutely than any other fact in the world.’”

There Are Hundreds of Old Testament Prophecies That Jesus Fulfilled

We have given conclusive proof that Jesus did exist and have quoted the source that shows that there are 365 [or even 456] Messianic Prophecies in the Old Testament that are given that Jesus fulfilled from the book of Genesis to Malachi. We have further shown that the mathematical probability that Jesus is the Christ and that He was and is the Messiah is overwhelming.

Many Jews claim that Jesus (if they believe that He existed) knew the Old Testament Scriptures and just arranged His life in such a way that it appeared as if they were to apply to Him. But they should readily admit that there are hundreds of prophecies, concerning the Messiah, over which He, as a human being, could have had no influence or control. For example, how could He have “inspired” Judas to betray Him for 30 shekels of silver? How could He have arranged it to be born in Bethlehem; and how could He have influenced His parents

to flee to Egypt to escape the wrath of Herod?

There is no doubt that due to a misunderstanding of Scripture, the expectations of the Jewish people of that time were that of a leader who would liberate them from the oppressive yoke that the Romans had laid on them, and when Jesus came preaching a gospel of love even for one's enemies, and when He subsequently died without replacing the Roman government and establishing Jewish rule over the land, those expectations remained unfulfilled for most of the Jews at that time. Jesus stood in stark contrast to other false messiahs that had arisen and failed.

Chapter 3

The Messianic Idea in Judaism

In the previous chapters, we looked at proof of Jesus' existence and that He was indeed the Messiah, promised in the Old Testament.

Let us return to the website *jewfaq.org* and continue to look at the Messianic idea in Judaism.

"Belief in the eventual coming of the *mashiach* is a basic and fundamental part of traditional Judaism. It is part of Rambam's 13 Principles of Faith, the minimum requirements of Jewish belief. In the *Shemoneh Esrei* prayer, recited three times daily, we pray for all of the elements of the coming of the *mashiach*: ingathering of the exiles; restoration of the religious courts of justice; an end of wickedness, sin and heresy; reward to the righteous; rebuilding of Jerusalem; restoration of the line of King David; and restoration of Temple service.

"Modern scholars suggest that the messianic concept was introduced later in the history of Judaism, during the age of the prophets. They note that the messianic concept is not explicitly mentioned anywhere in the Torah (the first five books of the Bible).

"However, traditional Judaism maintains that the messianic idea has always been a part of Judaism. The *mashiach* is not mentioned explicitly in the Torah, because the Torah was written in terms that all people could understand, and the abstract concept of a distant, spiritual, future reward was beyond the comprehension of some people. However, the Torah contains several references to 'the End of Days' (*acharit ha-yamim*), which is the time of the *mashiach*; thus, the concept of *mashiach* was known in the most ancient times."

This explanation, that the Messiah is not mentioned in the Torah because people could not understand the abstract concept of a distant reward, is silly and laughable. God inspired the writing of the five books of Moses, and they do contain numerous references to the end time and to the coming of the Messiah (compare Genesis 3:14–15; 22:18; 49:10).

The Jews Believe That the Human Mashiach Will Be Anointed as King in the End of Days

Continuing with the above-mentioned quote:

“The term ‘mashiach’ literally means ‘the anointed one,’ and refers to the ancient practice of anointing kings with oil when they took the throne. The mashiach is the one who will be anointed as king in the End of Days.

“The word ‘mashiach’ does not mean ‘savior.’ The notion of an innocent, divine or semi-divine being who will sacrifice himself to save us from the consequences of our own sins is a purely Christian concept that has no basis in Jewish thought...

“The mashiach will be a great political leader descended from King David (Jeremiah 23:5). The mashiach is often referred to as ‘mashiach ben David’ (mashiach, son of David). He will be well-versed in Jewish law, and observant of its commandments (Isaiah 11:2–5). He will be a charismatic leader, inspiring others to follow his example. He will be a great military leader, who will win battles for Israel. He will be a great judge, who makes righteous decisions (Jeremiah 33:15). But above all, he will be a human being, not a god, demi-god or other supernatural being.

“It has been said that in every generation, a person is born with the potential to be the mashiach. If the time is right for the messianic age within that person’s lifetime, then that person will be the mashiach. But if that person dies before he completes the mission of the mashiach, then that person is not the mashiach.”

It is interesting to read that the mashiach will not be a “being who will sacrifice himself for us” and that he will be “a human being, not a god, demi-god or other supernatural being.” These statements are all false, and need to be properly reviewed.

As we explained previously, it was prophesied in the Old Testament that the Messiah would come twice—first, as a human being to DIE for mankind; and second, as God to rule this earth forever.

Isaiah 53 Refers to the Birth of Jesus, Not to the Jewish Nation

Regarding His first coming as a human being, this is clearly prophesied in Isaiah 53. However, Judaism rejects today the clearly revealed and intended meaning, but this was not always the case.

We explain in our free booklet, *“Do You Know the Jesus of the Bible?”* in chapter 7, “The rejected prophecies of Isaiah 53,” that all the statements mentioned in that chapter were fulfilled by Christ at His first coming. In addition, we state, beginning with page 37:

“The *Ryrie Study Bible* explains:

“Traditional Jewish interpretation understood the passage to be speaking of the Messiah, as, of course, did the early Christians, who believed Jesus to be the Messiah (Acts 8:35). Not until the 12th century did the view emerge that the NATION [of] ISRAEL is referred to, a view that has since become DOMINANT JUDAISM. But the servant is distinguished from the “people” (Isaiah 53:8). He is an innocent victim, something that could not be said of the nation (53:9).’

“Sadly, however, as stated above, Judaism today rejects Isaiah 53 as applying to the Messiah, but teaches that it refers to the JEWISH NATION.

“*Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible* states in his introduction to Isaiah 53: “The Jews have endeavored to apply it to their sufferings in captivity...”

Similar ridiculous interpretations allege, as we continue to explain, that the “Servant” applies to the people, holding that “the PEOPLE—NOT GOD—will bring about the work of salvation.”

