

Adult Sunday School Class “Our Christian Heritage” - Lesson 6

We have been studying the history of the Christian church and the history of Christian doctrine beginning with the era following the death of the apostles. So far, we have discussed:

- The Post-Apostolic era (90 -140 A.D., the decades right after the deaths of the apostles)
- The Era of the Christian Apologists (130 - 180, the writers who tried to convince the Roman government that Christians were no threat to them)
- The Old Catholic Age (170 - 325, the period of time when the trinity doctrine and other doctrines were being formed and accepted by the official church)
- The Ecumenical Age (325 - 787, the era when the church was under the control of the state and church doctrine was formed by church councils).

Pagan Influences

During the days of the apostles and in the days following, there was a sharp conflict between Christianity and all forms of paganism. This was because Christians claimed they served the only true God. They proclaimed that Jesus was this true God manifested in flesh, the only Lord, the only Savior, and that salvation comes only through Him.

By contrast, the other religions of the Roman Empire were based on polytheism - the belief in many gods. The Romans allowed each nation in the empire to worship its own gods as long as no one interfered with the worship of others. As a matter of civic duty, everybody in the empire had to participate in the worship of Roman gods and in worship of the emperor as a means of pledging loyalty to the empire.

Except for Jews and Christians, most people had no problem worshipping Roman gods. Christians were persecuted because they refused to practice the state religion. The early Christians did not seek to overthrow the government, but they held different values and lived a different lifestyle from their pagan neighbors.

This situation changed completely with Emperor Constantine and the Edict of Milan (313) which announced the toleration of Christianity in the empire. Then the emperor claimed to accept Christianity and began to promote it in the empire. Several decades later, Emperor Theodosius I established Christianity as the state religion and banned paganism. Here is his edict (the Edict of Thessalonica, 380 A.D.):

EMPERORS GRATIAN, VALENTINIAN AND THEODOSIUS AUGUSTI. EDICT TO THE PEOPLE OF CONSTANTINOPLE.

It is our desire that all the various nations which are subject to our Clemency and Moderation, should continue to profess that religion which was delivered to the Romans by the divine Apostle Peter, as it has been preserved by faithful tradition, and which is now professed by the Pontiff Damasus and by Peter, Bishop of Alexandria, a man of apostolic

holiness. According to the apostolic teaching and the doctrine of the Gospel, let us believe in the one deity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, in equal majesty and in a holy Trinity. We authorize the followers of this law to assume the title of Catholic Christians; but as for the others, since, in our judgment they are foolish madmen, we decree that they shall be branded with the ignominious name of heretics, and shall not presume to give to their conventicles the name of churches. They will suffer in the first place the chastisement of the divine condemnation and in the second the punishment of our authority which in accordance with the will of Heaven we shall decide to inflict.

In short order, thousands of pagans who were prominent citizens in the empire now found their status called into question. For most, the answer was simple: change religions! Most never thought of their old gods as the only gods anyway. For many, the triumph of the Christians proved that the Christian God was superior to their old gods.

The problem, however, was that most did not undergo a true spiritual conversion. Instead of getting a revelation of Jesus Christ, repenting and renouncing their old ways, they simply added Christianity to their old beliefs or translated their pagan practices into the new Christian context. Instead of allowing the Spirit of God to convict and bring about true repentance, these converts made a verbal confession and submitted to water baptism. Some pagan temples were converted to Christian churches. Some pagan priests who converted were immediately pressed into service as Christian priests. The flood of pagan people into Christianity overwhelmed the structure of the church.

Therefore, while Christianity seemed to be victorious over the Roman Empire that had previously persecuted it, it actually suffered a serious defeat. In the words of one historian, *“While Christianity converted the world, the world converted Christianity and displayed the natural paganism of mankind.”* Thus, paganism dramatically influenced Christianity from the fourth century onward.

Polytheism

The apostles, who were Jewish, would never have taught a plurality of persons in the Godhead. Even to this day, Jews recoil from any suggestion that God is three persons. After the church became predominantly Gentile, this teaching crept in. It was natural for converted pagans to think of God as a plurality.

Worship of the Saints and Martyrs

Polytheism also aided in the worship of the saints. The ancient Greeks had prayed to the dead. Now, Christians began to pray to departed saints and martyrs. The Romans were fond of deifying men and then offering prayers and sacrifices to them (they had done so to dead Caesars). The church adopted basically the same process by “canonizing” saints and then praying to them for help. Many people also began to pray to angels. In theory, the church said that true worship went to God alone, but only *honor* was given to saints, martyrs, and angels. However, to the common people, the practice was *worship*.

