



COMPLETING
The
Unfinished
REFORMATION
THE SERIES VOLUME 2

George Akalonu

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Completing the Unfinished Reformation: The Series Volume 2

George Akalonu

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Contents

Preface for the Kingdom Culture Series.....	vii
Chapter 26.....	1
6 Paradigms of The True Church	1
Implications of understanding the Church as the spiritual Body of Yeshua in the earth realm.....	2
Implications of understanding and embracing this truth of the Church as Bride of Yeshua:.....	4
Chapter 27	11
The Individual Saint: Profile of the Saint as Work in Progress	11
Saints, Grace, Sin, and Security.....	14
Chapter 28.....	20
Whole Truth Produced Life and Growth!.....	20
Spiritual Growth is outcome of the whole Counsel of New Covenant Truths.....	20
General Introduction to Doctrines of the New Covenant.....	24
Kingdom Perspective of Doctrines.....	24
Understanding Basis of The New Covenant.....	25
Universal Access to Elohim Through the Shed Blood	26
Chapter 29.....	30
Glorious Truths & Fundamental C's.....	30
Catalysts of Growth in Grace: The 6 Fundamental C's	36
Chapter 30.....	39
The Hebraic/Jewish Factor	39
Paul and Refutation of Replacement Theology	40
Urgent Assignment: Return of Hebrews/Jews to the Fold	41
The Duty of Care Gentile Saints owe the Hebraic/Jewish People and the nation of Israel.....	44
Chapter 31.....	45
Section C: The Clash of the Kingdoms	45
An Extract from MC-010 - Understanding the End Times: The Times of Gentiles.....	45
Understanding the Clash of Kingdoms.....	49
Chapter 32.....	52
Culture Clash with Rome: The Dominant Kingdom of Men	52
THE ROMAN PANTHEON.....	54
Chapter 33.....	58
Surviving the Odds: The Alpha Church Versus Rome	58

Chapter 34	66
Christians on The Broad and Narrow Ways	66
Two Gateways.....	67
Two types of Ministers.....	68
Attitude to His Return/the End Times	69
Chapter 35	74
Canon and Apologetics	74
Phases of the Gospel before Advent of Roman Catholicism	77
Chapter 36	81
The Rightly Divided Word Empowered the Alpha Church	81
Chapter 37	87
Christian Religion: History of Roman Catholicism	87
Chapter 38	94
The Journey Down the Broad way of Religion	94
The Four Factors Which Led to Emergence of Roman Catholicism as a Dominant Religion:.....	95
The Charge and Promise:.....	99
Chapter 39	103
Role of the Nicolaitanes in emergence of Roman Catholic Priesthood	103
Reasons for Raising the Fivefold	106
Dangerous Theology of the Nicolaitanes	107
Assessment of the Nicolaitanes by Yeshua, Jesus as Head of the Church.....	108
Summary of Lessons 38 and 39: The Great Switch!.....	109
Chapter 40	111
Prophecies of the Empire which would re-configure the world	111
Key Prophecies concerning Rome as a Power that would re-define human power on earth.....	112
How Rome and its Alternative Christian Religion was viewed in the Book of Revelations	114
Chapter 41	116
Spiritually, the Gentiles missed it with the Divine Purpose	117
The Church has a Master Plan	119
Kingdom Culture	120
Conclusion of the Matter: All have sinned.....	122
Chapter 42	123
From Adversary to Partner!	123

Chapter 43	132
From Relationship/Kingdom to Religion/Christendom	132
Chapter 44	139
Pillars for Consolidation of Roman Catholic Religion Part 1	139
Theatre of Action moves from human hearts to Cathedrals & Church buildings	142
Chapter 45	146
Pillars for Consolidation of Roman Catholicism Part 2 Another Mary	146
Chapter 46	153
Pillars of Roman Catholicism Part 3 Purgatory, Indulgence + others	153
Observance of Special Days Condemned.....	155
Chapter 47	161
Pillars of Roman Catholicism Part 4 The Dark Ages	161
Chapter 48	167
The Holy Roman Empire	167
Religious origins	168
Chapter 49	173
Mystery Babylon - Part 1	173
Chapter 50	179
Mystery Babylon - Part 2	179
Chapter 51	187
Mystery Babylon – Part 3	187
Postscript	194
How to be involved	194
Masterclass Curriculum	195
Masterclass Mentors	197
Principal Officers	199

Preface for the Kingdom Culture Series

We have tarried before the Lord for some time to receive a rhema concerning how to introduce the books in the series you are about to read. He directed us to share a little bit of how He ordered our steps over a 21-year period between 1996-2017.

In 1996, the Lord called us out of denominationalism to serve His Body and Kingdom. As we resigned from a Pastoral calling and began to serve Him and the Body in a community in Africa (Owerri, Imo State of Nigeria), we held on to one critical vision He released beginning August 1996. At that time, we joined other saints to lament the sad state of Africa on almost all fronts of life. It was surreal to hear the Lord comfort us by saying He had appointed His Church in Africa as instrument of a quick work: Rescuing His Kingdom program in the earth realm from corruption in preparation for the return of King Yeshua, Jesus.

In August 2006, He directed us to relocate to London which as centre of the world would make our Acts 1:8 assignment more impactful on a global scale. Looking back, because we did not see it then, it is significant that it was 100 years after Azusa Street Revival that the Lord in 2006 birthed Global School of Ministry as a catalyst of Reformation, Restoration, and Revival. Again, we did not see clearly then how extensively it was to be used to rediscover Truths which were missed out by Martin Luther in the Protestant Reformation of 1517.

Interestingly, the Lord used various means to make it clear what He was about to do was not raise a man or woman, like Martin Luther was raised prominently and publicly. But rather activate a company of saints worldwide with understanding of Him and the Church. A company of saints who embrace His Kingdom pattern and take their place as His sons who would do all His will. In this regard, the Lord made it clear the election of His Church in Africa was not for the purpose of building an 'African Cultural Church'. The wider and more strategic scope was to use it to use His remnant 'out of the seed of Ham' to impact and connect His seed out of Shem and Japheth to constitute the fourth race which is the Elect Remnant or 'one new man' spoken of by Apostle Paul.

In other words, the focus of the Lord was simply to use the Global School of Ministry project to activate His elect remnant to walk in unity of the Faith. And, be empowered to represent Him and the Kingdom right where they are in various corners of the world where He preserved them from the claws of Babylon. It was then Holy Spirit provided illumination of this anchor scripture:

Romans 11:5 (KJV) *5 Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.*

There is a simple, yet grand key to understand the fundamental difference between the Martin Luther Protestant Reformation and the Kingdom Culture project. The Reformation of Martin Luther was designed to 'Protest' some of the dogma and practices of the Roman Catholic Church when he received revelation of their unbiblical origins.

The Kingdom Culture project, on the other hand, is designed to take the Church back to what it was before the Roman Empire embraced the larger wing of the Church which was tired of persecution and

martyrdom in the 4th Century. In other words, through the Kingdom Culture project, the Omega or End Time Church will be a logical conclusion of what had started in the Alpha or First Century Church.

Unlike other reformation projects before it, Kingdom Culture, through the Global School of Ministry and annual Master Class series of the Global Advanced Mentorship Program have two simple keys: Get the Church back into the 'School' Paradigm where Study of the Word is central to both congregational and general ministry. Second, to challenge all saints to receive the Four-dimensional work of Holy Spirit: He Is the Seal of redemption; He uses the Word to Transform Life of Believers from inside out, He Unites saints to live as one indivisible Body of Yeshua notwithstanding their locations or sects; He releases Power through which saints are able to demonstrate the awesome powers of the Risen Yeshua, Jesus!

These are accomplished when leaders and saints sincerely and diligently embrace the ministry of Holy Spirit and the Word through the **T>T>E>A>R process**. It is one where leaders are used by Holy Spirit to:

- **Teach** saints the whole counsel of Holy Scriptures
- **Train** saints to discover and take their places as effective members of the Body of Yeshua
- **Equip** saints with what it takes to walk in victory through mentorship and support
- **Activate** the Gifts and callings of Holy Spirit which may lie dormant in them
- **Release** the saints into productive ministry. This may be by public ordination or Commissioning during ministry events.

500 years after the Protestant Reformation of 1517, the Lord Yeshua, Jesus is activating throughout the earth realm this framework. The framework through which Holy Spirit will undertake training of Reformers who will receive proper understanding of the Pauline Epistles and Master Plan of the true Kingdom Church contained therein, and build individual lives, ministries and congregations accordingly.

This Kingdom Culture project involves release of 40 books on dedicated websites where all saints worldwide who desire to discover, pursue and fulfil their callings as the Royal Priesthood after the order of Melchizedeck can find the teaching resources to train in the comfort of their own homes.

On the other hand, these 40 books will put in the hands of the great company of elect ministers across the world who know the flock is not theirs but Yeshua's. These books are tools with which to systematically transform the operating systems of the ministries committed to their trust from 'Theatres' to 'Schools'. These books collectively make up the curriculum with which to launch their own Global School of Ministry project. The curriculum will ensure every two or three years, fresh sets of fit-for-purpose ministers of the gospel who will serve the Lord with all their hearts are produced.

All 40 books on the websites constitute what it takes to root out the leaven of Babylon derived from our various experiences with Christian Religion. They therefore constitute what we need to embrace and walk in true Kingdom Culture. It is through ministry of the Word that the Church will be prepared and made ready for return of her Groom:

Ephesians 5:25-27 (KJV) *25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; 26 that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.*

Please intentionally study this and the other resources in the series prayerfully under unction of Holy Spirit with your Bible to confirm all the points made. As you train, necessity is upon you to make your vessel available for Holy Spirit to use to transmit these empowering truths to other saints who yearn for empowerment!

Psalm 68:11 (KJV) 11 *The Lord gave **the** word: **great was the company** of those that published it.*

2 Timothy 2:2 (KJV) 2 *And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.*

May Elohim, our heavenly Father make you the instrument of His Grace He designed you to be!

Use of the Hebraic Names of the Most High

Yahweh, Elohim, Yeshua. During our walk with the Lord, we discovered by leading of Holy Spirit how fundamentally flawed was the intrusion of Rome into the gospel from 4th Century AD. Replacement Theology led Rome to take away all Hebraic/Jewish connections as root of what is now called the Christian Faith. What He has led us to do is to call our Father by the Name He revealed Himself to Israel which is Yahweh. In the same way, rather than call our Creator by the generic title God, we find it more appropriate to call Him by the Hebraic Name He revealed to humanity through Moses which is Elohim. The Name, Elohim properly conveys His Unity in Plurality as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit! We also call our King the Name His Father gave Him, Yeshua as well as the Anglicized translation, Jesus derived from the Greek translation, Ioseus.

We do this as led by Holy Spirit, not as part of the so-called sacred Names movement. Neither do we subscribe to the legalistic methods of Judaizers who are intent on dragging saints into the dead works and rituals of Judaism. We do not condemn or malign those who have not yet caught this depth of revelation. Please feel free to call the Most High by what He reveals to you and what you are comfortable with.

Chapter 26

6 Paradigms of The True Church

Understanding the True Church

One of the most outstanding features of the New Covenant is it births the Church! Many of those who rail against the Church make a mistake of fighting the wrong foe! They may be referring to Christian Religion which is an error or wrong notions of the Church.

What the Church is not

The Church presented in the New Covenant is not any of these:

1. Organization of humans;
2. Buildings with religious designs people go into on certain 'holy' days and hours;
3. A Carnal entity that is known by what is seen, heard or felt;
4. A Business entity programmed to generate revenue for its owners and managers;
5. An entity measured by numbers of people connected to it.

The New Covenant Church in Reality

The New Covenant Church has its origin in Elohim. He conceived her, birthed her, keeps her and will ensure it consummates its destiny in Yeshua at end of the age. Instead of getting caught up in definitions, let us see how the New Covenant presents the Church in terms that are rich with imagery:

A. The Body of Yeshua

There is an overarching presentation of the True Church as the very Body of Yeshua in the New Covenant texts.

Romans 7:4 (KJV) *4 Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.*

Romans 12:3-10 (KJV) *3 For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. 4 For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: 5 So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. 6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; 7 Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; 8 Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness 9 Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. 10 Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;*

1 Corinthians 12:12-30 (KJV) *12 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. 13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. 14 For the body is not one member, but many. 15 If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? 16 And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? 17 If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? 18 But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. 19 And if they were all one member, where were the body? 20 But now are they many members, yet but one body. 21 And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. 22 Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: 23 And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. 24 For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked. 25 That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. 26 And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. **27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.** 28 And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? 30 Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?*

This imagery presents the Church the way Elohim sees it as a direct fruit of the Incarnation and completed earthly assignment of Yeshua, just as He Himself reported to the Father in John 17.

Implications of understanding the Church as the spiritual Body of Yeshua in the earth realm

A.1 The Church can walk in the fullness of its inheritance only when it truly understands and walks in the reality that it is the very spiritual Body of Yeshua, Jesus the King of Kings! This awesome truth is truly mind boggling and shifts the paradigm of power away from Satan consciousness to Body consciousness. Let us see why:

Colossians 1:12-29 (KJV) *12 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: 13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: 14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: 15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: 16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: 17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. **18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.** 19 For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; 20 And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. 21 And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled 22 In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight: 23 If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister; 24 Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church: 25 Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; 26 Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: 27 To whom*

God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: 28 Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: 29 Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

Colossians 2:6-10 (KJV) *6 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: 7 Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. 8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. 9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. 10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power*

A.2 Saints will walk in holiness, knowing it is spiritual suicide to allow members of their bodies to serve Satan and the flesh

1 Corinthians 6:15-19 (KJV) *15 Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. 16 What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. 17 But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. 18 Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. 19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?*

A.3 The Body of Yeshua will reject the paradigm of Church as both a dry, impersonal religious organization and as a religious building people go into on certain 'holy' days and hours.

A.4 The Church will be seen for what it is: A living, loving organism of actively empowered Body parts functionally relevant to the needs of each other.

When ministers embrace this paradigm, they will invest to make Ephesians 4:11-16 come to pass. The outcome is a situation where all saints discover, are activated in and walk in their spiritual gifts.

Ephesians 4:13-16 (KJV) *13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: 14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; 15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: 16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.*

B. The Bride of Yeshua

This is another mind-boggling profile of the true Kingdom Church. The eternal reality is Yeshua, Jesus sometime in time was Incarnated in order to be the Perfect Human Whose Holy Blood was poured out as a Bride Price for a spiritual Bride! This Bride includes saints already triumphant after running their earthly races as well as the militant wing which is still living in time!

Ephesians 5:22-27 (KJV) *22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. 24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; 26 That he might sanctify and cleanse*

it with the washing of water by the word, 27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

Commentary: Yeshua never leaves His Church the way He found it. He is at work, perfecting the Church for the fullness of glory so it can be fit for the marriage supper to come!

Verse 28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. 29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: 30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. 31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. 32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

Commentary: The picture in verses 31,32 is that of cleaving of a wife to her husband!

Implications of understanding and embracing this truth of the Church as Bride of Yeshua:

B.1 As the Bride of Yeshua, the message is simple: Saints are one with Him in a legal, spiritual contract! Once a sinner is convicted, repents genuinely and puts total faith for redemption in the Blood that Yeshua shed on the Cross, He or she has partaken of the Bride Price – the money given by a Groom to parents of a Bride! That Bride Price is His Blood!

1 Peter 1:18-20 (KJV) *18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; 19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: 20 Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,*

1 Corinthians 6:20 (KJV) *20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.*

B.2 Chastity/Holiness. We do not own our beings to do whatever we like. Just as it is abominable to see a married woman habitually living in adultery, so is it an abomination for saints to live under the influence of Satan to the extent that he controls their behaviour which is what Sin and sinning is all about! Understanding this truth will compel saints to love righteousness and hate iniquity and not open any doors to the Adversary to control their behaviour away from the nature of Yeshua which is righteousness! As Hebrews 1:9 states, this was one of the secrets of the remarkable life of Yeshua.

True Kingdom leaders are not those who have the largest congregations or built the largest Cathedrals or most prominent on TV, Cable and Radio. They are rather those who are passionately invested in the faith that none of the souls committed to their trust should slip away and perish. Beyond that they make it a covenant commitment to present all saints within their loop faultless before Yeshua at His coming, which they look up to in eager anticipation!

2 Corinthians 11:2 (KJV) *2 For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.*

Galatians 4:11-12, 16, 19 (KJV) *11 I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain. 12 Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as ye are: ye have not injured me at all.*

16 Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?

19 My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you,

Colossians 1:28-29 (KJV) *28 Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: 29 Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.*

Leaders who despise this commitment behave like hirelings who flee when wolves appear like Yeshua described in John 10.

B.3 Security. Husbands do not abandon their wives in dangerous environments to manage on their own strength. On the other hand, they are invested in doing all necessary things to keep their wives secure from robbers, rapists and other types of evil people. Before He ascended back to heaven, Yeshua gave His word concerning security and safety of His Bride.

Matthew 28:20 (KJV) *20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*

He Himself assured that once two or three people are gathered in His Name, there is an automatic manifestation of His Presence! We do not need as it were to enter a special religiously designed building or make some incantations before this happens! We are His Church and anywhere we are, He is right there! If we embrace this truth and walk in it, mountains will move without struggle!

Matthew 18:19-20 (KJV) *19 Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. 20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*

His apostles also amplified that message:

Hebrews 13:5-6 (KJV) *5 Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. 6 So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.*

1 Corinthians 10:13 (KJV) *13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*

Jude 24-25 (KJV) *24 Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, 25 To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.*

B.4 Abide in Yeshua. Understanding this truth will motivate saints to cling to and abide in Yeshua in all situations, knowing we are betrothed to Him for all eternity (John 15:1-8)!

C. The Agency of the Kingdom which will continue His work in the earth realm until consummation of all things.

Before He left the earth realm for Heaven, Yeshua mandated the Church to continue His Mission of reconciling the Lost to The Father. It is only through this process of conversion from Sinner to Saint that the Kingdom is populated.

Matthew 28:18-20 (KJV) *18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen*

Acts 1:4-8 (KJV) *4 And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. 5 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. 6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? 7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. 8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*

Birthing on the Day of Pentecost, the Alpha or early Church laid hold of its identity as a Divine reality and went forth with nothing but His Mandate; His Presence and Power. It turned the world upside down!

Acts 2:1-4 (KJV) *1 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*

Acts 17:6 (KJV) *6 And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also;*

We on whom end of the age has come must also learn to die to self, take away all confidence in all things carnal and release our vessels 100 percent for Holy Spirit to use to complete the work. Getting back into the core Kingdom Business of reconciling the lost to our heavenly Father through Faith in the finished work of the Cross is the urgent need of the hour, if we truly are expectant of return of the King of Kings! Interestingly, this reconciliation Commission is not reserved for a select few called anointed Evangelists but is rather an assignment every true saint can get involved with.