Isaiah 53:8 states that “My Servant” (Isaiah 52:13) “was cut off from the land of the living; For the transgressions of My people He was stricken.” Daniel 9:26 explains that it is the “Messiah” who “shall be cut off, but not for Himself.” So clearly, the Messiah is identified as the Servant who would come as a human being to DIE for our transgressions.

But the Messiah was no ordinary human being. He was God in the flesh (“Immanuel,” compare Isaiah 7:14; literally “God with us”). He would be born in Bethlehem as “The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting” (Micah 5:2).

Jesus’ Return to Earth Will Be as the Supernatural Son of God

When He comes a second time, He will NOT come as a human being, as it is falsely alleged in the above-quoted website article. IF He were to come as a human being, He would ultimately die (something, which the Muslims believe; compare our free booklet, *“Middle Eastern*

and *African Nations in Bible Prophecy*, Appendix 1, “Will there be a Mahdi?”, pages 61–62). But this is not what the Old Testament says.

The Messiah was God, before He became a man and died; and when He returns, He will come as God—the Son of God the Father. He will rule as God—the God of Jacob (Isaiah 2:3). His name will be “Mighty God”; and “of His government and peace There will be no end”; it will “remain forever” (Isaiah 9:6–7). Daniel 7:13–14 describes how He—“One like the Son of Man”—is brought before God the Father—the “Ancient of Days” to receive a kingdom and glory and an “everlasting dominion Which shall not pass away,” proving that the Messiah could not be a mere man when He takes over the rule over this earth who would subsequently die in due time. Rather, He will live and rule forever.

For further proof, please read our free booklets, “*God Is a Family*” and “*The Book of Zachariah—Prophecies for Today*.”

The Ruling Messiah Could Not Be a Human Being

That the ruling Messiah could not be a mere man is also obvious from the following considerations:

We know that mankind has been on the earth for around 6,000 years after God created Adam and then Eve. After about 1,650 years, mankind had gone off the track so much and was so evil that we read: “Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

“And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. So the LORD said, ‘I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.’ But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD” (Genesis 6:5–8).

Then God started again through Noah and his family and eventually, man went off track yet again and has continued to do so throughout all of those years.

How many wars have been fought during the last 6,000 years? Hundreds, maybe thousands or even tens of thousands, who can know? However, it is man’s aggression and lust for power that guarantees that these will continue while man is in charge on earth.

In *Wikipedia* under the heading of “World Peace,” we read:

“World peace, or peace on Earth, is the concept of an ideal state of happiness, freedom and peace within and among all people and nations on Planet Earth. This idea of world nonviolence is one motivation for people and nations to willingly cooperate, either voluntarily or by virtue of a system of governance that has this objective. Different cultures, religions, philosophies, and organizations have varying concepts on how such a state would come about.

“Various religious and secular organizations have the stated aim of achieving world peace through addressing human rights, technology, education, engineering, medicine or diplomacy used as an end to all forms of fighting. Since 1945, the United Nations and the five permanent members of its Security Council (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States) have operated under the aim to resolve conflicts without war or declarations of war. Nonetheless, nations have entered numerous military conflicts since then.”

God gave the nation of Israel a choice. We read in Leviticus 26 they were given a promise of blessings (verses 1–14), but if they went down the wrong path, there would be cursings (verses 15–45). We know from history that they, so often, chose the wrong way.

Today, we see the state of the world and no man can change what is happening. First of all, the Ten Commandments would have to be kept so that society would be regulated in the right way. Then everyone would have to worship the one true God. “There is salvation in no other name given among men by which we must be saved” (that of Jesus Christ), as we read in Acts 4:12. The chance, at this time in world history, of that occurring is zero, as only God can call people to the Truth and into His Church, and it is clear that will not happen to everyone on earth at this time.

No man, even leaders like Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Napoleon Bonaparte, Hitler and many others have been able to rule the world, even though they may well have had aspirations to do so. Man is totally incapable in himself to do so, and so it will take a supernatural Being to sort out the mess that man has made. To think that a human leader can arise and convert the whole world to their brand of religion and authority is flying in the face of history. Even the ancient nation of Israel which was God’s chosen nation could not enforce the ways of God on the rest of the world.

An Imposter Will Arise at the End Time Claiming to Be God

There will be someone who will arise and many will be convinced that this man is God, but of course, he is not God, but an imposter. In our booklet *“Is That in the Bible?—The Mysteries of the Book of Revelation,”* we read the following on pages 67–68 under the heading: “The Man of Sin in the Temple of God”:

“Another Scripture that indicates the existence of a future temple in Jerusalem, just prior to Christ’s return, can be found in 2 Thessalonians 2:3–4. Paul writes:

“Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day [of Christ’s return] will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.’

“This ‘man of sin,’ who is also called ‘the lawless one’ in verses 8 and 9, is identified in the book of Revelation as ‘the false prophet’ (compare, for example, Revelation 16:13; 19:20; also see Revelation 13:13–14). This religious figure will deceive people through ‘great signs’ (Revelation 13:13; 19:20). We read in 2 Thessalonians 2:9 that the coming of the lawless one is ‘according to the working of Satan, with all power, SIGNS and lying wonders.’ This false prophet will receive the power to do these things from none other than Satan and his demons (compare Revelation 16:13–14).

“The *Ryrie Study Bible* comments:

“... the Antichrist [this is an incorrect designation—rather, the passage speaks about the false prophet] will desecrate the rebuilt Jewish temple in Jerusalem by placing himself there to be worshipped... This will be the climax of man’s great sin of self-deification, in open defiance of God.’

“The *Nelson Study Bible* adds:

“The man of sin will proclaim himself to be divine and will sit in the temple of God, acting as if he were a god... The man of sin will probably stand in a physical temple in Jerusalem, and declare himself to be a god, the ultimate fulfillment of the ‘abomination of desolation’ spoken of by Daniel (Dan. 7:23; 9:26, 27; 11:31, 36, 37; 12:11) and Jesus (Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14)...

“The returning Christ will consume the man of sin ‘with the breath

of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming' (2 Thesalonians 2:8)."