Worship of Statues, Icons, and Relics

Along with prayer to saints and martyrs came worship of their statues, pictures, and relics - body parts, bones, clothing, and other items associated with the saints. Pagans believed that the spirit of a god inhabited its statue, so converted pagans now bowed to statues of Christian saints. Christians also attributed magical powers to statues - and especially relics. As time passed, the church in the West allowed prayer to statues, while the church in the East allowed prayer only to "icons," which are flat pictures.

Constantine's mother, Queen Helena, was given permission by Constantine to go to the Holy Land and locate relics of Christianity. She was responsible for the construction of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem and the Church on the Mount of Olives. Former Emperor Hadrian had built a temple to Jupiter over the reputed site of Jesus' tomb. Helena ordered the temple torn down and according to legend during excavations, three crosses were found. Legend says that Helena had a woman who was near death brought from the city. When she touched the first two crosses, nothing happened, but when she touched the third cross she was supposedly healed. Helena then declared this cross to be the true cross of Christ. She also ordered the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to be built on this site. She supposedly also found the nails of the crucifixion. Helena left Jerusalem to return to Rome, bringing with her parts of the so called "True Cross" and other relics. These relics can be seen in Rome and in Jerusalem to this day. Please understand that many Catholics have great faith that these relics are real and possess powers. True Christians do not believe that these relics are real - and even if they were, they possess NO magical powers. The real power in Christianity is the power of the Spirit of God in a believer's life (Christ in you).

The Middle Ages are often called the "Dark Ages" because of the lack of spiritual light during this time. The Middle Ages occurred about 600 - 1500 A.D. We will study doctrines that formed and were practiced by the Catholic church (the official, institutional Christian church).

The Effect of Pagan Influences

The first doctrines to be officially altered in institutional Christianity were the doctrines of God and Jesus Christ (150 - 381 A.D.). Through the First Council of Nicaea (325 A.D.) and the First Council of Constantinople (381), the trinity doctrine was formed and accepted by the church.

Along with this came a change in the baptismal formula to dovetail with the trinity doctrine. The apostles' formula of baptism in the name of Jesus Christ evolved into the trinitarian formula of baptism "*in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*"

When truth is distorted, the Spirit of God does not move as freely in the church. Therefore, the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues became more rare as time went by. True miracles brought about by prayer and faith diminished. The gifts of the Spirit, along with the baptism of the Holy Spirit, diminished as well.

The Christian church was meant to be a spiritual institution, not a state religion. There is no God-ordained country of “Christian,” like there was a nation of Israel in the Old Testament. The New Testament is all about a spiritual kingdom that transcends the earthly nations on this earth.

Acts 1:4 And being assembled together with *them*, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, “which,” *He said*, “you have heard from Me; **5** for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” **6** Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” **7** And He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. **8** But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

During the Millennium, Jesus Christ will reign as King of kings and Lord of lords over the whole earth, and His capital will be Jerusalem. But for now, Christianity is a spiritual kingdom in the hearts of men.

Christianity became the state religion of the Roman Empire in 380 A.D. when Emperor Theodosius I made a proclamation stating this. When this happened, it took the heart and soul out of true Christianity as many people “became Christians” because the state commanded it. Pagan ways infiltrated the church and shaped it for the centuries to come.

By the fourth century the state church proclaimed that it guaranteed salvation. No one could be saved outside the official, visible structure of the Catholic church. Even if someone broke away from the state church and had the same beliefs, without the church bishops to perform sacraments, that person was considered lost. Instead of relying on faith and obedience to sound doctrine for salvation, people were to rely on the authority of the church for salvation. The Catholic church (Augustine) even defined the Millennium Age of Revelation 20 as having come to pass as the church ruled in political and religious affairs. There was a sort of “country of Christian,” but it was not ordained by Jesus Christ.