Matthew 24:14 (KJV) *14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.*

2 Corinthians 5:17-21 (KJV) *17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. 18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. 20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. 21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

Very often, most saints make the mistake of thinking that the Church and the Kingdom are one and the same. The reality however is that the Church is an agency of the Kingdom on this side of eternity!

A. Called out people or in Greek, 'Ekklesia'!

The true identity of the Church therefore is this: we are the Called-out people of Elohim who are to collectively manifest and function as agency of the eternal Kingdom planted in the earth realm to impact the world on this side of eternity:

1 Peter 2:9-12 (KJV) *9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light; 10 Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. 11 Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; 12 Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.*

Philippians 2:12-16 (KJV) *12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. 13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. 14 Do all things without murmurings and disputings: 15 That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; 16 Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.*

Our identity is distinct from the World. We have no business being like it. We are rather catalysts of divine transformation. On encountering the True Church, those in the world will know both by fruits as well as by focus.

Matthew 5:16 (KJV) *16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

The Grace of Yeshua in us which we appropriate by Faith is manifested in the good works which come forth as fruit!

Titus 2:7 (KJV) *7 In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity,*

Titus 2:14 (KJV) *14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*

Titus 3:8 (KJV) *8 This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.*

Titus 3:14 (KJV) *14 And let our's also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful*

The sweetest part of the deal is that in the Church, Yeshua made room for all who believe to come and partake of His Headship and position as Groom! Hebrews/Jews and Gentiles are all called, have responded, are responding and are equal stake holders in the New Covenant Church! In the New Covenant Church, all middle walls of partition were broken and set aside by the broken Body of Yeshua so that all have access as Hebrews 10: 19-25 says. Amongst the redeemed, divisions based on racial, ethnic, gender, age or socio-economic status becomes irrelevant!

Galatians 3:26-29 (KJV) *26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there*

is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Ephesians 2:11-22 (KJV) *11 Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; 12 That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: 13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. 14 For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; 15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; 16 And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: 17 And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. 18 For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. 19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; 20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; 21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: 22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.*

Ephesians 3:1-11 (KJV) *1 For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, 2 If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: 3 How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, 4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) 5 Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; 6 That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: 7 Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. 8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; 9 And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: 10 To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, 11 According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:*

The Church will be consummated in Yeshua at end of the age. That is why His return is organically linked to fulfilment of the lifespan of the Church. In other words, the True Church has a start and end date. Both are linked to Yeshua. It started after He left the earth and Yahweh sent Holy Spirit to take His Place as Comforter of all saints.

John 14:16 (KJV) *16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; 17 Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. 18 I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. 19 Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also.*

John 16:7 (KJV) *7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you*

The Church has a Day of Consummation of its assignment

The New Covenant reveals with clarity that the Church that was activated in the earth realm on the Day of Pentecost has a Day appointed, known only to the Father when its assignment will be consummated before the Kingdom is established in the earth realm. That day of consummation will involve

resurrection of saints who died in Yeshua and catching away (otherwise called Rapture) of those who are alive. The reason is that flesh and blood (mortality) cannot inherit the Kingdom. It is necessary for Saints to be like Yeshua the Head Whose resurrection and bodily ascension indicates that the earth realm during the Manifest Kingdom will be ruled by saints who have translated from mortality to immortality. Only two things can affect this translation: Death or the Rapture!

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (KJV) *13 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. 15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. 16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. 18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*

1 Corinthians 15:49-53 (KJV) *49 And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. 50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. 51 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.*

Its next phase will be brief: The Judgement Seat of Yeshua for assessment of the quality of their work in the earth realm (2 Corinthians 5:10) and Marriage Supper of the Lamb where rewards will be distributed to the deserving. (Revelation 19:1-9) Thereafter, the Lord will return with the saints triumphant to vanquish armies of the world led by the anti-Christ. With Satan chained, there will be no evil influence on the earth realm as Yeshua rules the earth realm as King of Kings with Jerusalem as His Capital city. Saints will rule and reign in a physical sense as Priests and Kings across the cities and nations of the earth realm for 1000 years. After a few more things including eternal damnation of Satan; the Great White Throne Judgement, endless eternity will begin when the Mystery of Elohim will be accomplished and He will be all in all for His saints (Revelation 19:11-21); 20; 21; 22).

The awesome inheritance of saints who suffer for His Name sake or deny themselves present luxuries to complete their course is just plainly unspeakable!

1 Corinthians 2:9 (KJV) *9 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.*

Romans 8:16-19 (KJV) *16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: 17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. 18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. 19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.*

Let us close with this awesome prayer by Paul for the Church:

Ephesians 1:15-23 (KJV) *15 Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, 16 Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; 17 That the God of our Lord Jesus*

Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: 18 The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, 19 And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, 20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, 21 Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: 22 And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, 23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

B. The True Church is the Spiritual Building of Elohim in the Earth Realm.

The individual saint is the ‘Church’ of Elohim by His Indwelling Holy Spirit. In the same way, all saints are regarded as individual building blocks – lively stones – which collectively make up His Spiritual House on earth. In other words, we ‘do not go to Church’, rather we are the Church!

Ephesians 2:18-22 (KJV) *18 For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. 19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; 20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; 21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: 22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.*

1 Peter 2:5 (KJV) *5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.*

Implications of this Truth

F.1 If we accept this truth, we will die to self so that our lives are poured out to love Elohim without restraints as well as our fellow brethren of like precious faith.

F.2 Knowing this truth will drive us to pay whatever price that is required of us to walk in wisdom to maintain unity of the Body in the Bond of Peace (Ephesians 4:1-6; John 17).

F.3 Knowing this truth will enable us to bend over backwards to recover those who err (Galatians 6:1-2).

The True Kingdom Church is a supernatural organism of sons of Elohim united together as lively stones! That is why Unity based on Love is at the heart of the Church. Satan knows this and brings His biggest and most potent arsenals to war against unity of the Body.

Review Questions

1. Kindly indicate which of the 6 paradigms of the True Church (A – F in the chapter) that ministered most to you
2. What will you do with the revelation in this Chapter?

Chapter 27

The Individual Saint: Profile of the Saint as Work in Progress

The individual saint: A profile

In the previous chapter, we focused on the True Church of Yeshua as an organic spiritual entity which is agency of the Kingdom in the earth realm. In that regard, the picture is that of an organism containing living parts which are held together by Blood of the Lamb and Holy Spirit.

With that picture of a Body in mind, it is needful to examine what the individual parts are. The individual part here is no other than the saint. One of the greatest failures of Christian Religion which exposes its fundamental deficiency is the inability to receive and walk in the report of the New Covenant concerning the awesome identity and profile of saints.

Sainthood is a reality of Grace, not works! It is an inheritance saints derive from their relationship with the Father, standing on the merit of the finished work of the Cross. In other words, one who truly believes and embraces Salvation in Yeshua, Jesus alone based on the Blood He shed experiences an immediate transition of status: from sinner to saint!

2 Corinthians 5:17 (KJV) *17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new*

Sainthood is who brethren are by their New nature! This judicial reality is the basis on which Elohim views the redeemed and makes them part of His family and Kingdom. Lest this truth is misinterpreted, let us note quickly also that there is nowhere in the Word that is implied that once people are saved, there is no more work to be done in them. On the other hand, the New Covenant presents an interesting picture:

1. Judicially, those who are saved have right standing (righteousness) with the Father. They are consecrated or set apart for His holy use.
2. Though saints by His Grace, Elohim invites them to a lifelong process of being conformed into the image of Yeshua, Jesus and even orchestrates the process!
3. Those who stop growing and pressing into Him end up rusty and potentially risk falling away!

Let us examine what the New Covenant says of these three tranches of truth so that we can walk in the fullness of Truth.

1. Judicially, those who are saved have right standing (righteousness) with the Father. They are consecrated or set apart for His holy use.

In the New Covenant, Salvation from Sin and its master, Satan is a free gift. We do not earn it by works or humanistic attempts to please him. It is not by the weight of our prayers or what we abstained from.

No one gains divine approval on the merit of the quantum of religious exertions, rituals performed or acts of self-flagellation!

Romans 6:23 (KJV) *23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Ephesians 2:1-8 (KJV) *1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; 2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: 3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. 4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) 6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: 7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:*

Romans 5:15-18 (KJV) *15 But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. 16 And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. 17 For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) 18 Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.*

The New Creation is just that: New humans! Saints are redeemed from the hand of Satan; made righteous by the Blood; Justified in His sight; adopted into the family of Elohim and having a secure inheritance in Him, among other blessings. Saints who are unable to receive the gift of Salvation by Grace will struggle with a religious spirit which negates the Joy and Liberty they should enjoy in Him. (KJV)

Romans 1:16-17 (KJV) *16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. 17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.*

2. Though saints by His Grace, Elohim invites them to a lifelong process of being conformed into the image of Yeshua, Jesus and even orchestrates the process!

While on this side of eternity, Elohim does not abandon the saint to His own devices. He is actively at work through dealings of Holy Spirit, ministry of the Word, divinely orchestrated circumstances, discipline, corrections and what they suffer to perfect saints in character. His ultimate goal is enable each saint to conform into the image of Yeshua, the Ultimate Human!

Romans 8:28-30 (KJV) *28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. 29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*

The reason why this is so critical is that each saint has an ultimate frame of reference: Yeshua, the Model Human. If saints cooperate with Him by abiding in Yeshua and His Word regardless of what they encounter on the outside, their perfection will be a done deal (John 15:1-8).

As we saw in an earlier chapter, all saints are expected to transition into Disciples or followers of Jesus; to become Intimate with Yeshua and thus have access to His heart which can only come by Friendship and grow to live like sons of Elohim in the earth realm, taking responsibility for estate of their Father. We also saw that in terms of ministry, all saints are called into the Royal Priesthood after the Order of Melchizedek Whose High Priest is Yeshua Himself, seated on the Throne of Majesty. In this way, each saint was equipped to run the Kingdom race in their appointed lanes in such a way to breast the tape into eternity with full honours!

The mandate was not just to preach and teach, but to do so within a certain context: as Witnesses of Yeshua, Jesus! A witness is one whose lifestyle reflected the Person Who sent him/her:

Acts 1:8 (KJV) *8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: **and ye shall be witnesses unto me** both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*

The Alpha Church was so successful in this regard that Gentiles in Antioch saw the Messiah (Greek: Christos) evidently displayed in their lives and therefore gave them the nickname: Christian.

Acts 11:25-26 (KJV) *25 Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: 26 And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. **And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.***

The Gentiles who did not know Yeshua could see Him in the lives of the brethren in their midst! This nickname by unbelievers has stuck ever since. Unfortunately, multitudes who had no idea of its origin have made that nickname a crutch on which a Religious system is based.

We will recall that in Acts chapter 9, Paul had a dramatic, life changing encounter with the glorified Yeshua which was his entrance into the Kingdom. He did not rest on his oars but embraced the truth of process which enabled him to become an outstanding saint and leader. In quest of understanding His King and Kingdom, Paul detached himself from other pursuits to focus intensely on these two things. The intensity of this quest is best understood by reading this text which reveal his thirst for growth:

Philippians 3:7-17 (KJV) *7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. 8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, 9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: 10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; 11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. 12 Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. 13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before 14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. 16 Nevertheless, whereto*

we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. 17 Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.

It is also revealed in his attitude to challenges and sufferings:

Acts 20:22-24 (KJV) *22 And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: 23 Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. 24 But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.*

2 Corinthians 10:7-10 (KJV) *7 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. 8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. 9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.*

Case study: Some epistles of Paul were written to saints in various cities to empower them. Yet, the epistles did not just commend them where necessary, but also rebuked corrected and exhorted them to embrace ways to grow up in Yeshua!

3. Those who stop growing and pressing into Him end up rusty and potentially risk falling away!

Let us restate the truth that Grace is not a static thing! It is His life which we can and should grow in.

2 Peter 3:18 (KJV) *18 But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.*

It is an inconvenient truth which saints need to understand and walk in! Peter was an again instrument who Holy Spirit used to put the necessity of growth in the right context and danger of eternal damnation when this does not happen.

2 Peter 1:5-11 (KJV) *5 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; 6 And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; 7 And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. 8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. 10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: 11 For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

Saints, Grace, Sin, and Security

Satan has various crafty ways of deceiving saints. One of them is to them into wild goose chases of phantom enemies based on differences in dogma. It is important for the remnant to see through his devices and focus on the practical matters of how Elohim wants us to live and desist from willful sins which He considers as iniquity. In this regard, recourse to denominational debates of whether a saint has eternal security or not, regardless of what he or she does after being saved is not the best approach.

The gold standard is to simply stay on the word. Here is what the Word says about saints, Grace, Sin and Security.

3(i). The new nature of saints is righteousness which requires them to live holy before the Lord

1 Peter 1:15-16 (KJV) *15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; 16 Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.*

1 John 3:1-9 (KJV) *1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. 2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. 3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure. 4 Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. 5 And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. 6 Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. 7 Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. 8 He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. 9 Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.*

Critical adversaries whose activities may derail saints from a life of holiness unto the Lord include:

Satan, the flesh/human nature, worldly influences and denominational affiliations which can tempt us away from the truth and Kingdom life or distort our theologies. In other words, though saved, if we give any adversaries access to our soul, they will eventually overpower and control saints away from the righteousness we received as a gift.

3(ii). Saints have a responsibility not to abuse Grace and use it as excuse to sin.

Grace is free but not Cheap! Grace of Elohim was procured for humanity through the costly price of the Blood of Yeshua! This Grace therefore enables saints not only to come into a state of right standing with the Father but to also remain in a relationship of like persons! To suggest that some body will receive Grace to be saved from Satan and Sin only to remain bound in habitual sins is to stretch the gospel!

Romans 6:1-16 (KJV) *1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? 2 God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? 3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? 4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: 6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. 7 For he that is dead is freed from sin. 8 Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: 9 Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. 10 For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. 11 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. 12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. 13 Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. 14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. 15 What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law,*

but under grace? God forbid. 16 Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

3(iii). Though it is not the will of Elohim that any saint should sin, whenever there is a slip or stumbling, there should be recourse of penitence to Yeshua and His Blood for cleansing

The New Covenant recognizes the reality that either in Thought, Word, Attitudes, Actions; by what is done or left undone, a Christian can miss the mark, even unintentionally. Whenever this happens, there is a breach in realm of the Spirit regarding communion with Elohim.

1 John 1:5-10 (KJV) *5 This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. 6 If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. 8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.*

Saints are warned throughout the Holy Writ not to assume that because of a historical encounter with Yeshua, they have a free pass to live anyhow and remain in a fallen state, since no one knows when the end of all things is due. A lively conscience is supposed to be convicted by Holy Spirit to the extent of genuine heartfelt repentance!

1 John 2:1-3 (KJV) *1 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: 2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. 3 And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.*

3(iv). Saints are secure in their Redeemer and cannot be destroyed by Satan or external forces as long as they abide in Him and rely on His strength, not theirs

The security that Yeshua guarantees those who are His is simple and potent: if we abide in Him and allow His words to abide in us, neither Satan, demons, human beings nor circumstances can pluck us out of His safe hands!

John 10:9-11,2 6-29 (KJV) *9 I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. 10 The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. 11 I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. 26 But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. 27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: 28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. 29 My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.*

He Who began the good work of Redemption does not leave saints to their own devices. He is always at work using a variety of means including placing special vessels in our path to urge us onto the right path and pace; release of revelation of Truth which empowers and the right kind of spiritual atmosphere needed to nurture growth.

Philippians 1:6 (KJV) *6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:*

That is why with the security Elohim offers saints in Yeshua, comes two matching responses:

- **Surrender of the will to Him.**

Let us note that from the way Elohim created humans, He placed in them the capacity to choose whether to obey Him and be blessed or disobey Him and to suffer the consequences. This capacity to choose is in the human will. Elohim respects choices His saints make and will never violate their will. This explains the Fall of Adam and Eve and that of all those who once walked with Elohim but fell by the wayside, their theologies notwithstanding!

- **A conscious cooperation with Holy Spirit to put off what He reveals as untenable and put on what He considers necessary. It is still His Grace at work in both the act of revealing and the strength to obey!**

Philippians 2:12-16 (KJV) *12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. 13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. 14 Do all things without murmurings and disputings: 15 That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; 16 Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.*

Ephesians 4:17-32 (KJV) *17 This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, 18 Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: 19 Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. 20 But ye have not so learned Christ; 21 If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: 22 That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; 23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; 24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. 25 Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another. 26 Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: 27 Neither give place to the devil. 28 Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. 29 Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. 30 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: 32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*

Ephesians 5:1-11 (KJV) *1 Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; 2 And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour. 3 But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; 4 Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. 5 For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. 6 Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. 7 Be not ye therefore partakers with them. 8 For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: 9 (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all*

goodness and righteousness and truth;) 10 Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. 11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them

Colossians 3:1-10 (KJV) 1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. 2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. 5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: 6 For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: 7 In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. 8 But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. 9 Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; 10 And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

3(v). Those who claim to be saved and make sin a habit/lifestyle are on the highway to eternal damnation, their theologies and dogmas notwithstanding!

The New Covenant is inherently a Holy One. It reveals the relationship between a Holy Elohim and His Holy people who make a conscious decision to reject Satan the seducer and the motions of their fleshly natures which essentially war against true spirituality.

Galatians 5:13-21 (KJV) 13 For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. 14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 15 But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. 16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. 17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. 18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. **19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.**

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 (KJV) 9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, 10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

Hebrews 6:1-9 (KJV) 1 Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, 2 Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. 3 And this will we do, if God permit. **4 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, 5 And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, 6 If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.** 7 For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: 8 But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned. 9 But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak

Hebrews 10:26-31 (KJV) *26 For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, 27 But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. 28 He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: 29 Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? 30 For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. 31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

Conclusion

Saints have an obligation to intentionally desist from rebuilding again the things that were destroyed when they switched loyalty from Satan to Yeshua at the New Birth. That is why death of the Self-nature is so important!

Galatians 2:18-20 (KJV) *18 For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. 19 For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. 20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

Saints with a lively conscience who abide in Yeshua are invited by Elohim to trust Him to keep them from falling and as they wait on Him, they are shown ways to escape every snare of Satan.

1 Corinthians 10:12-13 (KJV) *12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. 13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*

Jude: 24-25 (KJV) *24 Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, 25 To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.*

Review Questions

1. Mention 3 things that ministered specially to you.
2. What will you do with this chapter from this chapter?

Chapter 28

Whole Truth Produced Life and Growth!

Spiritual Growth is outcome of the whole Counsel of New Covenant Truths.

The Alpha Church placed 7 things at the center of their Lives:

1. Supreme Love of Elohim evidenced by submission to Yeshua, Jesus in all things. This produced a powerful testimony evidenced in hearty embrace of martyrdom, where necessary as the case of James and Stephen showed along with those of Paul and Peter.

Revelation 12:11 (KJV) *11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.*

2. Consistent Prayer and Study of the Word. This built up their spiritual lives and caused their transformation from one degree of glory to the other all through their earthly pilgrimage.