This man will not be God. He—together with a military leader, the "beast"—will try to convince people that they will create a kingdom to exist and rule forever, but they will fail miserably, as other "messiahs" have failed before them. The "Thousand-Year-Reich" of Adolf Hitler lasted less than 15 years. Right up to just before Jesus Christ returns to this earth, there will be counterfeits and imposters, and the false prophet will fool most people.

For the Jews to think that the *mashiach* will be "a human being, not a god, demi-god or other supernatural being" and that he will be able to subdue all nations and introduce the equivalent of the Kingdom of God on earth is just not possible. It is something that only a great supernatural Being can achieve, and that will be Jesus Christ at His return.

Chapter 4

According to the Jews, When Will the Mashiach Come and What Will He Do?

We previously looked at the fact that Judaism has been, and is still looking for, a human being to fulfill the role of the “mashaich” who they expect will bring about the millennial prophecies we read about in many books in the Old Testament.

Let us continue to look at the website *jewfaq.org* where we read further, as follows:

“When Will the Mashiach Come?

“There are a wide variety of opinions on the subject of when the mashiach will come. Some of Judaism’s greatest minds have cursed those who try to predict the time of the mashiach’s coming, because errors in such predictions could cause people to lose faith in the messianic idea or in Judaism itself. This actually happened in the 17th century, when Shabbatai Tzvi claimed to be the mashiach. When Tzvi converted to Islam under threat of death, many Jews converted with him. Nevertheless, this prohibition has not stopped anyone from speculating about the time when the mashiach will come.

“Although some scholars believed that G-d has set aside a specific date for the coming of the mashiach, most authority suggests that the conduct of mankind will determine the time of the mashiach’s coming.”

The Bible Shows That the Return of Jesus Can Be Delayed or Accelerated

We want to interject here that the above-quoted concept does include elements of truth, but is not entirely correct. We explain in our booklet, *“When and How Will Christ Return?”*, chapter 4, beginning on page 23, that based on our conduct, we can hasten or delay the coming of the Messiah:

“... we read in 2 Peter 3:12 that we are to be ‘looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God’—the return of Christ... Just as we can hasten Christ’s return, so we can also delay it, to an extent. This can be seen in 2 Peter 3:9: ‘The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance’...

“According to 2 Peter 3:9, God may delay Christ’s coming, if Church members, whom God wants to be in His Kingdom, are not ready, due to a lack of serious repentance...

“Some feel that the precise moment of Christ’s return has been fixed for thousands of years—as the Father ‘knows’ the exact moment of Christ’s Second Coming. They say that according to Christ’s words, the Father knew at least 2,000 years ago exactly when He would send back His Son: ‘But of that day and hour no one KNOWS, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only’ (Matthew 24:36). (Mark 13:32 adds that not even the Son of God—Jesus Christ—knows that exact time.)

“However, in light of the fact that Christ’s return can be delayed or accelerated—at least partially because of human conduct—it is very doubtful that God the Father ‘knew’ the exact day and hour of Christ’s return for thousands of years.

“We should note that, according to the two passages in Matthew 24:36 and Mark 13:32, Christ said that man, angels and Christ do not ‘know,’ but ‘only My Father.’ There is NO VERB here, following ‘My Father,’ so it must be added...

“Acts 1:7 does not say that God ‘knows.’ It only says that it is not for Christ’s disciples to ‘know.’ In regard to the Father, it is stated that He has ‘put this’ in His own power or authority. Reading Matthew 24:36 and Mark 13:32 together with Acts 1:7, it is apparent that the words which need to be supplied in Matthew 24:36 and Mark 13:32 would have to be those showing God’s AUTHORITY to set the date.”

The *Luther Bible* from 1891 rendered Acts 1:7 in regard to the time of Christ’s coming: “... which the Father has reserved to His power.”

This means then that we can hasten or delay the time of Christ’s coming, until the Father decides that He has waited long enough and that there would be no further delay (compare Revelation 10:6), as otherwise, all of mankind would be destroyed and no one would survive (Matthew 24:22).

The Jews Believe That the Human Mashiach Will Arise When Most Needed

Continuing with the quote from the above-mentioned website:

“In general, it is believed that the mashiach will come in a time when he is most needed (because the world is so sinful), or in a time when he is most deserved (because the world is so good). For example, each of the following has been suggested as the time when the mashiach will come:

“if Israel repented a single day;

“if Israel observed a single Shabbat properly;

“if Israel observed two Shabbats in a row properly;

“in a generation that is totally innocent or totally guilty;

“in a generation that loses hope;

“in a generation where children are totally disrespectful towards their parents and elders...”

This is just man’s mind at work and complete speculation. There are no Scriptures to indicate that any of this will happen under the rule of man.

But let us assume that one of these times, as listed above, came to pass. Could Israel—and do they mean the Jewish nation?—all repent in one day? What about everyone else on earth? It’s never happened in 6,000 years and, even when Jesus returns, there will still be those who will be difficult and disobedient (compare Zechariah 14:16–19).

If Israel (again just the Jews?) observed a single Sabbath properly or two Sabbaths in a row properly, what would that prove? It is impossible at this time that this could ever happen but there is so much more to an obedient God-fearing person than keeping one or two Sabbaths. It is just such a very narrow, restricted activity to be able to make it a possibility for the Messiah to arise. We can liken this to the fact that so many churches and other places of worship were full just after 9/11 when the Twin Towers in New York had been attacked. After a few weeks, things got back to “normal”!

The next qualification would be if a generation is totally innocent or totally guilty. How could a generation all be one way or another? Civilization over the millennia has shown us that generations are made up of people at different levels—the good, the bad and those in between. To think that a generation could all be one way or another

is not consistent with 6,000 years of experience.

We are told that the time of the Messiah's coming will be like the time of Noah (thoroughly evil and wicked), but—like Noah—there will be some who will be righteous. They are called the elect and it is for their sake that Christ will shorten the days and return so that all of mankind will not be destroyed. This includes many members of the true Church of God prior to and during the Great Tribulation and the conversion of 144,000 Israelites and the great multitude of Gentiles prior to the plagues of the Day of the Lord.