Worship of Mary

Another significant pagan influence was the worship of fertility goddesses. The ancient Babylonians worshiped Ishtar. The Phoenicians and Philistines called her Ashtoreth. The goddesses were associated with consorts (lovers) or with divine sons. Tammuz was the son of Ishtar. In Egypt, Horus was the son of Isis. In Greece, Adonis was the son of Aphrodite. Pictures and statues of mother and son were worshiped. The goddesses were given titles. The Egyptians called Isis “great mother, mother of God, queen of Heaven.” The Babylonians called Ishtar “the holy virgin, virgin mother, mother of God, queen of heaven.” The Phrygian goddess was the “great mother” and “our lady.”

Jeremiah talks about worship of the goddess:

Jeremiah 7:18 The children gather wood, the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead dough, to make cakes for the queen of heaven; and *they* pour out drink offerings to other gods, that they may provoke Me to anger.

During the Ecumenical Age, many people began to worship Mary the mother of Jesus, just as pagans had formerly worshiped goddesses. They applied many of the same titles to her, such as “mother of god,” “queen of heaven,” and “our lady.” They made statues and pictures of mother and child much like earlier pagan representations. The worship of Mary eventually became one of the dominant features of the church of the Middle Ages.

Augustine taught that Mary was a perpetual virgin. It was taught that even after she married Joseph she remained celibate. It was taught that the brothers of Jesus that are mentioned in the Scripture were actually cousins of Jesus or children of Joseph by a previous marriage. Some Catholic theologians, in an effort to keep Mary a virgin, even taught that Christ’s birth process was miraculous (the baby miraculously passed through the closed womb).

The doctrine of Mary continued to develop through the Middle Ages and even into the modern age. Prayer to Mary and worship of Mary was extremely popular, even exceeding prayer to Jesus Christ Himself! In essence, Mary was elevated to divine status. Everyone agreed that she was sinless and because of this she could grant miracles to petitioners. Many people have reported seeing visions of Mary and receiving miracles by praying to her. One abbot of the Middle Ages, Bernard of Clairvaux, said that Mary was so beautiful that God Himself had desire for her - even a hymn was written describing this! In the Middle Ages, Mary was called the “mother of God, queen of heaven, queen of angels, empress of the world, door of heaven, and tree of life.”

What does the Scripture say about Mary? It states that she was a virtuous and blessed woman, but it does not exempt her from the general statement that all have sinned. Jesus put her on the same level as all faithful believers:

Matthew 12:47 Then one said to Him, “Look, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with You.” **48** But He answered and said to the one who told Him, “Who is My mother and who are My brothers?” **49** And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, “Here are My mother and My brothers! **50** For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother.”

Mary needed salvation just like everybody else. She was one of the 120 who waited in the Upper Room and were baptized with the Holy Ghost:

Acts 1:14 (NKJV) These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers . . . **2:1** When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

The Catholic church stated that Mary never sinned, and that she was born without original sin (the guilt of Adam and Eve). This belief is the doctrine of the *immaculate conception* (it does not refer to the virgin conception of Jesus, but to the conception of Mary). In 1854, Pope Pius IX declared the immaculate conception of Mary to be official church doctrine.

Another common belief was that, at the end of her life, Mary was taken bodily into heaven without seeing corruption. Pope Pius XII made the *assumption of Mary* an official doctrine in 1950.

In the Middle Ages, it was typically said, “If you do not receive an answer to your prayer, go to Mary. If Mary will agree with you, then she will go to Christ and ask on your behalf. Christ will never refuse a request from His mother, so you are sure to get an answer.” Mary became the supreme mediator. People prayed to her more than to Jesus Christ. They were often afraid to approach God directly.

The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ is the mediator between God and man:

1 Timothy 2:5 For *there is* one God and one Mediator between God and men, *the* Man Christ Jesus.

The Church Services

In New Testament times, Christians met in homes to worship.

Acts 2:46 So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart.

Acts 5:42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

Acts 12:12 So, when he had considered *this*, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying.

The purpose of “church services” was to worship, receive teaching and preaching, have prayer together, and have fellowship. When possible, early churches met in places especially prepared for worship. In times of persecution, particularly in Rome, the church met in secret (the Roman church met in the underground cemeteries called “catacombs”). The first evidence of a public church building is in 230 A.D. When Emperor Constantine embraced Christianity, he began building church buildings at state expense.

From the beginning, Christians met on the first day of the week (Sunday) because this was the day of Christ’s resurrection.

Acts 20:7 Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.

1 Corinthians 16:2 On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.

The first day of the week was called “the Lord’s Day”. It was not an observance of the Sabbath (which is the seventh day of the week), but a celebration of the resurrection of Jesus and a time to worship.