3. In this way, they bonded with Elohim and fellow saints in an organic type of unity. For that reason, they could walk in Love as sons of the same Father and mind the same things.

1 Corinthians 1:10 (KJV) *10 Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.*

From time to time, the human nature cropped up, leading to differences in perspectives and solutions. Because of tenderness of their hearts, such divergences were resolved. Those who got tired of the Faith either backslide, went into heresy or apostasy and were thus counted out of Fellowship through exercise of discipline.

4. They cared for the holistic wellbeing of each other and their neighbors. This includes provision of communal feeding opportunities through funds raised for that purpose.

5. Preaching the Gospel of Salvation by Grace through Faith in Yeshua and the Kingdom was their central and only message. Heaven endorsed their message with Miracles, Signs and Wonders following.

6. They regarded themselves as Ambassadors of the Kingdom of heaven who were on assignment in the earthly realm.

7. Their Ultimate Hope, for which they invested all, was the Kingdom to Come when Yeshua would return as King

Philippians 3:20-21 (KJV) *20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: 21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.*

In their studies of the Word, broad spectrum of revelation was available in these forms:

A. The Gospels

It is significant that of all the things Yeshua told Peter that should occupy pride of place in the New Testament Church, the most significant was to Feed His Sheep and Lambs (John 21:15-17). The Alpha Church thrived because they had access to documented revelations of Yeshua and the Kingdom.

Of these, we believe that if Ministers heed the instructions of Yeshua to feed His flock, the quality of what they are fed is crucial. As those who know about computers say, input will determine output. In the same way, if certain specific revelations of Truth in the New Covenant are systematically used to feed saints under unction of Holy Spirit, their growth in Grace is more likely to happen than a haphazard presentation of preachments. Worse still, dwelling on unbiblical or extra-biblical revelations may actually open a crack in the spiritual wall through which immature saints can fall off:

Colossians 2:18-19 (KJV) *18 Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, 19 And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.*

Let us take a brief overview of how various vessels were given the privilege to download and document vital aspects of the message of the Kingdom and the reality of the Kingdom within; Kingdom Nation and Kingdom to Come/Manifest Kingdom.

Matthew

Documenting His Life, Message and Ministry was so important that Yeshua personally recruited Matthew, a man skilled in recording miniature details as His Own personal biographer

Matthew 9:9 (KJV) *9 And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.*

Essentially, he captured the reality of Yeshua as the long-prophesied Messiah so that Hebrews/Jews – his primary audience - would receive and believe in Him.

John

It was also so important that those who would receive the Kingdom message understand the dual nature of the King: as fully Human and fully Elohim. For this purpose, John was elected by heaven to enjoy the most intimate relationship with Yeshua. John saw Him like no man did and had the privilege of encountering the glorified Yeshua Who will return to rule this earth on the Isle of Patmos. The gospel written by John and his epistles are critical for understanding of the dual nature of the King of the Kingdom and therefore validate His claim for the throne that is the hearts of those who are citizens of the Kingdom:

John 1:1-3 (KJV) *1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 The same was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.*

1 John 5:5-7 (KJV) *5 Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? 6 This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit*

that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. 7 For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.

Revelation 1:9-17 details encounter of John with the risen King.

To understand the Kingdom within; participate in the Kingdom nation and be ready 24/7 for the world to come, one critical source material would be the various writings Holy Spirit inspired John to write in the Gospel by his name; his epistles and the Book of Revelation, one of the greatest prophecies of all time in the Holy Bible

Mark

To ensure that the culture of serving the people (as opposed to the worldly ethos of being served) was fully documented, a young disciple, Mark was given the privilege of learning from his uncle Peter and mother Mary who was one of the women who waited on Yeshua. From them and by inspiration of Holy Spirit, he documented the way Yeshua served the people.

Luke

To ensure that no detail was left out, a Medical Doctor with eye for details, Luke, was given the privilege to take a strategic look at the entire ministry of Yeshua, using multiple sources to present Him as not just King of the Hebrews/ Jews but also of the whole human race. For this reason, Luke traced the genealogy of Yeshua all the way to Adam.

Luke was the instrument who recorded Acts of Apostles.

In addition to the 4 Gospels, Holy Spirit used various vessels to release exhortations for godly living to the Church. These include two of the four half-brothers of Yeshua, James and Jude who later became Apostles after His Death, Resurrection and Ascension. Greater doctrinal truths were released through two more vessels.

Peter

Because Peter walked with Yeshua for the three and half years of His public ministry, some of what He learnt about the Kingdom within, the Kingdom nation and the Kingdom to come were documented in the epistles he wrote. Peter who had flipped flopped while walking with Yeshua and at the onset of the Alpha Church became so sold out to his Master that he gladly embraced martyrdom. It was him who Holy Spirit used to pen these immortal lines concerning the Kingdom nation:

1 Peter 2:9-12 (KJV) *9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light; 10 Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. 11 Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; 12 Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.*

Paul

Beyond the biographies that Matthew Mark, Luke and John wrote of Yeshua which captured His declaration of the Kingdom and holistic ministry in Israel, the revelation of what happened at the Cross and full benefits thereof were committed to the trust of Paul. One reason why Christian Religion has held sway for too long is that most preachers have not factored in the profound nature of the revelations Yeshua gave to His Church through this single vessel. Peter who had walked with Yeshua for 3 and half years and who became one of the core leaders of the Alpha Church had this to say about the writings of Paul:

2 Peter 3:15-16 (KJV) *15 And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; 16 As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.*

When the 12 disciples seemed to be thick in their minds concerning manifestation of critical dimensions of the Kingdom nation which would be a universal reality of the One new man of Yahweh in the earth realm – both Hebrews and Gentiles – Yeshua had to Personally descend from heaven to recruit a vessel with capacity to quickly understand and run with the vision of the Church as His Very Body and Bride and instrument through which He would demonstrate the Kingdom in the earth realm. (See Ephesians 1,2,3, 4,5). To him was revealed the Governmental system of the Kingdom Church; its reality as a living, loving organism rather than an organization or organizations of humans (Ephesians chapter 4: 1-16).

To Him was also granted a sneak peak of how the glorified Church would be connected with the King and serve as co-heirs and co-rulers in the Kingdom to come (Romans 8: 14-26; 1 Thessalonians 4).

Till today, it is the Father's good pleasure to give us the three dimensions of the Kingdom, losing nothing but gaining all! The price has been paid in full and all that is left for us is to cash the cheque <USA: check> by faith and live same out by our sold-out lives which give Holy Spirit right of way.

Luke 12:32 (KJV) *32 Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*

It has pleased Him therefore to give us three irrefutable witnesses in the earth realm by which our place and privileges in the Kingdom are secured beyond ability of Satan or humans to touch or pluck out. Once we remain within parameters of those three witnesses, we are safe. The truth of the Kingdom is well documented for our study and understanding if we give Holy Spirit space to take the things of Yeshua and show us as He was assigned. He does not and will not contradict what is already written! He will rather clarify, amplify and simplify them for our understanding!

John 14:26 (KJV) *26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.*

2 Timothy 2:15 (KJV) *15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (KJV) *16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*

Matthew 7:24-27 (KJV) *24 Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: 25 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. 26 And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: 27 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.*

In these days when the word 'kingdom' has become a buzzword, let us close our ears to fables of humans and tantalizing secular humanistic preachments and get back into the word so that Holy Spirit will unfold the revelation of the true Kingdom to us upon whom the end of the age has come!

General Introduction to Doctrines of the New Covenant

In the core Kingdom business of study of the Word, the Alpha Church gave no room for private interpretation of scriptures to suit worldly culture or personal perspectives of saints.

2 Peter 1:20-21 (KJV) *20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. 21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*

Certain truths were held as basic and essential to the embrace of the full gospel message. Those who departed from those central, essential truths were regarded as heretics and unworthy of fellowship

Titus 3:9-11 (KJV) *9 But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain. 10 A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; 11 Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.*

Doctrinal Purity was as essential to the success of the Alpha Church as the quality of relationship the saints enjoyed with Elohim through Yeshua their Mediator!

Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry defines doctrines thus: "Doctrine is a set of accepted beliefs held by a group. In religion, it is the set of true beliefs that define the parameters of that belief system. Hence, there is true doctrine and false doctrine relative to each belief set. In Christianity, for example, a true Biblical doctrine is that there is only one God in all existence (Isaiah 43:10, 44:6, 8). A false doctrine is that there is more than one God in all existence."

Kingdom Perspective of Doctrines

From a Kingdom point of view, Doctrines of the Word are of great import.

I. They refer to the specific truths which when known and embraced empower saints with the right understanding of all things which pertain to life and godliness. This includes, for instance, issues such as Who Elohim Is and His manifestation as Father, Son and Holy Spirit throughout the New Covenant.

II. It also includes terms of His relationship with humans as sons in the earth realm. Truths concerning how He wants us to live and rewards for obedience – both in time and eternity are all doctrines which saints need to know and live out. Ignorance of any truth is no virtue but will lead to a sub-optimized

spiritual life. Getting to know the full counsel of the Word therefore is needful for walking in fullness of liberty!

Hosea 4:6 (KJV) *6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.*

John 8:32 (KJV) *32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*

III. In this regard, it is important to note that specific truths within the Constitution deal with various aspects of Kingdom Life. Instructions for Receiving of right doctrines lead to renewal of the mind, transformation of the mind and change in the walk of saints (their relationship with Yahweh as a loving Father rather than a distant, 'unknown God'). The outcome is 'Good works' or lifestyles which decorate the gospel in such a way that sinners can see the clear difference between them and saints.

Ephesians 2:10 (KJV) *10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*

1 Timothy 2:9-10 (KJV) *9 In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; 10 But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.*

Titus 3:8 (KJV) *8 This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.*

It is needful for the entire Body of Yeshua to come to a place of unity based on receiving the full counsel of the Holy Scriptures, rather than cherry picking of what various groups want. There may be some truths which a saint or minister may not understand yet at any point in time. But if our hearts are open, free of dogmatic positions of denominations, Holy Spirit will bring clarity and understanding. That is why childlike faith is of great price in the sight of Elohim.

Matthew 18:2-4 (KJV) *2 And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, 3 And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. 4 Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*

Understanding Basis of The New Covenant

Before we delve into specific doctrines of the New Covenant, it is needful to correct a general misconception fostered by Replacement Theology which sought to cast it as a Covenant for Gentiles. Elohim had an exclusive Covenant with Israel which was written on tablets of stone and given through Moses as the Torah. The people were required to be circumcised and observe all Laws in the Torah to walk in it. But because of the fallen human nature, the Law became an instrument of convicting them of their sins. They were required to sacrifice animals and birds to obtain temporary reprieve. After consistently failing to keep the Old Covenant, Elohim in His mercy announced through Prophet Jeremiah that He would make a New Covenant with Israel

Jeremiah 31:31-33 (KJV) *31 Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: 32 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day*

that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: 33 But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

That New Covenant required a better mediator of Divine origin and nature to fulfil and seal it. Yeshua, Jesus came as that mediator to first fulfil the Old Covenant and then inaugurate the New with His Own Blood that was shed.

Matthew 5:17 (KJV) *17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.*

Secondly, He came to inaugurate the New Covenant sealed in His Blood

Luke 22:20 (KJV) *20 Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you*

Hebrews 9:15 (KJV) *15 And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.*

Universal Access to Elohim Through the Shed Blood

Whereas the Old was limited to Israel and the Hebrews (and all proselytes who converted from Gentiles), the New Covenant is a universal one through which all humanity has opportunity for reconciliation with Elohim by the Blood of Yeshua

Hebrews 10:19-23 (KJV) *19 Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20 By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; 21 And having an high priest over the house of God; 22 Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)*

Galatians 3:26-29 (KJV) *26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

Colossians 3:9-11 (KJV) *9 Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; 10 And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: 11 Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.*

The New Covenant offers all humans the opportunity for a holistic relationship with Elohim. The basis of the relationship is three-fold:

i. The Blood shed by Yeshua

ii. The ministry of Holy Spirit who alone convicts all sinners of all cultures and races of Sin, righteousness and Judgement and seals all who respond in faith for the Day of glory

iii. All who are part of the Covenant are to live by the Word of Elohim articulated from Genesis to Revelation. Saints are born again by the Word as 1 Peter 1: 23 says.

The Word is to be received as a whole not in part. Saints are to abide in Yeshua and allow Him (the Word to abide in them) and receive His Grace to live by the Word. This is made possible through the inner ministry of Holy Spirit, not by humanistic struggles.

D. Broad Division of Doctrines in the New Covenant

In the New Covenant, there are broad divisions of source of doctrines. These are:

i. The Life, Message and Works of Yeshua and instructions for godly living derived therefrom

From the beginning of the Church, the universality of the Word for all saints to observe was stated as a reality because the Apostles preached and taught on Yeshua and the Kingdom He preached. This was documented in the four Gospels – Matthew Mark, Luke and John. The Alpha Church was substantially grounded in what the Apostles saw and heard concerning Him and His assignment:

Acts 2:41 (KJV) *41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. 42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

ii. Articulation of the Wider dimension of the Covenant based on fuller revelation of what happened at the Cross

The fuller message of why Yeshua went to the Cross and what He accomplished was specifically granted to Paul the Apostle. He received by Holy Spirit the deeper and wider implications of the Cross, reality of the One New Man of Elohim in the earth realm functioning as Kingdom Citizens and ambassadors on assignment as His sons. Paul stressed to those who heard him the reality of what was committed to his trust by Election.

Ephesians 2:10-22 (KJV) *10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. 11 Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; 12 That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: 13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. 14 For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; 15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; 16 And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: 17 And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. 18 For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. 19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; 20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; 21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: 22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.*

Ephesians 3:1-12 (KJV) *1 For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, 2 If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: 3 How that by revelation he made known unto me*

the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, 4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) 5 Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; 6 That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: 7 Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. 8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; 9 And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: 10 To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, 11 According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: 12 In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.

Paul also received revelation of how the Lord purposed to ensure ultimate redemption of saints – both the dead and living at end of the age 1 Corinthians 15; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11; 2 Thessalonians 2. Without studying and understanding the Pauline epistles, a minister will have great deficiency in apprehending the New Covenant.

iii. End of the Age and World to Come

John the beloved was divinely elected to receive extensive revelation of how good would triumph over evil at end of the age; the subjugation of the world system; judgement of Satan and all the wicked dead of all ages; the Millennial reign of Yeshua when He would reign to fulfil the desire of the ages for the earth realm and thereafter; a sneak peek into endless eternity when the mystery of Elohim would be accomplished as triumphant saints live in close proximity with Him forever while the wicked suffer in the Lake of Fire for eternity. Paul and Peter were also used to bring forth revelation of some aspects of end of the age.

E. The Danger of Sectarian/Denominational Approach to the New Covenant

Denominationalism is rooted in the dangerous habit of cherry picking of scriptures and clinging to certain revelations and experiences while excluding others. In the end, denominationalism creates Sectarianism which foundationally divides the Body and wars against Unity of the Faith. In the process, it makes human leaders and their opinions/perspectives have more weight than Yeshua and causes saints to be inherently dysfunctional. By cherry picking scriptures and preferring some to others, denominations essentially create dogmas and traditions of men for their followers.

But let us note with charity that while the default position of Elohim seems to be to call all His remnant out of the divisive culture of denominationalism, there are those He will permit to remain in such circles with a specific assignment to influence many for good. Such people will be liberated by Truth and will remain in denominational churches as instruments of empowerment. His Light in them will be instrument of opening the eyes of those in blindness.

F. Truth – The Whole Counsel in the New Covenant is Key to True Unity!

The Lord deems unity of His Body to be so important that He interceded earnestly to the Father in John 17. That unity is made possible when saints believe the whole counsel of Elohim in the Holy Scriptures and see it the way He sees it as Constitution of the Kingdom.

1 Corinthians 1:10 (KJV) *10 Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.*

It is through diligent study of the Word, under unction of Holy Spirit that those called to leadership can discern and understand all the Body of Truth therein.

2 Timothy 2:15 (KJV) *15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

When all ministries, congregations and saints are exposed to the same Body of Truth, true unity of Faith will ensure, regardless of where saints are located or the names of their local assemblies or networks.

Ephesians 4:1-6 (KJV) *1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, 2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; 3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; 5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*

What this means is that a brand-new day will dawn in the earth realm when all saints begin to feed on the Word from their infant years till the day they complete their earthly pilgrimage

2 Timothy 3:15-17 (KJV) *15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*

From the next chapter, we will proceed to see what doctrines are and why they are to be of universal acceptance and application in the Body of Yeshua as Constitution of the Kingdom.

Review Questions

1. Why is it important that our understanding of the Kingdom should be rooted in the Word as inspired or illuminated by Holy Spirit?
2. What is your personal take away from this chapter?
3. Can you be transparent and share what you will do differently because of what you learnt in this chapter?

Chapter 29

Glorious Truths & Fundamental C's

Ingredients which shaped life of saints in the Alpha Church and their Outcomes

The Alpha Church was a remarkable success in various facets of assessment. Whether in terms of quality of life the saints lived relative to their unbelieving families, friends and neighbors or in terms of rapid growth of their numbers, they were an extraordinary force for good which upended cultures of their day.

By revelation and comparing scriptures with scriptures, we believe that the thing which made that difference remarkable was their whole-hearted embrace of the ***Lordship of Yeshua; acceptance of the whole counsel of scriptures as their life compass and the abiding presence of Holy Spirit Who was Teacher, Guide and Comforter.*** In other words, with the same Holy Spirit Who conceived Yeshua in the womb of Mary and endued Him with power from heaven at the Baptism of John, Divinity was present in the life of all saints!

While the apostles who walked with Yeshua for 3 and half years grappled with their senses concerning the awesome reality that He was indeed Elohim made Flesh to dwell among them and while cultural blocks of their Hebraic identity restrained their ability to launch forth into the then known world, Yeshua did not wait perpetually. He came down to the earth realm and personally elected a special vessel to take the Great Commission to new heights (Acts 9: 1-21). That was Saul of Tarsus who became Paul. Here was a man who sat at the feet of Gamaliel, one of the leading Scholars of his day (Acts 4: 34-40); here was a man so full of zeal for Judaism that he was an accessory to the martyrdom of Stephen who saw himself as mandated by Elohim to destroy the saints of his day for disregarding the Torah. A few things about his biography may help us to apprehend where he came from:

Philippians 3:4-11 (KJV) *4 Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: 5 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; 6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. 7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. 8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, 9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: 10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; 11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.*

With entry of Paul, the Gospel programme ascended to new heights and became rooted in deeper degrees of Truth. The Holy Word of the New Covenant was presented in specific building blocks which could produce clear outcomes of transformed hearts and renewed minds both among Hebrews/Jews and Gentiles. It is significant that out of the 27 Books in the New Covenant, Holy Spirit used Paul alone to bring forth 14 or more than 50 percent! These are Epistles to the Romans; 1 and 2 Corinthians;

Galatians; Ephesians; Philippians; Colossians; 1 & 2 Thessalonians; 1 & 2 Timothy; Titus; Philemon and Hebrews. (Some scholars dispute his authorship of Hebrews, but we are persuaded it was him).