According to the opinion of Judaism, as quoted by the writer in the above-mentioned article, the time when the *mashiach* could arise is when a generation loses hope. Again, this is given as an all-encompassing requirement which is something that has never happened before as there are always those who have a positive mindset even in the most trying of circumstances.

Following the suggestions of Judaism, the last requirement for the human *mashiach* to arise is when there is a generation where children are totally disrespectful towards their parents and elders. Again, another all-encompassing situation which could never happen in its entirety. The contrary is clearly revealed in Malachi 4:4–6.

Human nature over a period of 6,000 years has amply proved that this world, being ruled by Satan the Devil, will not change under the leadership of a human being. It is also not possible for human beings to become "totally innocent," nor will it ever happen, due to God's merciful intervention, that everyone, without exception, will be "totally guilty," "totally losing hope," and "totally disrespectful." But only when someone becomes a Spirit-born member of the Family of God will there be perfection.

The above-quoted article continues:

"Before the time of the *mashiach*, there shall be war and suffering (Ezekiel 38:16)."

To inject right here, even though this is a very common error in Jewish interpretation, the events in Ezekiel 38 and 39 take place AFTER the coming of the Messiah, not before. Compare our free booklet, *"Biblical Prophecy—From Now Until Forever."*

Continuing:

"The *mashiach* will bring about the political and spiritual redemption

of the Jewish people by bringing us back to Israel and restoring Jerusalem (Isaiah 11:11–12; Jeremiah 23:8; 30:3; Hosea 3:4–5).”

The Human Jewish Mashiach Will Bring About Political and Spiritual Redemption

Just to clarify again, this common false concept of the “Jewish people” is mentioned throughout the article. The Truth is that Christ will not only free the Jews from slavery and bring them back to the Promised Land, but also ALL modern descendants of Jacob or Israel—referred to in the Bible as the houses of Israel AND Judah. Compare again our free booklet, *“Biblical Prophecy—From Now Until Forever.”*

Continuing:

“He will establish a government in Israel that will be the center of all world government, both for Jews and gentiles (Isaiah 2:2–4; 11:10; 42:1). He will rebuild the Temple and re-establish its worship (Jeremiah 33:18). He will restore the religious court system of Israel and establish Jewish law as the law of the land (Jeremiah 33:15).”

The Messiah will not “rebuild” the Temple, but He will cleanse an existing Third Temple and free it from pollution. See, for example, our free booklet, *“The Fall and Rise of the Jewish People.”* In addition, He will not establish Jewish law as the law of the land, but the law of GOD (much of Judaism or today’s Jewish laws, customs and traditions are totally against the commandments of God.)

Olam Ha-Ba: The Jewish Messianic Age

Continuing:

“The world after the messiah comes is often referred to in Jewish literature as Olam Ha-Ba (oh-LAHM hah-BAH), the World to Come. This term can cause some confusion, because it is also used to refer to a spiritual afterlife. In English, we commonly use the term ‘messianic age’ to refer specifically to the time of the messiah.

“Olam Ha-Ba will be characterized by the peaceful co-existence of all people (Isaiah 2:4). Hatred, intolerance and war will cease to exist. Some authorities suggest that the laws of nature will change, so that predatory beasts will no longer seek prey and agriculture will bring forth supernatural abundance (Isaiah 11:6–11:9). Others, however, say that these statements are merely an allegory for peace and prosperity.”

These changes are to be understood literally, not just allegorically. Continuing with the article:

“All of the Jewish people will return from their exile among the nations to their home in Israel (Isaiah 11:11–12; Jeremiah 23:8; 30:3; Hosea 3:4–5). The law of the Jubilee will be reinstated.”

Again, it is all the modern descendants of the houses of Israel and Judah who will have survived the terrible times to come, who will return to the Promised Land. Regarding the law of the Jubilee, see our free booklet, *“Old Testament Laws—Still Valid Today?”*

Continuing:

“In the Olam Ha-Ba, the whole world will recognize the Jewish G-d as the only true G-d, and the Jewish religion as the only true religion (Isaiah 2:3; 11:10; Micah 4:2–3; Zechariah 14:9). There will be no murder, robbery, competition or jealousy. There will be no sin (Zephaniah 3:13). Sacrifices will continue to be brought in the Temple, but these will be limited to thanksgiving offerings, because there will be no further need for expiatory offerings.”

The World Will Recognize That God Is a Family

The world will recognize the God of Israel (not just the Jews) as the one and only true God, but we must understand that God is a Family, presently consisting of the Father and the Son, Jesus Christ, the Messiah. The world will not totally be without sin, as it is impossible for human beings not to sin, but due to the acceptance of the supreme Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, they will be forgiven of their sin upon repentance and belief.

The idea that the Millennial offerings which will be brought will only be “thanksgiving offerings” is clearly false. In fact, burnt offerings and sin offerings and offerings for atonement are specifically mentioned (Ezekiel 40:38; 43:10, 18, 21, 27; 44:11, 27, 29; 45:15–25). We discuss these temporary animal sacrifices in the Millennium in our free booklet, *“Biblical Prophecy—From Now Until Forever.”*

Continuing:

“Some gentiles have tried to put an ugly spin on this theology, claiming that Jews plan to force people to convert to our religion, perhaps based on their own religion’s history of doing exactly the same thing. That is not at all how Jews understand the messianic age.

We believe that in that future time, everyone will simply know what the truth is, in the same way that we know that $2+2=4$, and there will no longer be any reason to argue about it. It is much like a situation I witnessed at work once: two computer programmers were arguing loudly and at length about whether it was possible for a user to input data at a certain point in a program. Finally someone pressed a key and they all saw that nothing happened. Now they knew the truth, end of argument. When *mashiach* comes, theological truths will be equally obvious to mankind, and there will be no reason to argue about it."

This conclusion is also wrong. As mentioned before, not everyone will accept the Messiah and God's Law right away. Some will still want to wage war. Others will at first refuse to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. People will have to be educated about God, the true worship of God, and God's Way of Life (Isaiah 2:1–4). This understanding will not come "automatically."