Justin Martyr wrote in his *First Apology* that a typical worship service in the mid second century consisted of: reading of Scripture, preaching or teaching, prayer (group and by individuals), offering, and communion (for baptized believers).

The Church Ministry

The New Testament speaks of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers (Ephesians 4:11). It uses three terms: bishop (overseer), pastor (shepherd), and elder (presbyter).

Titus 1:5 For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you— **6** if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination. **7** For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money.

1 Peter 5:1 The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: **2** Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, servicing as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; **3** nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; **4** and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

The elders or bishops were ministers who had leadership roles in the local church, particularly in teaching and preaching.

1 Timothy 3:1 This *is* a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. **2** A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach . . . **5** (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?)

1 Timothy 5:17 Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.

Titus 1:7-9 For a bishop must be . . . **8** . . . hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, **9** holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.

During the Post-Apostolic Age, the pattern was for each city to have one bishop, considering all the believers in one city to be part of one church. There were elders and deacons who assisted him. Clement of Rome wrote that the people of a congregation elected both bishops and deacons. Later in time, fellow bishops began to play a decisive role in the selection of a new bishop. When Christianity became the state religion, the state (the emperor or other officials) appointed the bishops. Later, when the pope began to take authority, he claimed the right to appoint all bishops.

Beginning in the third century, the bishop of Rome began to take his place as a “bishop of bishops.” Over the centuries, this evolved into the position of pope (meaning “father”). Leo I (bishop of Rome from 440 to 461) is sometimes considered to be the first pope because he was the first Roman bishop to claim such and he was accepted by some. During this time, the western Roman Empire was collapsing, and the pope began to take authority that in the past was in the hands of the emperor. The first real pope, however, was Gregory I, who was elected in 590 as pope. He was the first Roman bishop to have true authority as pope and was endorsed by the government.

Gregory was important because he established the Catholic belief that tradition was equal in authority with the Scriptures. Therefore, the official pronouncements of the church were just as valid for doctrine as the Bible. The decisions of the councils and the pope were to be taken as seriously as the

Scriptures. For doctrine, one could go to the Bible, the councils, the creeds, and the consensus of the church fathers. (In fact, beginning in 1229, it was against the law for the common man to have a Bible in his possession. The bishops were to interpret the Word of God for the people.)

The Jews in Jesus' day also believed in the equal authority of Old Testament Scriptures *and* their "oral law." In fact, Jesus addressed this:

Matthew 15:1 Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying,
2 "Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread."

3 He answered and said to them, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? . . . you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition.

7 Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying:

8 'These people draw near to Me with their mouth,
And honor Me with *their* lips,
But their heart is far from Me.

9 And in vain they worship Me,
Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' "

Adding to the Scriptures the commandments of men was rebuked by Jesus.

From Preacher to Priest

The development of certain doctrines caused the pastor or preacher or elder to become a priest in the Catholic hierarchy. What is a priest? The dictionary defines *priest* as, "a person whose office it is to perform religious rites, and especially to make sacrificial offerings." In the Old Testament, God set up the descendants of Aaron (of the tribe of Levi) to be priests in the Temple. They offered the animal sacrifices that God had ordained.

But what about New Testament times? In Hebrews, Jesus is called a priest (our High Priest), who offered up Himself as a sacrifice. The saints of God are called "kings and priests" in Revelation. The Apostle Peter called the saints of God a holy priesthood that offers up *spiritual* sacrifices:

1 Peter 2:5 you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

However, ministers are not called "priests" in the teachings of the apostles. So, why priests in the New Testament age? To answer this question, we must understand the Catholic interpretation of the Lord's Supper or Communion.

The Lord's Supper or Eucharist

The Lord's Supper, or Communion, was celebrated by the early church as a thanksgiving to God. They also felt that partaking of the Lord's Supper pointed to the second coming of Jesus Christ. On the evening before His death, Jesus

celebrated the passover with His disciples and initiated the Lord's Supper for His followers. The Scripture says:

Luke 22:14 When the hour had come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him. **15** Then He said to them, "With *fervent* desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; **16** for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."

17 Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, "Take this and divide *it* among yourselves; **18** for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."

19 And He took bread, gave thanks and broke *it*, and gave *it* to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me."

20 Likewise He also *took* the cup after supper, saying, "This cup *is* the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.