In strategic terms, Holy Spirit used Paul to minister the Word to them in such a way that some Glorious Truths were released to nurture the Alpha Church to maturity. Individuals and Congregations which received, studied and understood the epistles did so through meditation and prayer, until it became an integral part of their lives. We will share here a synopsis of 16 of those Truths. If the Lord leads, we will study them in detail as the full Course.

#.1. Grace. It is by Grace that sinners are saved through Faith they exercise in the finished work of Yeshua. Grace is also the life of Yahweh in Yeshua and His strength that is the basis of the new life of the redeemed. Without Grace, saints will live a dry religious life free of the vitality that comes from their vibrant relationship with the Father. Grace is manifested in Mercy and Favor which sets saints apart from their contemporaries and on a higher pedestal of glory.

Ephesians 2:1, 4-5, 8-9 (KJV) *1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;*

4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved);

8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

#.2. Election. Salvation did not just happen. Well before foundation of the world, Elohim had chosen them in Yeshua out of His love and mercy to be part of His glorious family in the earth realm. Though this has been His plan for all, the paradox is only the remnant actually responds to this Divine lifeline! Election is based on the reality that Incarnation of Yeshua was not a plan B after Adam and Eve sinned. Well before humans were created, He had offered Himself as propitiation and therefore slain before time as Revelation 13:8 says. For this reason, all who were saved considered it a privilege from Elohim which was not to be toyed with in any way.

Ephesians 1:3-6 (KJV) *3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: 4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: 5 Having pre-destinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.*

Embracing Election as a Divine privilege opened them up to also embrace all that they encountered as permitted by an All Knowing and Ever-Present Father for their good. Remembering the Words of Yeshua concerning Suffering, they did not squirm, moan or groan when they encountered Rejection or Persecution.

Romans 8:29-30 (KJV) *29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*

#.3. Redemption. They understood that saints are redeemed through the blood that was shed at the cross of Calvary. He gave His life so that saints may live! The Blood of Yeshua paid the price for sin of Adam and Eve.

Ephesians 1:7 (KJV) *7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;*

Romans 3:24 (KJV) *24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:*

#.4. Justification and Righteousness. This is the pronouncement that seals the deal of translation from sinner to saint for those who truly repent of their sins. It is the act of being counted blameless with no record of past sins in heaven as they were truly blotted out by the Blood. The outcome is peace with Yahweh and a good conscience free of guilt because there is no record of the past that was fully atoned for on the Cross.

Romans 3:24 (KJV) *24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:*

Romans 3:28 (KJV) *28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.*

Romans 5:1 (KJV) *1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:*

Romans 5:9 (KJV) *9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.*

Justification is the basis of Righteousness!

Romans 3:21-22 (KJV) *21 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; 22 Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:*

Romans 3:25-26 (KJV) *25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; 26 To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*

#.5. New Creation. Though there are billions of people on planet earth, those who are the true members of the family of Elohim and citizens of His Kingdom are so because they are His New Creation in the earth realm. There is a change of nature that occurs within their innermost being – the spirit man where the Elohim type of life replaces the Old which was born in sin and ruled by Satan.

2 Corinthians 5:17 (KJV) *17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*

Ephesians 2:1-4 (KJV) *1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; 2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: 3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. 4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,*

#.6. Adoption. Here, the former sinner and enemy of Yahweh is made a member of His family and translated or conveyed into the Kingdom. Our adoption begins as children and progresses ultimately to

sons. Son-ship speaks of maturity so that we take responsibility for maintaining the estate of our Father in the earth realm.

Romans 8:15 (KJV) *15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.*

Ephesians 1:5 (KJV) *5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,*

#.7. Position. Based on what happened at the Cross, the saint has a shift in position. Whereas he/she was a full earthling, there is now a paradigm shift by which though still physically in the earth realm, the spirit-man of the redeemed is seated with Yeshua in heavenly places.

Ephesians 2:4-6, 9 (KJV) *4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) 6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.*

#.8. The Mobile Temple of Holy Spirit. The obverse side of the truth in #.7 is the reality that saints are mobile Temples indwelt by Ruach ha Chodesh, Holy Spirit. In this setting, they literally carry Him wherever they go, and He will show up if they accept this truth by faith. The analogy is the Ark of Testimony which Israel physically transported whenever they moved camp.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (KJV) *19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? 20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.*

#.9. Security. The redeemed of Yeshua have a double layer of security in Him and Yahweh that they need to know and walk in. As this truth sank in, fear was automatically erased out of their lives. This enabled them to be unmoved by whatever they encountered, including Martyrdom.

Colossians 3:1-3 (KJV) *1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. 2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.*

#.10. Dual Citizenship. Saints are in effect, dual citizens. They are first citizens of the Kingdom of heaven while they are planted as its Ambassadors in specific nations in the earth realm. Their primary loyalty is to Yeshua their redeemer and there is absolutely no question that His word rules their lives. Yet His word requires saints to love, respect and honour temporal leaders of their earthly nations and obey laws, except where such will lead them to sin, in which case they become conscientious objectors, doing so with great grace (Philippians 3:20-21);

1 Peter 2:11-15 (KJV) *11 Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; 12 Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. 13 Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; 14 Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. 15 For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:*

#.11: Show piece of Elohim. The redeemed of Yeshua are the showpiece of Yahweh who He wants to showcase. Their manifestation as His sons in the earth realm both in the now and in the world to come is something He yearns to bring to pass because it demonstrates His goodness

Ephesians 2:10 (KJV) *10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*

#.12. Guaranteed Outcomes. Saints are guaranteed that while on their earthly pilgrimage, if they remain in the center of the will of their heavenly Father and trust Him with their future, all things will work together for their good and are therefore part of the process for their maturation and perfection.

Romans 8:28-32 (KJV) *28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. 29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. 31 What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? 32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*

Romans 8:35-39 (KJV) *35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. 37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. 38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

#.13. Walk by Faith, not by sight. Saints begin the eternal journey by Faith and continue therein. By Faith they can relate with the Supreme Spirit Being that Elohim Is.

2 Corinthians 5:7 (KJV) *7 (For we walk by faith, not by sight:)*

Hebrews 10:35-39 (KJV) *35 Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. 36 For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. 37 For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. 38 Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. 39 But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.*

In effect, Prayer is the vehicle through which saints release their Faith as they communicate with their heavenly Father on a spirit to Spirit basis!

Mark 11:22-24 (KJV) *22 And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. 23 For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. 24 Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.*

#.14. Inheritance. Sons have an inheritance from their Father. It is the full benefits of being in Yeshua, Jesus in time and in eternity. They are the Covenant Blessings of Calvary cross which Satan uses ignorance to offer them pseudo-blessings such as he did to Eve in Eden.

Ephesians 1:3 (KJV) *3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ*

Romans 8:31-32 (KJV) *31 What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? 32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*

2 Peter 1:3 (KJV) *3 According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:*

These are gifts of grace to be received, appreciated and appropriated by Faith. All saints are to walk in them and by so doing, announce to people within their spheres of influence whose they are and where they are going. Paul spoke of this reality with confidence in a tough situation.

Acts 27:23 (KJV) *23 For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve,*

#.15. Sealed unto Day of Redemption. In consideration of the awesome promises of eternal life and inheritance in the hereafter, it is needful to note that Elohim did not just state His intent. He went further to seal the deal of eternal life in saints by the Person of His Own Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 1:13 (KJV) *13 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,*

Out of the estimated 7.5 (+ or -) Billion people on earth, only those who He Himself knows as truly redeemed by the Blood of Yeshua have this seal of Holy Spirit!

2 Timothy 2:19 (KJV) *19 Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.*

Without any shadow of doubt, there is need for repentance by leaders so that the true Kingdom Church can arise as we humbly accept them by faith! They represent the clear and incontrovertible evidence that former sinners have become the new creation in Yeshua.

#.16. Delegated Authority of Yeshua, Ambassadors of the Kingdom

Saints are not just redeemed to fold their hands and wait for the Day of the Lord. That is one of the errors Christian Religion foisted upon 'church members' of various denominations. This theological error has crippled many saints to live 'normal' lives. Saints in the Alpha Church understood clearly that they were saved to be instruments of saving others (2 Corinthians 5:17-19) and making disciples of all nations (Matthew 28: 18-20) until the Gospel of the Kingdom accomplished its assignment in time when the King will return. Matthew 24:14. In that regard, they took it as given that all gifts, talents and resources placed inside of them and within their reach were assets with which to occupy, until He returns to judge and reward (Luke 19:11-27)

Acts 1:8 (KJV) *8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*

The profound nature of these Truths has impacted those who have been open to the full gospel of the Kingdom ever since they were inspired and written.

Believers who have not been taught and who are therefore not walking in the reality of these gracious Truths are engaged in various degrees of Christian religion. When saints are not taught these truths, the centers of their lives move away from Yeshua and gravitate to the human leaders in their lives. This creates room for Nimrod-type diversion of their destinies to serve the pecuniary interests of ministers and ministries. At the root of why many 'Christians' are ever learning and never able to come to knowledge of truth is that they are fed with Milk contaminated with dogmas of humans and traditions of sects which cause them to be soul tied to Preachers or Religious organizations.

Catalysts of Growth in Grace: The 6 Fundamental C's

The effects of the Truth they embraced and imbibed transformed their hearts and renewed their minds. They responded in a specific manner which is captured fully in another Course of Global School of Ministry called the 6 Fundamental C's. If the Lord leads, we will study the full Course as part of the Program.

However, let us share a brief overview for illustrating the incredible life of saints in the Alpha Church period. For ease of reference and to foster simplicity of application, the six core responses of the truly redeemed to the unlimited love of the Father in Yeshua begin with the Letter C:

1. Conversion – This is the change of mind and heart arising from true repentance and salvation. This is the fruit of genuine holistic repentance. Without Conversion, an individual is still in sin. Mere repentance of any single thought, word or deed that one was convicted of will not do. As we will see, Conversion is that point at which the encounter with Yeshua, Jesus is so real that it manifests as new life in Him.

Anchor Scripture:

Acts 3:19 (KJV) *19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.*

Those who are truly converted bring forth the fruits of repentance. They manifest a deep and unconditional love of Elohim and gratitude for what Yeshua accomplished on the Cross. They also love the brethren and all humans.

2. Consecration – This is the act of complete surrender to Yahweh to live for Him wholly. Those who enjoy the experiential reality of all that Yahweh offers them in Yeshua are those who die to self-interests and are wholly consecrated to live for His supreme purpose. When they are yielded totally to Him like this, His Zoë life (nature and life of Elohim) flows through them. Psalms 50:5, Matthew 16:24-26; Galatians 2:20.

Anchor Scripture:

Romans 12:1 (KJV) *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*

3. Commitment – This is the act of single minded pursuit of the Kingdom and its righteousness as the primary goal of the redeemed on planet earth. This single-minded pursuit of the Kingdom un-clutters

their lives to release a sense of Divine Purpose and strategic direction. In this mode, the saint is delivered from the clutches of Satan, the deceptive attractions of the world system and the ambitions of the self-nature. With this deliverance, the glory of the aroma of Yeshua, Jesus in them is unleashed, making them the flames of fire they are supposed to be: passionate and burning with zeal for His glory in all situations.

Anchor Scriptures:

Matthew 6:19-33-34 (KJV) *33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. 34 Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*

Saints in this mode become tasteful as salt and penetrating as light which dispels darkness. By being committed to the King and His Kingdom, they cannot be comfortable inside the stifling boxes of religion called denominations!

4. Communion – Communion has two dimensions. On the one hand, it is the act of being in continual fellowship with Yahweh; conversing with and seeking directions from Him in all things.

Anchor Scripture:

1 Thessalonians 5:17 (KJV) *17 Pray without ceasing.*

It also describes a life of true fellowship based on love with other saints who are citizens of the Kingdom. This happens when saints are bonded together in Yeshua as Head and in each other, releasing and receiving Grace for building up of the whole Body. True communion is possible when the Fivefold – Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers – are fully engaged in ministering to the saints in an organic, rather than organizational paradigm

Anchor Scriptures:

Ephesians 4:15-16 (KJV) *15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: 16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.*

5. Call – This states the New Covenant reality that ALL (not a few or some) saints in the Kingdom are called by Yahweh to serve as priests and kings, ministering to Him, His people; fulfilling the transformational assignment of the church in our environment as the salt and light and fully invested in continuation of His Mission Statement to seek and save the Lost– Luke 19:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; 1 Peter 2:9-12; Matthew 5:13–16; John 15:16; John 15:16, 1 Peter 2:9 and Revelations 1:6

Anchor Scriptures:

Ephesians 4:1 (KJV) *1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,*

2 Timothy 1:9 (KJV) *9 Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,*

The Priesthood after the Order of Melchizedeck to which all saints are called is totally different in nature and form from the Nimrodic and Levitical Priesthoods that are popular in Christendom. The Melchizedeck order is universal while the other two are exclusive preserves of a priestly caste which act as mediators between a 'holy God' and an 'unholy people'

1 Peter 2:9 (KJV) *9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light;*

6. Clinging – As John 15:1-8 articulates, as long as we cling to Yeshua as our life by abiding in Him and giving His Word space to be grafted, made flesh and abide in us, our will easily give way to His will. In the Pauline epistles, there is the revelation that as we die to self and depend on Holy Spirit, surrendering our will to Him by clinging to His Person and voice, He will use our beings to release the quantum of Grace that is needed at any given time. As long as He guides us in all things, our Salvation will not only bear abundant fruits but more importantly, we will grow in Yeshua to live like Him as sons of Elohim

Anchor Scripture:

Romans 8:9-16 (KJV) *9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. 10 And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 11 But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. 12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. 13 For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. 14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. 15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. 16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:*

Knowing the full scope of truths embodied in the 6 C's has a radical effect on saints.

Review Questions

1. Please share which of the 16 Glorious Truths particularly touched you
2. Please share which of the 6 Fundamental C's particularly touched you
3. If you lead a group of saints (whether Cell fellowship, Congregation) or minister on Social Media, what would you do with this chapter?

Chapter 30

The Hebraic/Jewish Factor

As we saw in a previous chapter, the Alpha Church suffered the same kind of rejection that its Head, Yeshua faced at the hands of those who considered themselves Custodians of the Torah and the Old Covenant. Those religious zealots, even when they bowed to the superiority of Yeshua over Moses and embraced the New Covenant often struggled with ingrained prejudices against Gentiles who were considered 'Unclean'.

The First Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 resolved the reality that Gentiles do not need to be converted to Judaism (through the rite of Circumcision) before they can be saved and live as saints. As we saw in both the epistles to Galatians and Philippians, Paul had occasions to warn of the leaven of Judaizing.

The Alpha Church in Acts of the Apostles was a spiritual entity dominated by people of Hebraic/Jewish stock. With their foundational understanding of the Torah and its hundreds of rules and rituals for ceremonial holiness, they fully appreciated the revelations brought forth through Paul about how the Grace of Elohim released through embrace of the sacrifice of Yeshua on the Cross as the Ultimate Lamb by Faith settled the Sin question once and for all.

The reality that Hebrews/Jews were a scattered people group starting from the days of Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon became a hidden asset: it enabled the gospel message to be conveyed across the length and breadth of the then known world in record time. Let us remember this account of the racial/ethnic mix of people who were in Jerusalem for both the Feast of Passover and Pentecost (which was 50 days later)

Acts 2:5-11 (KJV) *5 And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. 6 Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. 7 And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? 8 And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? 9 Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, 10 Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, 11 Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.*

It is important to note that as Peter made the altar call on that eventful day, most of those Hebrews/Jews from across the world were among the 3000 who were saved:

Acts 2:39-41 (KJV) *39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. 40 And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. 41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.*

At end of the Feasts, these new converts carried the gospel to their various locations. Furthermore, let us remember that apart from Simon the Canaanite in Mark 3:14, all the first 12 Apostles of Yeshua were Hebrews/Jews. The vibrant, powerful Church in Acts of the Apostles was essentially dominated by

ministers of Hebraic/Jewish stock. With their understanding of the Law and its limitations in the life of humans begotten in Sin, these brethren did a remarkable work of Evangelism and Missions. As we saw in an earlier chapter, the then know world was massively impacted by the gospel

In a twist of fortunes known by Elohim and permitted for the nobler cause of making room for the Gentiles, brethren of Hebraic/Jewish stock at some point in history of the early Church decreased in openness to and fervor for the gospel. One of the least appreciated portions of Scripture is this account where Paul warned those of his racial/ethnic stock that a shift of the center of gravity of the gospel was imminent:

Acts 28:23-29 (KJV) *23 And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening. 24 And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not. 25 And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, 26 Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: 27 For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. 28 Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it. 29 And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves.*

With that declaration of Paul, the baton an arrow head of the gospel moved from the House of Shem to the House of Japheth! Locationally, the center of gravity moved from Jerusalem to Antioch (Acts 13) and had now landed in Rome, chief land of the Gentiles who ruled the world. It was in Rome that both Paul, leading Apostle to the Gentiles and Peter who led the mandate to the Hebraic/Jewish stock ended their lives and ministry.

One of the greatest Sins of Christian Religion is the spirit of Anti-Semitism it unleashed upon the world. When Rome got wedded to the larger wing of the Church, it needed to blot out remembrance of the Hebraic Identity of Yeshua and the Gospel. In a sense, this approach is understandable: human Conquerors are not gracious to write history in such a way that favors those they conquered. Theologians of Rome therefore needed to construct a theology which essentially suppressed the Hebraic/Jewish components.

Interestingly, the Protestant Reformation followed this same path as we will see later in the Course. It was said of Martin Luther that he had an abiding dislike of Jews and some of his writings reflected that sentiment. For Protestant Scholars, including him, Elohim rejected the Hebrews/Jews when they rejected Yeshua. Accordingly, all the promises of Elohim for Israel were inherited by the Christian Church (Gentile dominated, of course).

Paul and Refutation of Replacement Theology

Unfortunately, these postulations by both Rome and its Protestant children fly in the face of Truth! One of the outcomes of the election of Paul as lead Apostle to the Gentiles was to roundly refute the creeping strain of anti-Semitism in the Alpha Church as Gentiles became accepted into the fold.

Holy Spirit used Paul to produce one of the most detailed refutations of Replacement Theology and a ringing warning against the spirit of anti-Semitism in three powerful chapters of the epistle to the Romans (9, 10, 11). Let us see the central thesis he advanced therein:

1. The Hebrews were elected above all peoples to be partakers of the Covenant
2. With time, they veered into Religion and missed out on vibrant relationship with Elohim
3. That backsliding did not take Elohim by surprise. He allowed it to happen
4. The reason for allowing the fall of Hebrews/Jews from the Gospel was to make room for the peoples of Gentile stock to come into covenant relationship with Him and be members of His family in the earth realm
5. The Gentiles were warned not to be conceited and gloat over fall of Hebrews/Jews from Grace but rather be in awe that room was thereby made for them
6. Saints redeemed out of Gentile stock should invest in Salvation of the Hebrews/Jews
7. In the fullness of Time, the programme of Elohim for the Gentiles would end and the attention of Elohim would shift to the Hebrews/Jews.