However, much of the above applies to the return of Christ (with our comments), but Judaism teaches that it will be brought about by a man. That truly would not be possible as man's history clearly shows, nor is it God's plan to do so.

In Galatians 5:22–23 we read: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law." The thought that a man could bring about such fruit of the Spirit in every person on earth is way beyond the bounds of possibility. No man can possibly bring about peace on earth—only the great God Himself can do this. And even then, not everyone will submit to God... some will refuse to repent even after the coming of the Messiah. This is also true for the time before His coming.

The Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord Precede the Second Coming of Jesus

We must remember that there will be a time of trouble such as never was before nor will be again (see Daniel 12:1 and Matthew 24:21) which is when the Great Tribulation starts which will include the Day of the Lord and, even with such terrible events, there will be those who will still refuse to repent. "And men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory. Then

the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain. And they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds” (Revelation 16:9–11).

The question has to be asked if there will be those who refuse to repent even under the most painful and excruciating circumstances, how can a *mashiach*, a human being, succeed in bringing the whole world into subjection? The simple answer is that it will be God the Father, sending His Son, Jesus Christ, back to the earth to set up the Kingdom of God—not a mortal, flesh and blood human being. Only then, most people will be led to repentance... while some rebels will refuse even then.

There Will Be False Christs at the End Time Deceiving People

We read in Matthew 24:21–27 about the time of Christ’s return:

“For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened. Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There!’ do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand. Therefore if they say to you, ‘Look, He is in the desert!’ do not go out; or ‘Look, He is in the inner rooms!’ do not believe it. For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.”

It is interesting that false christs and false prophets will arise at the end time (Matthew 24:24), and Jesus will have to return to save mankind from blowing himself off the face of the planet at precisely the right time. And God’s timing is perfect.

It will be achieved by the returning Savior of mankind, not by some human being for which the task would be impossible.

In addition to the booklets mentioned in this booklet, we have many more free booklets on the biblical Messiah—the Jesus of the Bible—as well as on prophecy which explain in detail what is just ahead of us now and these are available on request.

Conclusion

In this part of the booklet, we have seen why ancient and modern Jews were and are at odds with the true Jesus of the Bible. We saw that Jesus did indeed exist as a human being—although some, if not many, would deny this—and that the New Testament records about him are absolutely true—which is most certainly denied by modern Judaism.

We also saw that the Jewish concepts of a Messiah are in direct opposition to the biblical revelation.

In the next part, we will address the fact that nominal Christianity likewise rejects Jesus Christ.

Part 3

Nominal Christianity at Odds with Jesus Christ

In previous chapters, we explained why the Jewish establishment and the numerous Jewish sects and fractions were at odds with Jesus, when He was here on earth, and that the Jews are still waiting for the coming of the Messiah, as they reject Jesus as the Messiah. We also saw that the Jewish expectation of their concept of a Messiah is in violation of the Bible.

In this last part of the booklet, we will point out that nominal or professing Christians are likewise guilty of rejecting the true Jesus of the Bible, albeit for different reasons than the Jews, even though they may not realize this.

This article is a fitting discussion in the context of this booklet, as true Christians are spiritual Jews and Israelites (Romans 2:28–29; Romans 9:6–8; Galatians 6:16; John 4:22–24), while nominal Christians are not spiritual Jews in the eyes of God, but rather belong to those “Jews” who are rejecting Jesus (Revelation 2:9; 3:9).

Nominal Christianity Today Is Not the Same as Apostolic Christianity

There are many concepts nominal Christianity believes in, which we could quote, all being in contradiction to the clear teachings of the Bible. It has been said that virtually everything which the Bible teaches has been rejected or distorted by traditional Christianity. In this chapter, we will be concentrating on some major discrepancies showing that traditional or orthodox professing Christians do in fact reject Jesus Christ as their personal Savior.

To begin with, nominal Christians reject the true Jesus Christ as they believe in another Jesus (2 Corinthians 11:4) and in a different message than the one which Jesus taught (Galatians 1:6–8). They believe in the idea that man has an immortal soul [which will be

discussed below] and that therefore, Christians will go to heaven when they die, and that the wicked will go to hell to be tormented forever. All these teachings are wrong and reject the Bible, the written Word of God, and therefore Jesus Christ—the “Logos” or the “Spokesman” or “Speaker,” the spoken WORD of God the Father.

Heaven and Hell

The concepts of “heaven” and “hell” in orthodox Christianity are quite astonishing and troublesome:

Wikipedia writes:

“... in most forms of Christianity, [heaven] is the abode of the righteous dead in the afterlife... According to Catholic... teaching, Mary is said to have been assumed into heaven without the corruption of her earthly body; she is venerated as Queen of Heaven.”

The Bible does not teach us that we go to heaven when we die. Christ taught that no one will go to heaven (John 3:13: “No one ascends to heaven, but He who came down from heaven; that is, the Son of Man...”, *Luther Bible* 1891). The Bible actually teaches that when we die, we sleep a dreamless sleep, without consciousness, and that we have to be raised from the dead. However, according to the Bible, no one, with the exception of Jesus Christ, was raised from the dead to eternal life. Jesus is the FIRSTBORN of many brethren. Those who died in Christ, including Mary, will be resurrected to eternal life at the time of Christ’s return... not before then (1 Corinthians 15:50; 1 Thessalonians 4:15–17). Mary is still dead and in her grave, as everybody else who has died. But the ancient Assyrians and Babylonians believed in and worshipped a goddess in heaven, called Astarte or Ishtar, whom they called the Queen of Heaven (Jeremiah 7:18).

Going to heaven when we die is a doctrine that is NOT contained in Scripture. Neither is the concept of hell.

The Conversation writes:

“In traditional Christian doctrine, hell was conceived as a place, generally beneath the earth, where the wicked would be punished for eternity. There would be both psychological torment – at our knowing we had lost the opportunity for salvation – and physical ones inflicted by the Devil and his demons. There were gnawing worms and unquenchable fires. No escape from hell or mitigation of eternal torment was possible...”