Paul taught about the Lord's supper:

1 Corinthians 11:23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the *same* night in which He was betrayed took bread; **24** and when He had given thanks, He broke *it* and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." **25** In the same manner *He* also *took* the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink *it*, in remembrance of Me." **26** For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.

The early church taught that the Lord's Supper was to be celebrated to remember Jesus' death for us. Jesus was present at the Lord's Supper in a spiritual way. The early church often celebrated the Lord's Supper then had a fellowship meeting afterward (like a church potluck).

As time passed, the teaching of the spiritual presence of Jesus at the Lord's Supper was changed by the Catholic church to the "real presence" of the body of Christ present at the Eucharist (the Catholic term for the Lord's Supper). Under this view, the Eucharist becomes an incarnation. At the words of the priest, Christ actually comes (bodily) to the Eucharist. This became the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation ("change of substance"). The wine literally turns into Christ's blood and the bread literally turns into His body, even though the outward appearance does not change. Transubstantiation was taught commonly by the fifth century and became official church doctrine in 1215.

This realistic view led to the idea that the Eucharist is a sacrifice for sin. Christ is killed anew and offered up for the sins of the people at each Eucharist. The preacher becomes a priest who offers up the sacrifice of Christ just as effectively as when Christ was crucified.

This is the origin of the Roman Catholic mass. The Eucharist is no longer just a part of the worship service which is centered around preaching the Word, but it is now *the focal point* of every service, called the mass.

This concept of the Eucharist is seriously unscriptural and blasphemous. The New Testament teaches that Jesus was offered up as a sacrifice, once for all time. He does not need to be "re-sacrificed" daily or weekly.

Hebrews 7:22 by so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant . . . **26** For such a High Priest was fitting for us, *who is* holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; **27** who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.

Hebrews 10:12 But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, **13** from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. **14** For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.

The development of the priesthood also owed much to pagan influences. People began to view Christian ministers like priests in pagan religions. As worship turned into ritual and as the sacrifice of the mass became the central feature of each service, preachers became priests.

Pope Gregory I taught that the Eucharist is a sacrifice for our redemption. In the mass, the priest offers up the blood and body of Christ for the sins of the people. The benefits include forgiveness of sins, blessings for the body, and assistance to dead loved ones in purgatory.

In the Middle Ages and beyond, many faithful Catholics attended mass daily. Sins were divided into two categories - mortal and venial. A mortal sin was a willful transgression of the law of God. A venial sin was a minor deviation from God's laws - those little sins that everyone commits daily, as some say. If a person would attend mass, he would receive forgiveness of venial sins.

The mass was a sacrifice of the blood and body of Jesus Christ. The same body that hung on the cross was supposedly invisibly but actually present. It was said that God allowed this intangible transformation so that people would not be repulsed by the eating of human flesh and blood.

In the thirteenth century, Francis of Assisi is credited for starting the practice of "adoration of the Eucharist" where the consecrated wafer is placed in a special place on the altar and worshiped. In some monasteries and convents, the consecrated wafer was worshiped 24 hours a day. In 1220, Pope Honorius III proclaimed that as a consequence of the transubstantiation, the consecrated wafer of bread should be worshiped *as Christ Himself*. After the priest blessed the "host" which is the wafer of bread (the word host is derived from the Latin *hostia* which means "sacrificial victim"), the people would bow in worship. In the Middle Ages, the priests were fanatical about taking care of the bread and wine since they believed it actually became the body and blood of Jesus. In fact, beginning in the twelfth century, the wine was withheld from the people and reserved for the priest alone. This was done for fear that someone would "spill the blood of Christ."

The practice of worshiping the host is still observed today. Pope John Paul II would spend many hours in silent Eucharistic adoration and stated that the practice provides contact with the "very wellspring of grace". The Catholic church describes the mass as "the source and summit of the Christian life."

Where Was the Apostolic Church?

One might ask, “Where was the true apostolic church during this time when the institutional Christian church was so far from New Testament truth?” It is believed that there have always been those who have practiced true apostolic experience and doctrine somewhere in the world. By studying the ancient writings, we read of groups that taught that Jesus was the mighty God in flesh. There were groups who practiced water baptism in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins. There were groups that received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. These groups would have been considered heretic, and therefore their existence is hard to pinpoint. It would be several centuries before apostolic truth would once again be preached openly in power.