Romans 11:7-16 (KJV) *7 What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded. 8 (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day. 9 And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompence unto them: 10 Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway. 11 I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. 12 Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness? 13 For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: 14 If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them. 15 For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? 16 For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches....*

Romans 11:25-29 (KJV) *25 For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. 26 And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: 27 For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. 28 As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the father's sakes. 29 For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.*

Romans 11:33-34 (KJV) *33 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! 34 For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?*

Urgent Assignment: Return of Hebrews/Jews to the Fold

In that regard, a matter of urgent need in the programme of Elohim for the earth realm is for His children of Hebraic/Jewish stock to embrace Yeshua as Lord and Saviour. It is the good pleasure of

Elohim that in Yeshua, Jesus are all that His countrymen after the Flesh need to recapture their pride of place in the programme of Elohim for humanity. The entire essence of recruiting Matthew to be biographer of Yeshua was to document in clear detail the reality that He fulfilled the various Messianic prophecies which were well known to Israel. That is why this phrase 'that it might be fulfilled' was a key feature of the writings of Matthew.

Pastor Jeremiah Shepherd of God's Promise Restoration Center in Kilgore, East Texas makes the connection between the fulfilled prophecies concerning Yeshua and the need for Israel to repent as a nation and people to receive their King Whose coming is now nearer than when we first believed. Let us see what Elohim showed him a few weeks ago:

"This teaching on the fulfilled prophecies of Yeshua and the things that Israel's leaders shouldn't have missed is profound both for them as a nation as well as us in the end times. Within their story is great revelation that often goes overlooked. David is so much more than a historical king of united Israel. Through various scriptures, the Word reveals that he is actually the perfect icon and representation of the sins of Israel and God's continued mercy and purpose towards them as an elect nation. There are many scriptures which deeply connect the life of David to the tumultuous history of Israel, but for the sake of this excerpt, we'll briefly cover a few.

The first connection exists in to the primary sins that David committed. As is known, he lusted after Uriah's wife, committed adultery with her, then acted in deceit to cover it up, eventually leading to murder. It is the spiritual meaning of these three sins that connects David to Israel - Adultery, Deceit, and Murder. Spiritually speaking, Israel committed these exact 3 sins in their dealings with Yeshua and His proposed covenant to them. They committed spiritual adultery (idolatry) by seeking premature rewards through worldly alliances and selfish agendas. Then, they acted in deceit through their attempts to mask their murderous jealousy of Yeshua. Then they committed murder by sneakily conspiring to kill Jesus through Roman rule.

In fact, in 2 Samuel 12:7-12, The Lord's curse upon David for these three sins is practically the same as the curse upon Israel for killing Jesus. It reads as follows:

2 Samuel 12:7-12 (KJV) *7 And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; 8 And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things. 9 Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. 10 Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. 11 Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. 12 For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun."*

He says the sword wouldn't depart from his house, that evil would rise from within his own house, and that his wives and people would be taken and given to his neighbor. These are the same punishments carried out by God upon the nation of Israel. To this day, they always find themselves amid war and they

also have been scattered abroad throughout much of their history. Also, you will notice in 2 Samuel 12:14, that David's firstborn child even dies because of his sin. This reflects the truth that Christ, the firstborn and only begotten of the father, had to die for the sins of Israel and of the world. Then, the very next child born was Solomon, who built the greatest temple unto the Lord, symbolizing the resurrected life of Christ who has assembled the New Covenant temple in which we are all living stones, and He dwells within us.

In addition to this, 2 Samuel 12:13, David's response is HIGHLY important. Rather than deny his sin like his predecessor Saul, he admitted his guilt and owned his sin and shame. Therefore, Elohim mercifully proclaims through the prophet Nathan that David "shalt not die". In other words, he would be punished but not totally destroyed. In yet another connection, these exact same words are prophesied over Israel numerous times, including Jeremiah 30:11, where he promises to make an end to all other nations, but not make a full end of Israel.

It reads,

Jeremiah 30:11 (KJV) *11 For I am with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished."*

At the end of it all, most of the book of Psalms is a transparent expression of David's humiliation and repentance followed by the great mercies of God. In fact, in another connection, Jesus gives the Pharisees a clue of this at the end of Matthew 23, in verse 39. He says,

Matthew 23:39 (KJV) *39 For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.*

These are the EXACT WORDS spoken by David in gratitude of God's mercy in Psalms. Notice what David speaks in revelation of the loving mercies of Yahweh:

Psalms 118:1-6, 26 (KJV) *1 O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: because his mercy endureth for ever. 2 Let Israel now say, that his mercy endureth for ever. 3 Let the house of Aaron now say, that his mercy endureth for ever. 4 Let them now that fear the LORD say, that his mercy endureth for ever. 5 I called upon the LORD in distress: the LORD answered me, and set me in a large place. 6 The LORD is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me? 26 Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the LORD: we have blessed you out of the house of the LORD.*

In these verses, David testifies of the unending mercy of the Father and then admonishes Israel, the priests of Aaron and all who acknowledge the Lord forever to proclaim this truth. Then in the attitude of humble repentance, David says,

Psalms 118:26 (KJV) *26 blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord,*

the same words Jesus proclaims later in Matthew 23:39. Yeshua was basically telling them in Matthew 23, although I just proclaimed all of these terrible woes to you Pharisees and those who adulterously treat my covenant, I still love you, and I will return again and revisit those who eventually and finally repent in their heart, just like your King David did.

The Duty of Care Gentile Saints owe the Hebraic/Jewish People and the nation of Israel

In the Western world, there is a new theological movement which drives Christians to support Israel in its survival against the bitter enemies in the Middle East. That narrative essentially takes attention of saints away from what Elohim considers most urgent: Bringing them back into their appointed place in His Gospel programme. The time has come to get it right with our priorities: spiritual realignment! Elohim has guaranteed no nation or group of nations can ever pluck Israel out of the land of Israel again.

To be able to help Hebrews/Jews, saints need to restore witnessing to get them ready to receive He Who is coming in the Name of the Lord!

Romans 11:17-24 (KJV) *17 And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; 18 Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. 19 Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. 20 Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: 21 For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. 22 Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. 23 And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again. 24 For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?*

Romans 11:30-32 (KJV) *30 For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: 31 Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. 32 For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all*

The time has come to make the main thing, the main thing: Preaching the gospel of Yeshua and the Kingdom in a targeted way to the Hebrews as a people and Israel as a nation backed by consistent, persistent intercession!

Romans 1:16-17 (KJV) *16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. 17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.*

Review Questions

1. Please share your main take away from this chapter.
2. Of all the things that saints redeemed out of Gentiles owe the Hebrews/Jews, which is most important

Chapter 31

Section C: The Clash of the Kingdoms

Introduction to Section C

In this section, we will receive from the Lord, an accurate biblical and historically sound narrative of the gospel, necessary to understand what should be done to complete the Reformation started in 1517.

Situating Rome as a critical Factor: The Worldly Kingdom which sought to destroy the Spiritual Kingdom!

One of the reasons why the Omega Church is a favored one, is the reality it has all cards, so to say, on the table. Whereas, the highly successful Alpha Church was an emergent one, spontaneously manifesting what Holy Spirit was doing. Those of us upon whom end of the age has come, have the added benefit of written history, both 'spiritual' and 'secular' from which we can see the 'whole picture.' When history and fresh 'Now' revelation of Holy Spirit gets into an embrace, the results are explosive.

About 600 years before Yeshua, Jesus was born, Elohim gave to His remnant of all ages to come, a panoramic view of history of the world. The idea was to enable His Own people of each generation to understand the times, so they could know how to respond. We need to revisit that revelation to appreciate the role the Kingdom would play in shaping world history when the long-promised Seed of the woman was eventually incarnated.

An Extract from MC-010 - Understanding the End Times: The Times of Gentiles

In the course of history, Israel had suffered captivity to both Egypt and Assyria. The repeated failure, of the people and nation, to live on the narrow road of being a peculiar treasure to Yahweh occasioned a harsh judgement. That judgement was a scattering of the people to various parts of the world under Gentile rulers who would treat them badly until the fullness of time when those dispersed would be gathered again for Israel to live, not just as a Sovereign nation, but to be the delight of the nations. It pleased Elohim to use a Gentile ruler, Nebuchadnezzar to reveal to Israel and humanity, how their phases of captivity to Gentiles will pan out.

The Book of Daniel is truly the most outstanding fulcrum from where various prophecies and revelations concerning times of the Gentiles are located. In it are a description of nations and kingdoms, past and present, that would impact Israel and subsequently Yeshua and His Kingdom Church. Revelations in the book of Daniel were fulfilled with pin point precision, so much that we can with great safety know the remaining prophecies will also be fulfilled in due course. For Israel as a nation and Hebrews as a people, rejection of Yeshua Ha Mashiach by their religious leaders meant the situation of Gentiles over lordship in one form or the other would remain in various forms until He returns in glory to deliver them from the final Gentile ruler; the Anti-Messiah or anti-Christ and restores the Kingdom with Jerusalem as capital.

The things of Elohim are mysterious! It is interesting He chose to reveal a panorama of Empires and Kingdoms which will rule the world to Nebuchadnezzar, a heathen King. It is also significant the natural mind of the monarch could not comprehend the dream and there was need for those who had access to the spiritual realm to step in. The failure of all the astrologers and magicians of Babylon to help Nebuchadnezzar is instructive:

Daniel 2:1-3 (KJV) *1 And in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams, wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him. 2 Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, for to shew the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king. 3 And the king said unto them, I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit was troubled to know the dream.*

Daniel 2:27-30 (KJV) *27 Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, The secret which the king hath demanded cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, shew unto the king; 28 But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these; 29 As for thee, O king, thy thoughts came into thy mind upon thy bed, what should come to pass hereafter: and he that revealeth secrets maketh known to thee what shall come to pass. 30 But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living, but for their sakes that shall make known the interpretation to the king, and that thou mightest know the thoughts of thy heart.*

1 Corinthians 2:14 (KJV) *14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

It had to take a spiritual man indeed who had access to the mind of Elohim to comprehend what heaven had shown Nebuchadnezzar. It can be safely said therefore, in Daniel and through him, Yahweh found a pure vessel through who He released a panoramic view of world history from his days till end of the age that is soon to be upon our generation by correct interpretation of the dream of Nebuchadnezzar.

Daniel 2:31-45 (KJV) *31 Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. 32 This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, 33 His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. 34 Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. 35 Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth. 36 This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king. 37 Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. 38 And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold. 39 And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. 40 And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. 41 And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. 42 And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. 43 And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay. 44 And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the*

kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. 45 Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.

Let us now outline what has been fulfilled concerning the various Gentile nations which ruled Israel in history, after Egypt and Assyria. Understanding the accuracy of prophecies and how they were accurately fulfilled enable the remnant to understand the times and be confident of what will be unfolding at end of the age. True to the interpretation Daniel gave to the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 2:36-45, and collateral visions Yahweh also gave him in Chapters 7 and 8, here is how history unfolded since then:

1. From 606 BC, **Babylon**, represented by the **Head of Gold** ruled the world and Israel till **539 BC**, a total of **67** years. Babylon was largely homogeneous, made up predominantly of Chaldeans of modern day Iraq area. King **Nebuchadnezzar** was the leading light.
2. From **539 BC**, **Medo-Persia**, represented by the **Chest and Arms of Silver** ruled the world and Israel till **331 BC**, a total of **208** years. It comprised of two main people groups, the Medes and Persians of the area around modern-day Iran. Its leading lights were, among others, Darius and Cyrus.
3. From **331 BC**, **Greco-Macedonian** empire, represented by the **Belly and Thighs of Bronze** ruled the world and Israel till **146 BC**, a total of **185** years. It was made up of the people of Greece and Macedonia in Southern Europe. Its leading light was Alexander the Great; son of Phillip of Macedon who conquered the world up to India, before he died at youthful age of 33.

The pin point accuracy of what was to come in the time of the Medo-Persia and Greco-Macedonian empires, still marvel students of history. If you read Daniel Chapter 7, 8, 10 and 11, you cannot but marvel at how history bore out the words uttered through Daniel by the Most High and His holy angelic messengers. The fact the life of Alexander the Great would be cut short and he would be succeeded by four of his generals were almost graphic. The rivalry of two of those Kingdoms which his generals established, Egypt ruled by Ptolemy I Soter (323-285 BC) and his heirs, and the Seleucid Kingdom ruled by Seleucus Nicator (311-280 BC) and his heirs was a major fact of life of their time.

How one of the rulers of the Seleucid Kingdom; Antiochus Epiphanes IV would become an enemy of the Most High and hater of Jews to the degree of defiling the Temple at Jerusalem with a sow (pig which is an unclean animal) and an Idol of the Greek god, Zeus was prophesied in Daniel Chapter 8;23-25 and Chapter 11:21-45.

4. From **146 BC**, **Rome**, represented by the **Legs of Iron** which crushed all other kingdoms before it, ruled the world and Israel till **476 AD**, a total of **622** years. The first Emperor of Rome was Augustus after whom the Roman Senate named the 8th month of the year, August. It was during his tenure as Caesar that the Kingdom of heaven invaded the earth realm with the Incarnation of Yeshua, Jesus.

Luke 2:1-7 (KJV) *1 And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. 2 (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) 3 And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. 4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) 5 To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. 6 And so it was, that, while they were there, the days*

were accomplished that she should be delivered. 7 And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

Why is this piece of information critical? It is because it provided a clear signal from where the process of recovery of the Kingdom; lost by Adam in the earth realm, would take a bearing; starting with manifestation of Yeshua as the Seed of the woman. If He was Seed of the Woman, it implied the actual process of restoration of the Kingdom would be in two phases:

- The Seed of the Woman speaks of the Humanity of He who would be the Lamb of Elohim to atone for Sins of the whole World. In this capacity, He would manifest as a human and activate the Kingdom as a Spiritual reality in the hearts of those who embrace Him and His message. This spiritual dimension of the Kingdom would subsist until the next phase. In this regard, Yeshua would serve as the Lamb of Elohim during the phase of life on earth in which the Legs of Iron – Roman Empire would reign on earth.
- In the fullness of time, He will return as King of Kings and Lord of Lords to vanquish the armies of the world system and establish the manifest Kingdom as a world-wide reality.

Revelation 11:15 (KJV) *15 and the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.*

His return would be when the strange kingdom described in Daniel 2:41-45 as ‘Feet of Clay and Iron’ would dominate the earth realm. In the in-cohesive world system, people are torn apart based on race, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic conditions, and political ideology to the degree the center of civilization as we know it, is defined by hatred and acrimony. Therefore, it cannot hold its unfolding in high definition in this generation.

Note that Rome was described by Daniel as the ‘Legs of Iron’. This speaks of the two parts of Roman strength which stamped out Kingdoms before it and totally re-defined the world.

4.1 The Political, Administrative and Military Juggernaut. Roman soldiers were so courageous and powerful they swarmed and overran all targets defined by their Generals with singleness of eye. They proceeded to set up administrative systems of government to rule those they conquered. In this way, Pax Romana or the Peace of Rome was spread across the then known world.

This ‘secular’ dimension of Rome was to play an extraordinarily significant role regarding the birth, life, and ministry of Yeshua. It was to stand as a colossus against the Kingdom which Yeshua proclaimed and is the Head. It was also responsible for trying to destroy the Church through assimilation and contamination.

4.2 The Roman Church. It was in Rome one of the greatest deeds on earth was done; union of Political Rome and the larger wing of Church of Yeshua, which was by then about 300 years on earth and had suffered untold persecution from Political Rome. By that union, the Alpha Church was effectively stopped and the true remnant was driven underground. What was presented to the world was: The Roman Church, which began to re-define the gospel to create Christendom or Christian Religion. To validate the Empire, this new religion promoted ‘Replacement theology’ by which the Hebraic Roots of the gospel were systematically taken away and replaced with Roman themes.

The Hebraic calendar contained a fairly accurate reading of times and seasons. It was first replaced with the Julian Calendar and later the Gregorian Calendar; promoting allegiance to Roman pantheons including Emperor adulation. For instance: July was named in honor of Julius Caesar and August was named in honor of Augustus Caesar (formerly Octavian). The month of September simply honors the concept of Seven; whereas in the Old Hebraic calendar, this season is part of Elul, up to 13th; the month which calls for repentance and preparing the heart for encounter with the Lord.

True to the prophecies of Daniel in Chapter 7; Rome re-defined the world so permanently the last empire before Jesus, will be basically its offspring, having a great measure of its DNA.

Understanding the Clash of Kingdoms

With the introduction, let us now see in greater detail how the Clash of the Kingdom of Heaven represented by Yeshua and His followers, clashed with the earthly kingdom of Rome. It is vital we do not misinterpret these historical truths to resent the Roman Empire or have an attitude of superiority to people from the region. Whatever was done by their leaders and officers were permitted by Elohim as instruments of fulfilling His already declared determinate counsel!

1 Corinthians 2:7-8 (KJV) *7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: 8 Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.*

1. The Roman Empire ruled the land of Israel when Yeshua was born as Luke 2:1-7 stated.
2. The Romans appointed King Herod to rule Judea when Yeshua was born. He epitomized the clash of kingdoms in graphic detail when he heard of the birth of Yeshua.

Matthew 2:1-13 (KJV) *1 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, 2 Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. 3 When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. 4 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. 5 And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, 6 And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel. 7 Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. 8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also. 9 When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. 10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. 11 And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense and myrrh. 12 And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way. 13 And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.*

3. **Yeshua lived all His life under Roman Rule.** Recognizing the reality that all temporal rulers exist by the permission of Elohim for the maintenance of law and order until the Kingdom is restored, Yeshua taught the people to submit to Roman authority

Matthew 22:15-21 (KJV) 15 Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk. 16 And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men. 17 Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not? 18 But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? 19 Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny. 20 And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? 21 They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.

Temple tax collectors who obviously had approval of the Imperial government once harassed him about payment. Though the Son of Elohim, he complied by asking Peter to get money from the mouth of a fish to pay for both them!

Matthew 17:24-27 (KJV) 24 And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute? 25 He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers? 26 Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free. 27 Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee.

4. The Roman Governor Pontius Pilate who tried and found Him innocent of all accusations; nevertheless, signed the 'Death warrant' without which Yeshua would not be crucified.

5. It was Roman Soldiers who carried out both the extreme torture and Crucifixion!

Matthew 27:27-66

6. It was Roman Soldiers who collected bribes from Religious leaders and tried to discredit the Resurrection (Matthew 28). This was clearly an attempt to destroy a cornerstone of the Gospel of the Kingdom as 1 Corinthians 15 explains.