“Amidst the gloom, there was one bright spot in the traditional Christian doctrine of hell. Our punishment there would be proportionate to our sins just as our rewards in heaven would be proportionate to our virtues. This sense of proportionality led around the year 1000 CE to the invention of another place between heaven and hell – a place of purification of our sins...

“Purgatory was the place where those who were judged worthy of heaven eventually were purged, purified and punished for their sins before going on to their heavenly reward... The inhabitants were purified by fire...

“The Protestant reformers of the 16th century hated the idea of Purgatory and threw it out... Protestant Christianity therefore returned to the harsh either/or of heaven or hell, determined by God at the time of death (or birth)... Today’s conservative Christians... remain unmoved by the possibility of eventual salvation from hell for everyone. The doctrine of eternal torments in hell has stayed on their theological agenda.”

Hell and Purgatory Are Not Biblical Concepts

The concept of hell and purgatory is not biblical. Those who died without having had an opportunity to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Savior in this life will be given the opportunity when they are raised from the dead to a physical temporary existence in the Second Resurrection to qualify then for eternal life (Revelation 20:6, 11–12). If they committed the unpardonable sin, they will be resurrected in a third resurrection to physical life to be burned up in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:13–15). They will cease to exist (Obadiah 16; Malachi 4:1, 3).

The Kingdom of God Has Not Yet Come

Nominal Christians also reject Christ by believing that He will not return to set up the Kingdom of God, but that the Kingdom is either the Church or that it is within us. They do not believe that God is the Kingdom, the Family of God, and that true Christians who are begotten today will be BORN into the Kingdom as **God beings**. Even though some may give lip service to this Truth (see the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Number 460), they really do not truly believe in

it, as reflected by their other teachings (Please read our free booklets, *“God is a Family,”* and *“Are You Already Born Again?”*).

The Law of God Is Still In Full Force and Effect Today

Nominal Christians believe in a Jesus who came to do away with the **Law of God**, even though Christ said the exact opposite (Matthew 5:17–19). They teach against and transgress God’s commandments in order to keep their own traditions. Christ said that in doing so, they worship Him in vain; that is, they reject Him (Matthew 15:7–9; Mark 7:6–9, 13).

The Weekly and Annual Sabbaths Are Still to Be Kept Today

This is especially true for the **Sabbath commandment**. Jesus is the LORD of the Sabbath (Mark 2:27–28). He created it, as God the Father created everything through Jesus Christ (Ephesians 3:9). Since no one has seen the Father or heard His voice (John 5:37), it was Christ, the God and LORD of the Old Testament, who proclaimed the Ten Commandments from Mount Sinai. He told us to KEEP the Sabbath holy (Exodus 20:8). But orthodox Christianity has abolished the Sabbath and replaced it with Sunday [calling it the “eighth day”]. The Roman Catholic Church began this movement, due to anti-Semitism and the desire of embracing pagans into their fold who already kept Sunday in honor and worship of their gods, and most Protestant churches have followed the lead of the Catholic Church. In rejecting the Sabbath—God’s creation—they are rejecting Jesus Christ, the Creator and Lord of the Sabbath.

In our literature about the Sabbath and the mark of the beast, we have published numerous admissions of the Catholic Church to the effect that they have changed the Sabbath to Sunday, knowing that the Bible does not endorse such a change. Here are a few more admissions by the Catholic Church (we could cite many more quotations, but this should suffice):

“It is well to remind the Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, and all other Christians, that the Bible does not support them anywhere in their observance of Sunday. Sunday is an institution of the Roman Catholic Church, and those who observe the day observe a commandment of the Catholic Church” (Priest Brady in an address on March 18, 1903).

"Sunday is founded, not [on] scripture, but on tradition, and is distinctly a Catholic institution. As there is no scripture for the transfer of the day of rest from the last to the first day of the week, Protestants ought to keep their Sabbath on Saturday and thus leave Catholics in full possession of Sunday" (*Catholic Record*, September 17, 1893).

"The Sunday... is purely a creation of the Catholic Church" (*American Catholic Quarterly Review*, January 1883).

"Sunday... is the law of the Catholic Church alone..." (*American Sentinel*, June 1893).

"Protestants... accept Sunday rather than Saturday as the day for public worship after the Catholic Church made the change... But the Protestant mind does not seem to realize that ... in observing Sunday, they are accepting the authority of the spokesman for the Church, the pope" (*Our Sunday Visitor*, February 5th, 1950).

"They deem it their duty to keep the Sunday holy. Why? Because the Catholic Church tells them to do so. They have no other reason... The observance of Sunday thus comes to be an ecclesiastical law entirely distinct from the divine law of Sabbath observance... The author of the Sunday law... is the Catholic Church" (*Ecclesiastical Review*, February 1914).

"[Sunday] is a day dedicated by the Apostles to the honour of the most holy Trinity, and in memory that Christ our Lord arose from the dead upon Sunday, sent down the holy Ghost on a Sunday... and therefore is called the Lord's Day. It is also called Sunday from the old Roman denomination of Dies Solis, the day of the sun, to which it was sacred" (*The Douay Catechism of 1649*, by Henry Tuberville).

There is no "holy Trinity," as will be explained below. In addition, Sunday is nowhere called the Lord's Day in the Bible. Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath, not of Sunday. When the term "the day of the Lord" is used, it refers to a prophetic time span for the last days of approximately one year—not a particular day (compare Zephaniah 1:7, 14.) In Revelation 1:10, the phrase "the Lord's day" is used in English translations. This is the only passage where this wording is used. Some try to make a distinction between the "day of the Lord" (a prophetic time span) and the "Lord's Day" which allegedly refers to Sunday. As we have seen, IF the phrase "the Lord's Day" was to refer to a particular day, then it would refer to the Sabbath. However, the distinction is

arbitrary and a “clever” invention of the translator to teach the “holiness” of Sunday. Some translations even say quite deceitfully: “I was on Sunday in the spirit...” But the phrase in Revelation 1:10 could be easily and correctly translated with “the day of the Lord.” All German bibles render this phrase as “the day of the Lord.”

Also, Christ did not rise on a Sunday [see below], so the argument of having to keep Sunday holy to honor Christ’s resurrection or that suddenly Sunday became the Lord’s day evaporates as well.

The same is true for the replacement of God’s **Holy Days** or **annual Sabbaths** (cp. for instance Leviticus 23:24, 27, 32, 39) which Jesus, the God of the Old Testament, instituted for His Church, with pagan holidays which were instituted under Satan’s inspiration, such as Christmas, Easter, Halloween, and New Year’s Day. In doing so, they reject Jesus and the sign for His people (which sign is associated with both the weekly and the annual Sabbaths). This sign shows that those keeping God’s weekly and annual Sabbaths are God’s and that the true God is their God (Exodus 31:13–17; Ezekiel 20:12, 20).

The Only Sign That Jesus Gave Was That He Would Be In the Grave for 3 Days and 3 Nights

Orthodox Christianity rejects Jesus in that they deny the only sign that He gave to the Pharisees that He was the Messiah—that He would be **three days and three nights** in the grave (Matthew 12:40); that He was crucified on a Wednesday and placed in the grave just before sunset, when the annual Holy Day or Sabbath of the first Day of Unleavened Bread began—a “high day” (John 19:31); and that He was resurrected on Saturday (the Sabbath) and left the grave just before sunset, exactly three days and three nights later, as He had said that He would. It was right “in the end” (*Authorized Version*) or “at the close” (*Moffat*) of the [two] Sabbaths (as it should be rendered—so the *Fenton Bible*; the word here for “Sabbath” is in the plural, referring to the annual Sabbath on Thursday and the weekly Sabbath on Saturday), when the women appeared at the grave (Matthew 28:1), and Jesus had already risen (verses 5–6). Instead, traditional Christianity believes that He was crucified on “Good Friday” (called “black Friday” in pagan religions) and that He was resurrected on Sunday morning—the day of the pagan sun god Baal, also known as Nimrod, Mithra or Attis. This Sunday is

called Easter Sunday, which was dedicated to the pagan goddess Ishtar, known today as Easter. As mentioned, Ishtar was also worshipped by pagans as the Queen of Heaven (see above).

For more information, please read our free booklet, *“Jesus Christ—a Great Mystery.”*

The Holy Trinity Is Unbiblical

Traditional Christianity rejects Jesus Christ, the Son of God, by believing in the **Trinity** and that Jesus was somewhat of a human extension on earth while He—as the Son—was still in heaven.

First, let us notice how the concept of the “Trinity” is being described: *Infoplace.com* writes:

“The central teachings of traditional Christianity are that Jesus is the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”

Wikipedia writes:

“*Trinity* refers to the teaching that the one God comprises three distinct, eternally co-existing persons: the *Father*, the *Son* (incarnate in Jesus Christ), and the *Holy Spirit*... They are distinct from [one] another: the Father has no source, the Son is begotten of the Father, and the Spirit proceeds from the Father. Though distinct, the three persons cannot be divided from one another in being or in operation... The Trinity is an essential doctrine of mainstream Christianity...”

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* describes it in this way:

“The faith of all Christians rests on the Trinity... The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of Christian faith and life...”

The question is then, what happened to the Son (the second “Person” of the Trinity) when Christ became a human being and when He died.

Carm.org writes:

“God is a trinity of persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit... If any one of the three were removed, there would be no God... Jesus has two natures: divine and human... When Jesus died on the cross, his human nature died. The divine nature did not die. Therefore, we see that the Trinity never ceased to exist...”

This is nowhere taught in Scripture, and it is in fact utter nonsense. Worse yet, it constitutes a rejection of Christ and represents the spirit of Antichrist.

The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ was the Son of God (2 Corinthians 1:19; 1 John 4:14–15; 5:5; 2 John 1:3,9) who became man—fully flesh—and who died (Romans 5:10). When Jesus died, the Son died. The Son did not continue to be a living “Person” within a Trinity. Secondly, it was God the Father who resurrected Jesus Christ—the SON—from the dead (Galatians 1:1).

By believing in the Trinity, orthodox Christianity rejects Jesus Christ as God who came in the flesh and who died for us (1 John 4:2–3). Christ, the Son of God, needed to die for us to become our Savior. If the Son of God did not die, we don’t have a Savior (1 John 2:22). Orthodox Christianity rejects Christ as the Son, saying that the Son, as part of the Trinity, could not die. The Son stayed alive when His “human shell” or His “human nature” died. Jesus’ “divine nature” did not die. This, quite frankly, is blasphemy.

Jesus Did Not Have an Immortal Soul; Nor Do We

Traditional Christianity rejects the Sacrifice of Christ for an additional reason in that it claims and believes that even the Man Christ—His human shell—did not really die, but kept on living as an “immortal soul.” They state that Jesus (who, they say, did not really die, not even as a Man) went to hell to preach to the spirits, while His human body was in the grave.

Wikipedia writes about immortality:

“By the 3rd century, with the influence of Origen, the traditions of the inherent immortality of the soul and its divine nature were established. As the *new Encyclopedia Britannica* points out: “The early Christian philosophers adopted the Greek concept of the soul’s immortality...”

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* writes:

“... every spiritual soul is created immediately by God... and it is immortal: it does not perish when it separates from the body at death.”

We show in our free booklet “*Do We Have an Immortal Soul,*” that the Bible nowhere teaches that concept. In fact, the Bible says that the SOUL which sins will DIE (Ezekiel 18:4, 20).

However, since it is taught that Jesus (as supposedly every human being) had an immortal soul, the concept is that **He went to hell** after He died, but before He was resurrected.

Vatican.va writes:

“The frequent New Testament affirmations that Jesus was ‘raised from the dead’ presuppose that the crucified one sojourned in the realm of the dead prior to his resurrection... that Jesus, like all men, experienced death and in his soul joined the others in the realm of the dead. But he descended there as Savior, proclaiming the Good News to the spirits imprisoned there... In his human soul united to his divine person, the dead Christ went down to the realm of the dead. He opened heaven’s gates for the just who had gone before him.”