7. The full might of Imperial Rome was deployed against spread of the Gospel.

The basis on which Rome became systematically hostile to the King and His Kingdom was first established in the formal indictment against Yeshua as follows;

John 19:12-15 (KJV) 12 And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar. 13 When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha 14 And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King! 15 But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar.

Matthew 27:37 (KJV) 37 And set up over his head his accusation written, This Is Jesus The King Of The Jews.

This includes but is not limited to these hostile acts against the Alpha Church:

7.1 Martyrdom of an uncountable number of leaders of the CHURCH, from James who was killed in Jerusalem, to Peter and Paul who were killed in Rome; leaders of the true Kingdom Church were hunted down and killed in gruesome circumstances including crucifixion, beheading and mauling by wild animals.

7.2 The Roman Empire was one vast killing field in which the blood of millions of saints were shed. Their only crime as that they believed in Yeshua and submitted to His Sovereign rule as King over their lives.

Acts 17:6 (KJV) *6 And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also;*

Get ready to comprehend that which is one of the Golden Keys: To understand the End of the Age! When we understand all these things, we will know what Elohim wants to see in the end time Church! He wants His Church to be unspotted from the spirit and practices of the world system!

Review Questions

1. Kindly summarize this chapter
2. What new thing (s) has the Father revealed to you through His Word in the chapter?

Chapter 32

Culture Clash with Rome: The Dominant Kingdom of Men

In Chapter 31, we examined the reality that the Alpha Church operated in the context of a clash of Kingdoms. The saints represented the Kingdom of Elohim which was firmly in their hearts by their wholehearted submission to the Sovereign rule of Yeshua. Yet, He did not take them out of the world which was rule by the Roman empire.

Everything about the harsh environment they would operate in was known by Yeshua, Jesus. Even in sending them on a dry run/test mission to Israel, Yeshua had hinted at the opposite forces at play:

Matthew 10:18-33 (KJV) *18 And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. 19 But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. 20 For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you. 21 And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. 22 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. 23 But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come. 24 The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. 25 It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household? 26 Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known. 27 What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops. 28 And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. 29 Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. 30 But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows. 32 Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. 33 But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.*

That is why Yeshua prayed earnestly to the Father to preserve them for the special assignment of completing what He came to initiate: Restoration of the Kingdom lost by Adam.

John 17:9-20 (KJV) *9 I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. 10 And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. 11 And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. 12 While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled. 13 And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. 14 I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. 18 As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. 19*

And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. 20 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

Let us posture before Elohim to receive deeper insight into why the Roman Empire was bitterly opposed to the Person and Church of Yeshua, Jesus. In this and some other chapters, we will not re-invent the wheel. Because there is a great deal of well researched and established historical facts about the era of the Alpha Church, we will trust Holy Spirit to lead us to source materials – both ‘spiritual’ and ‘secular’ from which we will extract useful information to get the whole picture. Let us note, History is simply Prophecy ‘It is written’ already fulfilled while Current Affairs/Breaking News is Prophecy that is unfolding. With that fundamental understanding, we shall proceed in this chapter to see two broad aspects of the Roman Empire which were bulwarks against spread of the gospel message and Kingdom life of saints who submitted to the sovereign rule of Yeshua, making room for no other god.

Rome brooked neither opposition nor competition

In its 622 years of world dominance (not counting extra 1000 years of the Eastern Section operating from Constantinople), Rome operated on a simple principle: **Crush** or **Assimilate**. In this regard, Rome:

1.1 Rome crushed and stamped out world consciousness of the previous empires before it: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Assyria and Egypt. For the Empire, all hearts, minds and wills of humans everywhere in the world, should focus on the ‘eternal city’ of Rome. In this regard, Rome was to be the center and circumference of all human civilization, interests and activities.

1.2 It assimilated the Culture of Greece which was the last empire it succeeded (as well as aspects of previous empires all the way to Egypt which could serve any useful purpose for the Empire)

Culture in this regard includes the Language, Literature, World-view, Philosophy and Religion of the people This was indeed a strange development. Instead of Latin: The language of Rome; Greek was retained and used as official language of the Empire. The work of Greek Philosophers like Aristotle, Socrates and Plato, amongst others was standard fare in the literary and intellectual circles of Rome. Greek Architectural patterns for building both temples and private homes were absorbed by the artistically stylish people of Rome.

In the same way, some of those in the Pantheon of Greek gods were simply renamed and worshipped in the Roman Empire. Jupiter: the supreme god of Rome, for instance, is etymologically the same as Zeus of Greece.

Let us receive this very insightful piece of research published by Donald L. Wasson in Ancient.eu:

“In many societies, ancient and modern, religion has performed a major role in their development, and the Roman Empire was no different. From the beginning, Roman religion was polytheistic. From an initial array of gods and spirits, [Rome](#) added to this collection to include both Greek gods as well as a number of foreign cults. As the empire expanded, the Romans refrained from imposing their own religious beliefs upon those they conquered; however, this inclusion must not be misinterpreted as tolerance - this can be seen with their early reaction to the Jewish and Christian population.

EARLY BELIEFS & INFLUENCES

Early forms of the Roman religion were animistic in nature, believing that spirits inhabited everything around them, people included. The first citizens of Rome also believed they were watched over by the spirits of their ancestors. Initially, a Capitoline Triad (possibly derived from a Sabine influence) were added to these "spirits" - the new gods included Mars, the god of war and supposed father of Romulus and Remus (founders of Rome); Quirinus, the deified Romulus who watched over the people of Rome; and lastly, Jupiter, the supreme god. They, along with the spirits, were worshipped at a temple on Capitoline Hill. Later, due to the Etruscans, the triad would change to include Jupiter who remained the supreme god; Juno, his wife and sister; and Minerva, Jupiter's daughter.

Due to the presence of Greek colonies on the Lower Peninsula, the Romans adopted many of the Greek gods as their own. Religion and myth became one. Under this Greek influence, the Roman gods became more anthropomorphic – with the human characteristics of jealousy, love, hate, etc. However, this transformation was not to the degree that existed in Greek mythology. In Rome, individual expression of belief was unimportant, strict adherence to a rigid set of rituals was far more significant, thereby avoiding the hazards of religious zeal. Cities adopted their own patron deities and performed their own rituals. Temples honoring the gods would be built throughout the empire; however, these temples were considered the "home" of the god; worship occurred outside the temple. While this fusion of Roman and Greek deities influenced Rome in many ways, their religion remained practical.

Even though there were four colleges for priests, there was no priestly class; it would always remain a public office. This practice would even extend to the imperial palace. From the time of Emperor Augustus, the emperor would assume the title of *pontifex maximus* or chief priest. Other than the *pontifexes* there were *augures*, individuals who read the entrails of animals and the flight of birds to interpret omens, or in other words, the will of the gods. Elaborate rituals were performed to bring Roman victory in battle, and no declaration of war or major event was undertaken without the clear approval of the gods. Dating from the time of the Etruscans, a diviner or *haruspices*, was always consulted, and it was considered dangerous to ignore the omens. Spurinna, a Roman soothsayer, read animal entrails and foresaw Julius Caesar's death on the Ides of March. When Roman Commander Publius Claudius Pulcher ignored the omens - refusal of the sacred chickens to eat - before a battle during the First Punic War, he was defeated, as was his military career.

As the empire expanded across the Balkans, Asia Minor and into Egypt, Roman religion absorbed many of the gods and cults of conquered nations, but the primary influence would always remain Greece. With only a few exceptions, most of the Roman gods had their Greek counterparts. This Roman mythology would have a significant influence on the empire - politically and socially - as well as on the future of western civilization. One needs only to look at the names of the days and months (Tuesday, Saturday, January and June), the languages of European nations, and the names of the planets (Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, and Pluto) to realize this influence.

THE ROMAN PANTHEON

While the study of Roman mythology tends to emphasize the major gods - Jupiter, Neptune (god of the sea), Pluto (god of the underworld) and Juno - there existed, of course, a number of "minor" gods and

goddesses such as Nemesis, the god of revenge; Cupid, the god of love; Pax, the god of peace; and the Furies, goddesses of vengeance.

However, when looking at the religion of Rome, one must examine the impact of the most important gods. Foremost among the gods were, of course, Jupiter, the Roman equivalent of Zeus (although not as playful), and his wife/sister Juno. He was the king of the gods; the sky god (the great protector) - controlling the weather and forces of nature, using thunderbolts to give warning to the people of Rome. Originally linked with farming as *Jupiter Elicius*, his role changed as the city grew, eventually obtaining his own temple on Capitoline Hill. Later, he became *Jupiter Imperator Invictus Triumphator* - Supreme General, Unconquered, and ultimately, *Jupiter Optimus Maximus* - Best and Greatest. His supremacy would be temporarily set aside during the reign of Emperor Elagabalus who attempted to replace the religion of Rome with that of the Syrian god Elagabal. After the emperor's assassination, his successor, Alexander Severus, returned Jupiter to his former glory. Next, Jupiter's wife/sister was Juno, for whom the month of June is named - she was the equivalent of the Greek Hera. Besides being the supreme goddess with a temple on Esquiline Hill, she was the goddess of light and moon, embodying all of the virtues of Roman matron hood - as Juno Lucina she became the goddess of childbirth and fertility."

- Source: Donald L. Wasson, Ancient.eu/Roman Religion /2013

This was the culture existing in the earth realm and dominating the space in which Yeshua, Jesus was born, lived and grew to proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom. The Gospel He proclaimed had the power to deliver them from bondage to these gods and connect them to the One, True Supreme Being: Elohim, who desired to relate with them as His Own Children and citizens of His Eternal Kingdom. The Culture Clash is not difficult to imagine.

2. Emperor Worship and attachment to Cults

Another basis of the Clash of Kingdoms was the way the Roman Empire deified its human rulers and the strong attachment of the people to various cults which dominated lives of adherents. To grasp the full extent of the direct opposing culture of the Roman Empire within which the Gospel of Yeshua and the Kingdom was going to operate, let us again glean from the seminal work of Donald L Wasson:

"CULT WORSHIP

Besides the worship of these gods there were several cults - Bacchus, Cybele, Isis, Sarapis, Sibyl, and most of all the Imperial Cult. Some were readily accepted by Roman society while others were feared by those in power. Bacchus was a Roman deity associated with both the Greek god Dionysus and the early Roman god Liber Patri, also a wine god. Bacchus is best remembered for his intoxicating festivals held on March 17, a day when a Roman male youth would supposedly become a man. As his cult spread, the Roman Senate realized its dangerous potential and ordered its suppression in 186 BCE and afterwards, the cult went underground.

Another cult centered on Cybele, the "great mother" - a fertility goddess with a temple on Palatine Hill who was responsible for every aspect of a person's well-being. The goddess arrived in Athens in the fifth century BCE and first appeared in Rome during the Punic Wars. All of her priests were eunuchs, and many of her male followers would have themselves castrated. Next is Isis, the ancient goddess of Egypt who is best remembered in Egyptian mythology as the wife of Osiris and the mother of Horus. After

becoming Hellenized, she became the protector of sailors and fishermen. Arriving in Rome from Alexandria, Sarpis was a healing god and the sick would travel to her temple to be cured. Sibyl was a priestess of the Greek and Roman god Apollo who came to Rome from the Greek colony of Cumae.

She offered the Etruscan King Tarquin the nine Sibylline Books which were books of prophecy, but the price was considered too high, so he refused. After she had burned six of the books, he reconsidered and bought the remaining three; these three books were consulted by the Roman Senate in times of emergencies but they were lost during the barbarian invasions of the fifth century CE.

Lastly, there was the Imperial Cult. The idea of deification of the emperor came during the time of Emperor Augustus. He resisted the Senate's attempts to name him a god during his reign as he thought himself the son of a god, not a god. Upon his death, the Roman Senate rewarded him with deification which was an honor that would be bestowed upon many of his successors. Often, an emperor would request his predecessor to be deified. Of course, there were a few exceptions, notably, Tiberius, Caligula, Nero and Domitian, who were considered too abhorrent to receive the honor. Caligula and Nero believed themselves living gods while Domitian thought himself the reincarnation of Hercules."

- Donald L. Wasson in Ancient.eu/Roman Religion.2013
- Donald has taught Ancient, Medieval and U.S. History at Lincoln College (Normal, Illinois) and has always been and will always be a student of history, ever since learning about Alexander the Great. He is eager to pass knowledge on to his students.

The Culture Clash was real!

To this end, it neither countenanced opposition nor tolerated any idea or way of life which offered competition to its world-view. The new movement across the empire which started in the Roman Province of Judea – by proclaiming allegiance to one called the Messiah or Saviour whose adherents lived differently from other citizens of the empire definitely crossed their path.

The point being made here is that the gospel of Yeshua and the Kingdom had a direct mandate by Head of the Church to 'Go Ye' and transform worldly culture. These specific words of Yeshua, Jesus captured the essence of the Great Commission relative to the dominant Roman Culture in the earth realm:

Matthew 28:18-20 (KJV) *18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*

Knowing the harsh operating environment of Roman Empire; Yeshua charged His disciples not to go forth in the arm of the flesh or with head knowledge. He promises to endue them with the same Holy Spirit with which He so effectively complete 3 ½ years of Public Ministry:

Acts 1:4-8 (KJV) *4 And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. 5 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. 6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? 7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. 8 But ye*

shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Saints in the Alpha Church period knew that they would accomplish this awesome task not with force of arms or persuasive logic which appealed to human reason. They were not to quarrel, abuse or engage in subversion against governments or turn their pulpits into bully platforms against politicians in whom they disagreed. They were to go with a different set of instruments!

- By **Prayer**
- By **Spiritual warfare**, they would subdue Principalities, Powers and Rulers of the dark world (Ephesians 6:10-18)
- By **Compassion** and **love** for lost souls
- Their assignment was to be vessels through which Yeshua would use to affect and impact the hostile world from within – transforming the hearts and minds of every human they were given contact with and assigned to! One at a time; a family at a time; the Kingdom of heaven was to invade the mighty Roman Empire to subdue it from within.

Matthew 13:33 (KJV) *33 Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.*

Matthew 5:13-16 (KJV) *13 Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. 14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. 15 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. 16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

Review Questions

1. Please share 3 things you personally receive from this chapter.

Chapter 33

Surviving the Odds: The Alpha Church Versus Rome

In chapter 32, we traced the Clash of Cultures between the Alpha Church and Imperial Rome. As we saw, this arose because as saints enthroned Yeshua in their hearts and demonstrated His Kingdom in their everyday life. Their lives contradicted the demands of the empire including Emperor worship.

The Omega Church is fortunate that it has the benefit of written history and excellent scholarly works by academics and researchers to understand the full scope of what the Alpha Church experienced. Unfortunately, the weakness of the flesh gets in the way. The result is that generality of saints in the end time, have little or no knowledge of how those who were used by the Lord to begin the Church age of the Kingdom, lived out their Faith in Yeshua and relationship with the Father under unction of Holy Spirit, as citizens of the most powerful empire in world history.

The full import of the two exhortations by both Paul and Peter concerning how to practice the separation that Yeshua prayed to the Father in John 17, are better appreciated when we sit back to consider how they were lived out:

Philippians 2:12-16 (KJV) *12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. 13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. 14 Do all things without murmurings and disputings: 15 That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; 16 Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.*

1 Peter 2:9-12 (KJV) *9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light; 10 Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. 11 Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; 12 Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.*

As a follow up, it is necessary to have a fairly accurate and comprehensive understanding of how the Alpha Church survived the imperial might of Rome without compromise. We found two excellent articles on the web written by Ken Curtis, Ph.D. in Christianity Today. They present a graphic picture of how the early church fared within the very hostile environment that was the Roman Empire.

The Church under Rome (before 300 AD)

What Were Early Christians Like?

The early Christian church in the first three centuries after Jesus's resurrection brought about the most amazing transformation of diverse social and religious cultures ever achieved by peaceful means in the history of the world. How did it happen? What kind of people were these? What was special about their way of living and believing?

It would be a mistake to romanticize the early church as an age of purity to which we should seek to return. The churches always had their problems and internal struggles. Nevertheless, the early churches as a whole did represent something different in their world. It attracted both devoted followers and brutal persecutors. To see what these early believers were like, let's go to the sources and hear what they were bold to proclaim about themselves.

From the First Apology of Justin (c. AD 150)

First, an early philosopher, Justin Martyr, wrote to the Roman emperor, Antonius Pius around AD 150, to defend the Christians. In the excerpt below we see how the believers were eager to invite the most intense scrutiny of their lives. At the same time note how he reminds the most powerful man in that world that he may not really be as much in charge as he thinks.

Since you are called pious and philosophers, guardians of justice and lovers of learning, pay attention and listen to my address. If you are indeed followers of learning, it will be clear. We have not come to flatter you by this writing nor please you by our address, but to beg that you pass judgment after an accurate and searching investigation. . . . As for us, no evil can be done to us unless we are convicted as evildoers or proved to be wicked men. You can kill us. But you cannot hurt us.

To avoid anyone thinking that this is an unreasonable and reckless declaration, we demand that the charges against the Christians be investigated. If these are substantiated, we should be justly punished. But if no one can convict us of anything, true reason forbids you to wrong blameless men because of evil rumors. If you did so, you would be harming yourselves in governing affairs by emotions rather than by intelligence. . . . It is our task, therefore, to provide to all an opportunity of inspecting our life and teachings. . . . It is your business, when you hear us, to be good judges, as reason demands. If, when you have learned the truth, you do not do what is just, you will be without excuse before God.

How Did the Early Christians Describe Themselves?

The Epistle to Diognetes, c. AD 130

Here is a gem we are most fortunate to have as only one copy survived the centuries. We do not know who wrote it. It came from the second century. It was, like the New Testament, originally written in Greek. In this brief excerpt, we have preserved a magnificent description of Christian living in what was expected in the early church community.

“For the Christians are distinguished from other men neither by country, nor language, nor the customs which they observe. For they neither inhabit cities of their own, nor employ a peculiar form of speech, nor lead a life which is marked out by any singularity. The course of conduct which they follow has not been devised by any speculation or deliberation of inquisitive men; nor do they, like some, proclaim themselves the advocates of any merely human doctrines. But, inhabiting Greek as well as barbarian cities, according as the lot of each of them has determined and following the customs of the natives in respect to clothing, food, and the rest of their ordinary conduct, they display to us their wonderful and confessedly striking method of life.

They dwell in their own countries, but simply as sojourners. As citizens, they share in all things with others and yet endure all things as if foreigners. Every foreign land is to them as their native country, and every land of their birth as a land of strangers. They marry, as do all others; they beget children; but they do not destroy their offspring. They have a common table, but not a common bed. They are in the flesh, but they do not live after the flesh. They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of heaven. They obey the prescribed laws, and at the same time surpass the laws by their lives. They love all men and are persecuted by all. They are unknown and condemned; they are put to death and restored to life. They are poor yet make many rich; they are in lack of all things and yet abound in all; they are dishonored and yet in their very dishonor are glorified. They are evil spoken of and yet are justified; they are reviled and bless; they are insulted and repay the insult with honor; they do good yet are punished as evildoers. When punished, they rejoice as if quickened into life; they are assailed by the Jews as foreigners and are persecuted by the Greeks; yet those who hate them are unable to assign any reason for their hatred. To sum it all up in one word -- what the soul is to the body, that are Christians in the world."