The *National Catholic Reporter* wrote in 2012:

“Every Christian knows the story: Jesus was crucified on Good Friday and rose from the dead on Easter Sunday. But what did he do on Saturday? ... Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and most mainline Protestant churches teach that Jesus descended to the realm of the dead on Holy Saturday to save righteous souls, such as the Hebrew patriarchs, who died before his crucifixion.

“The catechism of the Catholic church calls the descent ‘the last phase of Jesus’ messianic mission,’ during which he ‘opened heaven’s gates for the just who had gone before him.’ An ancient homily included in the Catholic readings for Holy Saturday says a ‘great silence’ stilled the earth while Jesus searched for Adam, ‘our first father, as for a lost sheep.’...

“Churches that teach he descended to the realm of the dead most often cite 1 Peter 3:18–20...”

Of course, this passage does talk about the *time of Noah, prior to the Flood*, when Jesus preached to the spirits in prison (that is, the spiritually imprisoned demons—not any “departed ones” or dead people still being alive in “hell”).

Jesus Will Return Visibly When All Who Are Alive Shall See Him

Many within traditional Christianity also don’t believe—contrary to Matthew 24:27, 30; Mark 13:26; Revelation 1:4–7—that Jesus, at His Second Coming, will come back visibly, but they claim that Jesus will come back at first in secret, or that He already returned on the Day of Pentecost as the Holy Spirit—the third “person” of the Trinity who is somehow “identical,” but still not identical, with the Holy Spirit. This idea is nonsense for the simple reason that *the Holy Spirit is not a person*, and if it were a person, then it would have been the Person of

the Holy Spirit who would have come—and not the person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. For more information on what the Holy Spirit is, and what it is not, please read our free booklet, *“Is God a Trinity?”*

Traditional Christianity Does In Fact Reject the TRUE Jesus of the Bible

We could add many more concepts taught by traditional Christianity, which are contrary to who and what Christ was and is, and what He, the Word, taught; but we believe that the foregoing is sufficient to show that traditional Christianity does in fact reject the TRUE Jesus of the Bible. As long as it does, it does not believe and accept our Savior... and there is no other name under heaven by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12) than the name of the TRUE Jesus of the Bible.

Conclusion

Orthodox Christianity is at odds with Jesus, without perhaps even realizing it.

Jews and Christians have accused, fought and even killed each other over their religious concepts and beliefs. They were all in error. Satan has deceived the whole world. He has convinced man to accept religious, philosophical and political concepts which are in detrimental opposition to the Truth.

Christianity has accepted a false gospel and a false Jesus, and the Jews in times past and Judaism today have likewise rejected the true Jesus of the Bible and replaced Him with their human traditions of a false Messiah.

Jesus asked His true followers to pray: “Your kingdom come.” When He, as the King of kings and the Lord of lords, returns to this earth to establish that very Kingdom here, then, and only then, will deceived Jews and Christians recognize who the true Jesus of the Bible is... and they will worship Him as GOD.

The following booklets are available, upon request:

And Lawlessness Will Abound...
Angels, Demons and the Spirit World
Are Jews and Christians at Odds with Jesus Christ?
Are YOU Predestined to be Saved?
Are You Already Born Again?
Baptism—a Requirement for Salvation?
Biblical Prophecy—From Now Until Forever
Do We Have an Immortal Soul?
Do You Know the Jesus of the Bible?
Don't Keep Christmas
Europe in Prophecy: The Unfolding of End-Time Events
Germany in Prophecy—*The Mysterious Origin of German-Speaking Peoples and Their Prophetic Destiny*
God Is a Family
God's *Commanded* Holy Days
God's Law...or God's Grace?
God's Teachings on Sexual Relationships
Heavens and Earth...Before and After the First Man!
Hidden Secrets in the Bible
How Can We Know that Christ's Return Is Near?
How to Find the True Church of God
How to Keep the Sabbath
Human Suffering—Why...and How Much Longer?
Is God a Trinity?
Is That In the Bible?—Man's Holidays and God's Holy Days
Is That In the Bible?—The Mysteries of the Book of Revelation
Jesus Christ—A Great Mystery!

Middle Eastern and African Nations in Bible Prophecy
Obeying God Rather than Men
Old Testament Laws—Still Valid Today?
Paul's Letter to the Ephesians—*How to Understand It*
Paul's Letter to the Galatians—*How to Understand It*
Paul's Letter to the Philippians—*How to Understand It*
Punishment for Our Sins
Should YOU Fight in War?
Sickness and Healing—What the Bible Tells Us
Teach Us to Pray!
The Authority of the Bible
The Book of Zechariah—Prophecies for *Today!*
The Fall and Rise of Britain and America
The Fall and Rise of the Jewish People
The Gospel of the Kingdom of God
The Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord
The Keys to Happy Marriages and Families
The *Meaning* of God's Fall Holy Days
The *Meaning* of God's Spring Holy Days
The Mysteries of the Bible
The Sacrificial System and the Tabernacle In the Wilderness
The Ten Commandments
The Ten European Revivals of the Ancient Roman Empire
The Theory of Evolution—a Fairy Tale for Adults?
Tithing—Today?
When and How Will Christ Return?

HOW THIS WORK IS FINANCED

Our activities and literature, including booklets, weekly updates, sermons on CD and audio broadcasts are provided free of charge. They are made possible by the tithes, offerings and contributions of Church members and others who have elected to support this Work.

While we do not solicit the general public for funds, contributions are gratefully welcomed and are tax-deductible in the U.S. and Canada.

Donations should be sent to the following addresses:

United States

Church of the Eternal God
PO Box 270519
San Diego, CA 92198
www.eternalgod.org

Canada

Church of God, ACF
Box 1480
Summerland B.C. V0H 1Z0
www.churchofgodacf.ca

United Kingdom

Global Church of God
PO Box 44
Mablethorpe, LN12 9AN
www.globalchurchofgod.co.uk

Germany

Kirche des Ewigen Gottes e.V.
Postfach 1920
67329 Speyer
www.aufpostenstehen.de