From the Apology of Tertullian, AD 197

The "apology" was not saying "sorry" but was a defense of a viewpoint. One of the most colorful early church scholars was the North African Tertullian, who lived from around AD 160-225. He commended the Christian faith to the pagan world. In this excerpt, we get priceless insight into the practices of early Christian worship, discipline, leadership selection and financial giving. But most significantly, Tertullian preserves the amazing pagan observation of the Christians: "See how they love one another."

"We are a body knit together as such by a common religious profession, by unity of discipline, and by the bond of a common hope. We meet together as an assembly and congregation, that, offering up prayer to God as with united force, we may wrestle with Him in our supplications. This strong exertion God delights in. We pray, too, for the emperors, for their ministers and for all in authority, for the welfare of the world, for the prevalence of peace, for the delay of the final consummation. We assemble to read our sacred writings . . . and with the sacred words we nourish our faith, we animate our hope, we make our confidence more steadfast; and no less by inculcations of God's precepts we confirm good habits. In the same place also exhortations are made, rebukes and sacred censures are administered. For with a great gravity is the work of judging carried on among us, as befits those who feel assured that they are in the sight of God; and you have the most notable example of judgment to come when anyone has sinned so grievously as to require his severance from us in prayer, in the congregation and in all sacred intercourse.

The tried men of our elders preside over us, obtaining that honour not by purchase but by established character. There is no buying and selling of any sort in the things of God. Though we have our treasure-chest, it is not made up of purchase-money, as of a religion that has its price. On the monthly day, if he likes, each puts in a small donation; but only if it be his pleasure, and only if he be able: for there is no compulsion; all is voluntary. These gifts are not spent on feasts, and drinking-bouts, and eating-houses, but to support and bury poor people, to supply the wants of boys and girls destitute of means and parents, and of old persons confined now to the house; such, too, as have suffered shipwreck; and if there happen to be any in the mines or banished to the islands or shut up in the prisons, for nothing but

their fidelity to the cause of God's Church, they become the nurslings of their confession. But it is mainly the deeds of a love so noble that lead many to put a brand upon us. See, they say, how they love one another, for they themselves are animated by mutual hatred. See, they say about us, how they are ready even to die for one another, for they themselves would sooner kill."

Governor Pliny writes Emperor Trajan for advice in dealing with "The Christian Problem," AD 112

Pliny, the Roman governor in Bithynia, in present day Turkey, had a problem. What was he to do with the Christians who were spreading rapidly? He wrote to his emperor Trajan in Rome, seeking advice. He describes the Christian problem and shows how some under pressure were willing to renounce their faith and others were not. He then gives valuable description of Christian life, practice and worship at that time.

An anonymous document was published containing the names of many persons. Those who denied that they were or had been Christians, when they invoked the words dictated by me, offered prayer with incense and wine to your image, which I had ordered to be brought for this purpose together with statues of the gods, and moreover cursed Christ -- none of which those who are really Christians, it is said, can be forced to do -- these I thought should be discharged. Others named by the informer declared that they were Christians, but then denied it, asserting that they had been but had ceased to be, some three years before, others many years, some as much as twenty-five years, they all worshipped your image and the statues of the Gods, and cursed Christ. They asserted, however, that the sum and substance of their fault or error had been that they were accustomed to meet on a fixed day before dawn and sing responsively a hymn to Christ as a god, and to bind themselves by oath, not to some crime, but not to commit, fraud, theft, or adultery, not falsify their trust, nor to refuse to return a trust when called upon to do so. When this was over, it was their custom to depart and to assemble again to partake of food -- but ordinary and innocent food. Even this, they affirmed, they had ceased to do after my edict by which, in accordance with your instructions, I had forbidden political associations. Accordingly, I judged it all the more necessary to find out what the truth was by torturing two female slaves who were called deaconesses. But I discovered nothing else but depraved, excessive superstition.

And, finally, the observations of a prominent present day researcher.

Sociologist Rodney Stark analyzed the survival and growth of the early church in the first few centuries. Here is his fascinating summary of the Early Church.

". . . Christianity served as a revitalization movement that arose in response to the misery, chaos, fear, and brutality of life in the urban Greco-Roman world. . . . Christianity revitalized life in Greco-Roman cities by providing new norms and new kinds of social relationships able to cope with many urgent problems. To cities filled with the homeless and impoverished, Christianity offered charity as well as hope. To cities filled with newcomers and strangers, Christianity offered an immediate basis for attachment. To cities filled with orphans and widows, Christianity provided a new and expanded sense of family. To cities torn by violent ethnic strife, Christianity offered a new basis for social solidarity. And to cities faced with epidemics, fire, and earthquakes, Christianity offered effective nursing services. . . . For what they brought was not simply an urban movement, but a new culture capable of making life in

Greco-Roman cities more tolerable." (Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, Princeton University Press, 1996, page 161.)

How did the early Christian church survive? Humanly speaking, the odds were all stacked against it.

It was unthinkable that a small, despised movement from a corner of Palestine could move out to become the dominant faith of the mighty Roman Empire, an empire steeped in fiercely defended traditional pagan religions. The spread of the Christian church in its earliest centuries is one of the most amazing phenomena in all of human history. The church was considered a *religio prava*, an illegal and depraved religion. Wave after wave of persecution was unleashed to squash it. At least two of the persecutions were empire-wide and intended to destroy the church. So how did this young fledgling movement make it?

More than a building

The earliest Christians did not have church buildings. They typically met in homes. (The first actual church building to be found is at Dura Europos on the Euphrates, dating about 231.) They did not have public ceremonies that would introduce them to the public. They had no access to the mass media of their day. So how can we account for their steady and diverse expansion over the first three centuries?

After the Apostle Paul, we do not run across many "big names" as missionaries in the first few hundred years of Christian history. Instead the faith spread through a multitude of humble, ordinary believers whose names have been long forgotten.

To the cities!

Early Christianity was primarily an urban faith, establishing itself in the city centers of the Roman Empire. Most of the people lived close together in crowded tenements. There were few secrets in such a setting. The faith spread as neighbors saw the lives of the believers close-up, on a daily basis.

And what kind of lives did they lead? Justin Martyr, a noted early Christian theologian, wrote to Emperor Antoninus Pius and described the believers: "We formerly rejoiced in uncleanness of life, but now love only chastity; before we used the magic arts, but now dedicate ourselves to the true and unbegotten God; before we loved money and possessions more than anything, but now we share what we have and to everyone who is in need; before we hated one another and killed one another and would not eat with those of another race, but now since the manifestation of Christ, we have come to a common life and pray for our enemies and try to win over those who hate us without just cause."

In another place Justin points out how those opposed to Christianity were sometimes won over as they saw the consistency in the lives of believers, noting their extraordinary forbearance when cheated and their honesty in business dealings.

Christians became known as those who cared for the sick. Many were known for the healing that resulted from their prayers. Christians also started the first "Meals on Wheels." By the year 250, they were feeding more than 1500 of the hungry and destitute in Rome every day.

When Emperor Julian ("the Apostate") wanted to revive pagan religion in the mid-300s, he gave a most helpful insight into how the church spread. This opponent of the faith said that Christianity "has been specially advanced through the loving service rendered to strangers and through their care of the burial of the dead. It is a scandal that there is not a single Jew who is a beggar and that the [Christians] care not only for their own poor but for ours as well; while those who belong to us look in vain for the help we should render them."

On the surface, the early Christians appeared powerless and weak, they were an easy target for scorn and ridicule. They had no great financial resources, no buildings, no social status, no government approval, no respect from the educators. And after they became separated from their first-century association with the Jewish synagogues, they lacked institutional backing and an ancient tradition to appeal to.

But what finally mattered is what they did have. They had a faith. They had a fellowship. They had a new way of life. They had a confidence that their Lord was alive in heaven and guiding their daily lives. These were the important things. And it made all the difference in laying a Christian foundation for all of Western civilization."

- By Ken Curtis, Ph.D. in Christianity. com/church/church_history/timeline/1-300/the-spread-of-the-early-church

A Look at the Early Church by Ken Curtis, Ph.D.

Have you ever noticed that the Bible gives us no clue as to what Jesus looked like? All our paintings of Jesus are merely the artist's idea of how he might have looked. The first representation of Christ on record is actually a derisive graffiti on the wall of a house on the Palatine Hill in Rome. It pictured the body of a man being crucified but with the head of an ass. The inscription reads: "Alexamenos worships his god."

From the time of Nero (64 A.D.) until the conversion of Emperor Constantine and the Edict of Milan (313 A.D.), whereby Christianity was made legal, the Christian faith was officially regarded as a *religio prava*, an evil or depraved religion.

Christianity's Jewish Roots

Christianity began as a movement within Judaism. Much of the earliest proclamation of the Gospel took place in the synagogues. The Christians did not side with the Jews in their revolt against Rome beginning in 66 A.D., and by the end of the first century the church had largely separated from the synagogue.

When a "church" wasn't a building

These early believers did not have church buildings to meet in. They met mostly in homes. The first church buildings did not start to appear until the early 200s.

Debate but not denominations

The early church did not have denominations as we think of them today. But that does not mean they had no serious disagreements within the ranks. They did. And they did not find this surprising. They felt they were dealing with matters of ultimate truth and error - matters to be taken with the utmost seriousness even when it meant dissension.

Torn by dogs, nailed to crosses...

The early Christians were the targets of repeated persecutions - some of unspeakable cruelty. For example, the emperor Nero blamed the Christians for the great fire that destroyed 10 of the 14 city wards at Rome in 64 A.D., a fire that Nero apparently had ordered himself. The historian Tacitus, not a Christian, said that Nero had the believers "torn by dogs, nailed to crosses . . . even used as human torches to illumine his gardens at night."

But Christians were not under persecution everywhere and all the time. The persecutions were sporadic, with peaceful intervals in between. They varied in their intensity and were mostly localized.

Just Get your Certificate!

There were two all-out empire-wide persecutions intended to utterly destroy the church. The first, under the emperor Decius, began in December, 249. Everyone in the empire had to get a certificate from a government officer verifying that he or she had offered a sacrifice to the gods - an act that most Christians in good conscience could not do.

The second, called "The Great Persecution," began on February 23, 303, under Emperor Diocletian. Galerius, the empire's second-in-command, was behind this persecution policy and continued it after Diocletian's death. For eight long years, official decrees ordered Christians out of public office, scriptures confiscated, church buildings destroyed, leaders arrested, and pagan sacrifices required. All the reliable methods of torture were mercilessly employed - wild beasts, burning, stabbing, crucifixion, the rack. But they were all to no avail. The penetration of the faith across the empire was so pervasive that the church could not be intimidated nor destroyed. In 311, the same Galerius, shortly before his death, weak and diseased, issued an "edict of toleration." This included the statement that it was the duty of Christians "to pray to their god for our good estate."

Baptism

The Christian writer Hippolytus, writing about 200 A.D., describes baptism at Rome. Candidates took off their clothing, were baptized three times after renouncing Satan and affirming the basic teachings of the faith, and put on new clothes. Then they joined the rest of the church in the Lord's Supper.

Baptism was not entered into lightly. First one went through an extensive period of preparation as a "catechumen." This lasted as long as three years, involving close scrutiny of the catechumen's behavior. The church would only admit those who proved to be sincere in seeking a totally new life within the Christian community.

Slave makes good!

Christians drew members into their fellowship from every rank and race, an affront to proper, class-conscious Romans. A former slave who had worked the mines actually became the bishop of Rome -- Callistus in 217."

- Ken Curtis, Ph.D. in Christianity. com/church/church_history/timeline/1-300/

The power of Faith in Yeshua and abiding in His Word to overcome the World as stated in the Holy Scriptures was no doubt demonstrated by the Alpha Church. As we consider these things, may Holy Spirit inspire and energize us to shun compromise with the world in order to become His show piece in these end times.

1 John 4:4-5 (KJV) *4 Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. 5 They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.*

1 John 5:4-5 (KJV) *4 For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. 5 Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?*

Review Questions

1. Kindly share 3 things you learnt from this chapter.
2. What is your personal commitment to the Lord arising from the message of this chapter?

Chapter 34

Christians on The Broad and Narrow Ways

Looking back at the Alpha Church: the scope of persecution the saints suffered for their Faith was mind boggling.

Scope of the Pain:

1. Profiling and Classification as 'trouble makers'
2. Rejection by their contemporaries
3. There was Persecution for their Faith
4. There was Torture in various forms
5. Cruel deaths of various forms

Christians were Crucified; such as Peter (who reportedly requested to be crucified upside down to honor his Master); Beheaded such as Paul; Burning at stakes and mauling by wild animals

Those who survived:

1. Increased in Wisdom, experiencing what Yeshua told them to be 'be wise as serpents'
2. Increased their resolve to fulfill the Great Commission at all costs
3. Laid down their own lives for the work to be completed

Attitude of true saints in the fire:

1. They counted it a Privilege to be counted worthy to suffer for His sake.
2. They had Joy as their strength.
3. They forgave their tormentors, seeking that their blood would water the ground for revival.

Their report before the Lord can be summed up with this passage:

Revelations 12:11 (KJV) *11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.*

The Pliny Testimony

In Chapter 33, there is a remarkable document quoted by Dr. Ken Curtis in his piece on the Church under Rome (Before AD 300) which revealed that some Christians were steadfast about their Faith, even in the face of fire while others crumbled under the weight of intense persecution. Let us quote it again for context:

"Governor Pliny writes Emperor Trajan for advice in dealing with "The Christian Problem," AD 112

Pliny, the Roman governor in Bithynia, in present day Turkey, had a problem. What was he to do with the Christians who were spreading rapidly? He wrote to his emperor Trajan in Rome, seeking advice. He describes the Christian problem and shows how some under pressure were willing to renounce their faith and others were not. He then gives valuable description of Christian life, practice and worship at that time.

An anonymous document was published containing the names of many persons. Those who denied that they were or had been Christians, when they invoked the words dictated by me, offered prayer with incense and wine to your image, which I had ordered to be brought for this purpose together with statues of the gods, and moreover cursed Christ -- none of which those who are really Christians, it is said, can be forced to do -- these I thought should be discharged. Others named by the informer declared that they were Christians, but then denied it, asserting that they had been but had ceased to be, some three years before, others many years, some as much as twenty-five years, They all worshipped your image and the statues of the Gods, and cursed Christ. They asserted, however, that the sum and substance of their fault or error had been that they were accustomed to meet on a fixed day before dawn and sing responsively a hymn to Christ as a god, and to bind themselves by oath, not to some crime, but not to commit, fraud, theft, or adultery, not falsify their trust, nor to refuse to return a trust when called upon to do so. When this was over, it was their custom to depart and to assemble again to partake of food -- but ordinary and innocent food. Even this, they affirmed, they had ceased to do after my edict by which, in accordance with your instructions, I had forbidden political associations. Accordingly, I judged it all the more necessary to find out what the truth was by torturing two female slaves who were called deaconesses. But I discovered nothing else but depraved, excessive superstition."

Why was it so that some Christians in the Alpha Church were joyfully willing to lay down their lives while others loved their lives so much that they would do anything, including apostasy (deliberate falling away) to keep theirs?

The answer is rooted in the Holy Scriptures. Knowing the Truth will enable saints in the Omega or End Time Church to do a reality check to discern where they are in their relationship with Yeshua and count the costs concerning what may come upon them from the world system.

The Constitution of the Kingdom – The New Covenant - says there will be two types of Christians in the earth realm at any given time until Yeshua returns to set up the manifest Kingdom!

The Holy Scriptures provide sufficient reasons for the disparity of focus, lifestyle and attitude to death and life in the Alpha Church! Yeshua, Jesus spoke of two ways: The Narrow and Broad; two types of Christians; two types of Ministers and the reality that such divergences will be based on attitude to the Word!

Two Gateways

Matthew 7:13-14 (KJV) *13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: 14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*

Two types of Ministers

15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. 16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? 17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. 19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. 20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? 23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Basis: Two types of attitudes to the Word!

24 Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: 25 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. 26 And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: 27 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

In Matthew 13, Yeshua expands the concept of different types of Christians

Verse 1: *He revealed that the state of hearts of hearers of the Word and their attitude to it will have definite outcomes:*

Verses 4 & 19: *Wayside hearts will produce forgetful memories and short-lived experiences.*

Verses 5-6, 20-21: *Rocky/Stony heart will produce 'flaky/flash' fruit which cannot endure.*

Verse 7 & 22: *A heart filled with cares of this life (preponderance of focus on material things as true motive of embracing the Gospel) will stymie the effect of the word leading to un-transformed hearts. Though such people may be 'in Church', Yeshua does not occupy the throne of their hearts. They are mere professors of Faith in Him whose works deny Him eloquently.*

Verse 8 & 23: *Hearts which are ploughed by Holy Spirit mix what they hear with Faith.*

Yeshua said this represents those who will bear abundant fruit of His nature and character which can be seen by sinners!

He also revealed that while He came to earth to activate restoration of the Kingdom through bringing many sons to glory, Satan was also at work to plant his own sons in the same earth realm. Both types of people will be in the physical Church and even resemble each other outwardly! The parable of the Wheat and Tares in Matthew 13: 24-30; 36-43 is worth closer study!

Attitude to the Kingdom

In Matthew 13, Yeshua also gave us an insight that those who are possessors of Kingdom life and last the distance would be those who are intentional and passionate about the great value they place on it!

Matthew 13:44-46 speaks of how highly those who press in esteem the Kingdom and pay whatever price needful to possess it. (Great Treasure and Costly Pearl)

Verses 47-5 reveals that the Church age would feature both the true and the fake until the day of sorting!

Yeshua went on to give an accurate description of the correlation between surrendering of the heart and death of Self-man <filled with ambitions, self-love and Adamic dispositions> to emergence of the new man that is true purchase of His Redemptive Mission in the earth realm:

Matthew 16:24-26 (KJV) *24 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. 25 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. 26 For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*

Using Himself as an example, Yeshua pronounced this rule of productivity:

John 12:24 (KJV) *24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.*

In the Olivet Prophecy, Yeshua declared how there would be a falling away at the Latter times. That prophecy is of multiple application, covering both the period when Rome would besiege Jerusalem before destroying the Temple; the period of the Alpha Church; in these end times when we live as well as life under reign of the anti-Christ:

Matthew 24:9-13 (KJV) *9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. 10 And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. 11 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. 12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. 13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.*

Paul the Apostle picked up the theme of two types of ministers and the nature of what they focus on.

Attitude to His Return/the End Times

In the Matthew 24: 42-51 and Chapter 25:1-13 (Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins), Yeshua also revealed that two types of saints would be known by how intentional they are concerning His return. Those whose hearts are gripped with the reality that His absence is temporary and that He will return to take account are not going to be easily diverted by external pressures and challenges.

Peter also warned with strong language that false prophets would invade the Church, overthrowing the faith of many. The point he made is that those in leadership can misuse the enormous trust invested in them by generality of people 'in Church' to lead them away from allegiance to Yeshua, Jesus for their own pecuniary gains! How prescient his prophecies have turned out to be even at this time in history!

2 Peter 2:1-3,9-14, 17-22 (KJV) *1 But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and*

bring upon themselves swift destruction. 2 And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. 3 And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.

9 The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished: 10 But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. 11 Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord. 12 But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption; 13 And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you; 14 Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children:

17 These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever. 18 For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. 19 While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. 20 For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. 21 For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. 22 But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

In 2 Peter chapter 3, Peter is used by Holy Spirit to show that there is a direct correlation of preachments/teachings devoid of the End Times to the falling away to come. History has borne him out. Saints who live in consciousness of eternity and return of their King do not succumb under pressure or threat to their mortal lives. Those who are caught up with the partisan politics, what to eat and drink and who to party with tend to live like people in the days of Noah who mocked his building of the Ark and entreaty for them, to get in and be saved.

In his days, Paul prophetically described how there would be a falling away from the truth:

1 Timothy 4:1-2 (KJV) *1 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; 2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;*

2 Timothy 3:1-7 (KJV) *1 This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. 2 For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, 4 Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; 5 Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. 6 For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, 7 Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.*

While multitudes may seem to be in Church, Paul warned pointedly that Elohim was not fooled by how things looked on the outside!

2 Timothy 2:19 (KJV) *19 Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.*

Paul the Apostle was also used by Holy Spirit to reveal the reality that many would be attracted to the physical Church without necessarily been part of the Church which is the spiritual Body of Yeshua in the earth realm!

Philippians 3:17- 21 (KJV) *17 Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. 18 (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: 19 Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.) 20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: 21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.*

As Holy Spirit revealed through the writings of Paul, lifestyles of Possessors and Professors of the Kingdom in reality reveals whether Holy Spirit or another spirit is at work within the human heart:

Galatians 5:15-22 (KJV) *15 But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. 16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. 17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. 18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.*

Paul was used by Holy Spirit to give an understanding of how Faith plays a critical role in making the Word effective in hearts of the redeemed:

Hebrews 4:2 (KJV) *2 For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.*

Holy Spirit also used Peter to describe two types of 'Christians': those who grow in Grace and those who are static in their profession of faith or even regress from heights they attained:

2 Peter 1:3-12 (KJV) *3 According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: 4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. 5 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge 6 And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; 7 And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. 8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. 10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: 11 For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. 12 Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth.*

John the beloved warned the saints of his day and us that the spirit of anti-Christ was already at work, preparing the way for his manifestation in due time. Those series of warnings became vital tools to enable some to escape while the vast majority missed it and were caught up. As early as those days, some false teachers had begun to question the Divinity of Yeshua, Jesus

1 John 2:18-28 (KJV) *18 Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. 19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. 20 But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. 21 I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth. 22 Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. 23 Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also. 24 Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father. 25 And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life. 26 These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. 27 But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him. 28 And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.*

There is no doubt that those in the alpha Church who embraced theologies which denied the divinity of Yeshua, Jesus; were the most vulnerable to crumble under the weight of persecutions.

1 John 4:1-3 (KJV) *1 Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. 2 Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: 3 And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.*

The book of Revelation chapters 2 and 3 vividly illustrate the reality of the different types of saints who were on the scene, in the physical church, before the year 100:

The Church at **Ephesus** had backslidden from the place of Love and was carried away by programs and activities (Revelation 2:1-7).

The Church at **Smyrna**, though 'small' was commended for being steadfast (1 of only 2 to be commended) (Revelation 2: 8-10).

The Church at **Pergamos** tolerated those with the doctrine of Balaam and by so doing, opened the doors to syncretism and idolatry (Revelation 2: 11-17).

The Church at **Thyatira** gave room for the spirit of control and illegitimate authority to lord it over His flock (Revelation 2:18-29).

The Church at **Sardis** lived on spent fuel (Old glory) having a name that it was alive while it was in a coma (Revelation 3: 1-6).

The Church at **Philadelphia** was one of only two found faithful (Revelation 3:7-13).

The Church at **Laodicea** gloried in material possessions while Yeshua was pushed out of their hearts (Revelation 3:14-22).

From these passages, it is clear the majority on the Broad way were in denial of their state. When push came to shove, their response to persecution was to crumble like cookies, deny their 'Master' and Faith, nauseating both the oppressors and genuine saints in the process.

The faithful few endured all afflictions for His sake, aware that there would be eternal rewards when He returned!

Hebrews 10:32-39 (KJV) *32 But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; 33 Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. 34 For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. 35 Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. 36 For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. 37 For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. 38 Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. 39 But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.*

Review Questions

1. Please summarize the central thesis of this chapter.
2. Kindly share with us, your personal resolution going forward.

Chapter 35

Canon and Apologetics

The Canon: Gospels, Epistles and Apologetic in the early Church

The divergences of lifestyles between the true saints and church goers as we saw in Chapter 34 was not an accidental thing. It flowed directly from the nature of the Word which people heard and believed. Those who heard the full counsel of the New Covenant and were genuinely converted, consecrated and committed to the kingdom with single minded focus, obviously had greater capacity to make it till the end.

Those who heard the incomplete gospel or the version mixed with traditions of men built their faith on the quick sands of time which could not withstand adversity. Their crumbling under the weight of persecution or rejection was a foregone matter. The way Yeshua, Jesus described these two realities at conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount was simply prophetically accurate:

Matthew 7:24-27 (KJV) *24 Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: 25 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. 26 And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: 27 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.*

Speaking of His Words, let us not forget that they were conveyed through a number tranches:

- 1. Orally** – specific people who walked with Yeshua till His ascension to heaven (approximately 500 saw him ascend according to 1 Corinthians 15: 6 preached the much they heard and knew.
- 2. Orally** – the 120 who were in the Upper Room on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 1: 4-8, 13-15; Acts 2:1-4) had received the Ambassadorial credentials to declare the full counsel of Who Yeshua Is, what He preached, taught and what He did. These people were better equipped for the gospel of the Kingdom than the first set. Here is what was said of them:

Acts 2:41-42 (KJV) *41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. 42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

3. The Gospels and Epistles

As the early Church grew, the Apostles doctrine which all saints received and internalized included the full range of the 39 books which made up the New Testament Canon. They were generally divided into 3 broad classes: The Four Gospels; the 22 Epistles to Churches and individuals; and the Prophetic book of Revelations.

- Matthew was recruited by Yeshua as His personal biographer. The Gospel He wrote offered proof to all Torah-observant Hebrews/Jews that He was indeed the Messiah and hope of all Israel.
- John wrote the highly acclaimed Gospel which focused on the Divinity of Yeshua, 3 epistles and the ultimate prophetic book, the Book of Revelation. Revelation offered all saints hope that at end of the age, they have a secure inheritance in eternity while both Satan and all evil doers would suffer eternal damnation.
- Luke, a Medical Doctor wrote a comprehensive account of the life, works and ministry of Yeshua, Jesus for the benefit of Gentiles so that they would see in Him their hope for redemption.
- Mark who was a youth when Yeshua was alive. He was eye witness to His life and is generally believed to received authoritative insight from Peter who was his uncle.
- Other Apostles wrote Epistles whose inspirations were unquestionable. They include Peter who was a close disciple of Yeshua who wrote two powerful epistles.
- James and Jude wrote authoritative epistles (both were 2 of the 4 half-brothers of Yeshua born by Mary to Joseph (Matthew 13:55).

4. The Pauline Epistles/Letters

Though many in the second set of people had walked with Yeshua, Jesus for 3 and half years, their cultural mindsets as Hebrews/Jews created a screen which blocked their full understanding of the gospel of Yeshua and the Kingdom. The missing link in their understanding was largely apprehending the full implications of what happened at the Cross and how it created a new paradigm in the earth realm. The presence of sons of Elohim who had direct access to their heavenly Father; who enthroned Yeshua as King in their heart and who, filled with the same Holy Spirit that Incarnated Yeshua in the womb of Mary and filled Him at the Baptism of John (Luke 1:35; Matthew 3: 16), had the heavenly ordained capacity to be used as instruments of completing the Mission of reconciling the Lost from both Hebrews/Jews and Gentiles to their heavenly Father.

This vital revelation was committed to the trust of Paul who as Saul was a hater of Yeshua, the saints and the Gospel until he was specifically arrested and commissioned in Acts 9. To Paul was granted revelations that are so deep, so wide and trans-formative which were originally inspired letters/Epistles he sent to city Churches in Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi, Colossae, Thessalonica and to Hebrews everywhere. Others anointed letters he sent to protégés and friends like Timothy, Titus and Philemon. The weight of revelation in the two sets of letters was so much that the early Church recognized them as inspired applicable truths. Here is how Peter described the writings of Paul:

2 Peter 3:15-16 (KJV) *15 And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; 16 As also in all his epistles, speaking in*

them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.

That he wrote 14 of the 27 books of the New Testament speaks volumes of the quality and quantum of revelations committed to His trust. To know the Four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) is to know Who Yeshua Is, What He Taught and What He did. To know the Pauline Epistles is to understand Who He Is in us and who we are in Him.

5. Emergence of Canonical Books. So many books and ‘epistles’ floated in the early Church. Some were straightforward revelations given by inspiration of Holy Spirit. Those were known by their ability to convict, transform hearts, renew minds, inspire to righteousness and remind saints of their eternal destinations and need to hold on till the end despite what they experienced. Some others had either mixture of philosophy, traditions of men or mystical elements which did not edify but raised questions in the hearts and minds of readers.

Michael J. Kruger, the Samuel Patterson Professor President at Reformed Theological Seminary in Charlotte, North Carolina gave a profound insight into how the books of the New Testament became Canon or accepted as sound doctrine for building up the faith of saints. In his blog, Canon Fodder he said “For whatever set of reasons, there is a widespread belief out there (internet, popular books) that the New Testament canon was decided at the Council of Nicea in 325 AD—under the conspiratorial influence of Constantine. The fact that this claim was made in Dan Brown’s best-seller *The Da Vinci Code* shows how widespread it really is. Brown did not make up this belief; he simply used it in his book.

The problem with this belief, however, is that it is patently false. The Council of Nicea had nothing to do with the formation of the New Testament canon (nor did Constantine). Nicea was concerned with how Christians should articulate their beliefs about the divinity of Jesus. Thus, it was the birthplace of the Nicene creed.

When people discover that Nicea did not decide the canon, the follow up question is usually, “Which council did decide the canon?” Surely, we could not have a canon without some sort of authoritative, official act of the church by which it was decided. Surely, we have a canon because some group of men somewhere voted on it. Right?

This whole line of reasoning reveals a fundamental assumption about the New Testament canon that needs to be corrected, namely that it was (or had to be) decided by a church council. The fact of the matter is that when we consider early church history there is no such council. Sure, there are regional church councils that made declarations about the canon (Laodicea, Hippo, Carthage). But these regional councils did not just “pick” books they happened to like, but affirmed the books they believed *had functioned as foundational documents for the Christian faith*. In other words, these councils were declaring the way things had been, not the way they wanted them to be. Thus, these councils did not create, authorize, or determine the canon. They simply were part of the process of *recognizing* a canon that was already there.

This raises an important fact about the New Testament canon that every Christian should know. The shape of our New Testament canon was not determined by a vote or by a council, but by a broad and

ancient consensus. Here we can agree with Bart Ehrman, “The canon of the New Testament was ratified by widespread consensus rather than by official proclamation.”

This historical reality is a good reminder that the canon is not just a man-made construct. It was not the result of a power play brokered by rich cultural elites in some smoke-filled room. It was the result of many years of God’s people reading, using, and responding to these books.”

In this way, the 27 Books of the New Testament became widely accepted for public and private study. The 39 books of the Old Testament were studied to give context to the awesome Grace of Elohim who wiped out all the handwriting of ordinances that were against saints (commands of the Torah which sinful humans could not keep by the Blood shed at the Cross

Galatians 3:13-14 (KJV) *13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: 14 That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.*

Colossians 2:13-15 (KJV) *13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; 14 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; 15 And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.*

Significance of the Old Covenant lies in the reality that it shows us the just demands of the Law and the utter depravity of man leading to inability to obtain redemption by obedience. Because of this, the Law enables mankind to see its need for a Saviour or Messiah. In this way, knowledge of the Old Testament essentially enables saints to appreciate the matchless love of Elohim manifested in the Grace He freely grants to humanity in Yeshua, Jesus.

Saints were built up in their spirit-man as they congregated essentially to hear anointed exposition of the words of scripture, not ‘feel-good’ messages.

2 Timothy 3:15-17 (KJV) *15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*

Romans 15:4 (KJV) *4 For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.*

Phases of the Gospel before Advent of Roman Catholicism

Contrary to claims of the Roman Catholic Church that it is the ‘Mother Church’ and that its Popes have ‘Apostolic Succession’ meaning unbroken authority inherited like a baton from Peter, it is a creation of the union of Imperial Rome and the larger wing of the Church which buckled under the intense fire of persecution in the 4th century. A Chronological presentation of the early Church before advent of Roman Catholicism would reveal these phases:

1. The ‘Apostolic Age’.

This is the period when the first set of Apostles lived and ministered. The last of them to die was John the beloved who wrote the Book of Revelation about AD 95-95. Without reviewing or endorsing all the postings on Theopedia.com, we found an excellent article which defined that era:

“Apostolic Age (30–100 AD)

The apostolic period extends from the Day of Pentecost to the death of the Apostle John, and covers about seventy years, from A.D. 30 to about 100. The field of action is Palestine, and gradually extends over Syria, Asia Minor, Greece, and Italy. The most prominent centers are Jerusalem, Antioch, and Rome, which represent respectively the mother churches of Jewish, Gentile, and United Catholic Christianity.

Next to them are Ephesus and Corinth. Ephesus acquired a special importance by the residence and labors of John, which made themselves felt during the second century through Polycarp and Irenaeus. Samaria, Damascus, Joppa, Caesarea, Tyre, Cyprus, the provinces of Asia Minor, Troas, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Crete, Patmos, Malta, Puteoli, come also into view as points where the Christian faith was planted. Through the eunuch converted by Philip, it reached Candace, the queen of the Ethiopians. As early as A.D. 58 Paul could say: "From Jerusalem and round about even unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ." He afterwards carried it to Rome, where it had already been known before, and possibly as far as Spain, the western boundary of the empire."

Theopedia.com went on to offer the next phase of time which covers approximately 225 years:

From the Apostles to the Council of Nicaea (100–325)

"The second period, from the death of the apostle John to the end of the persecutions, or to the accession of Constantine, the first Christian emperor, is the classic age of the *ecclesia pressa*, of heathen persecution, and of Christian martyrdom and heroism, of cheerful sacrifice of possessions and life itself for the inheritance of heaven. It furnishes a continuous commentary on the Savior's words: "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; I came not to send peace on earth, but a sword..."

The church of this period appears poor in earthly possessions and honors, ***but rich in heavenly grace, in world-conquering faith, love, and hope; unpopular, even outlawed, hated, and persecuted, yet far more vigorous and expansive than the philosophies of Greece or the empire of Rome; composed chiefly of persons of the lower social ranks, yet attracting the noblest and deepest minds of the age, and bearing, in her bosom the hope of the world;*** "as unknown, yet well-known, as dying, and behold it lives;" conquering by apparent defeat, and growing on the blood of her martyrs; great in deeds, greater in sufferings, greatest in death for the honor of Christ and the benefit of generations to come.

The Apostolic Fathers

- Clement of Rome (? – ca. 98)
- Ignatius of Antioch (? – ca. 98/110)
- Polycarp (ca. 70 – ca.155/167)
- Didache
- Epistle of Barnabas
- Shepherd of Hermas

See main pages: Apostolic Fathers and Early church fathers

The Apologists of the first 300 years

The presence of the canonical scriptures did not mean that Holy Spirit stopped speaking. The Lord still communicated to the early church through various vessels. The reality however was that He never gave any of them any revelation which contradicted the canonical texts. In essence, those who were used to write letters or issue public statements in that period spoke and wrote to achieve these main objectives:

1. Expound the Truth that the saints already knew intuitively but lacked depth in
2. Defend the Faith. In doing so, they brought forth what is called 'Apologetics'.
3. Resisting errors, heresies, apostasies

In essence, they fulfilled this scripture in their time:

Jude 3:3 (KJV) *3 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.*

The Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics has this to say about the subject matter:

"Apologetics is a word that is often misunderstood, as if it means 'apologising' for one's faith. The word, however, derives its meaning from the Greek apologia, meaning a 'reasoned defence'.

In the Bible, apologetics is synonymous with evangelism:

1 Peter 3:15-16 (KJV) *15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: 16 Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ."*

Theopedia.com offers this short presentation of the subject matter and well-known apologists of that era:

"The Apologists

In the second century conventionally educated converts began to produce two kinds of writings that help us understand the developing shapes of Christianity — works aimed at a broad audience of educated non-Christians and works aimed at those who considered themselves inside the Church. The writing for non-Christians is usually called *apologetic* in the same sense that the speech given by Socrates in his defense before the Athenian assembly is called his Apology — the word in Greek meant "speech for the defense" rather than the modern more limited denotation of "statement expressing regret". The Apologists, as these authors are sometimes known, made a presentation for the educated classes of the beliefs of Christians, often coupled with an attack on the beliefs and practices of the pagans. Other writings had the purpose of instructing and admonishing fellow Christians.

- Justin Martyr (ca. 114 – ca. 165)
- Tertullian (ca. 155–230)
- Tatian (110–180)

Other Ante-Nicene writers

- Irenaeus (ca. 130–202)
- Marcion (ca. 110–160)
- Clement of Alexandria (? – ca. 211/216)
- Origen (ca. 182 – ca. 251)
- Cyprian (ca. 200–258)

Elohim has so ordained it that in each generation until Yeshua returns, there will be vessels specially elected and set aside to call attention of the Church to the foundational role of the Holy Scriptures in lives of saints. Such vessels will be used to expound the scriptures, bring forth fresh insight into import of specific scriptures which many have forgotten or hazy about. That was the case of Martin Luther in 1517 and many other reformers throughout the ages.

Review Questions

1. Please share with us your 3 main things that you take away from this chapter.
2. What is your personal commitment as we see end of the age unfolding in our time?

Chapter 36

The Rightly Divided Word Empowered the Alpha Church

Before we end this section, it is necessary to revisit the issue of the canonical scriptures which undergirded the lives of saints in the Alpha Church. The saints were encouraged to have an open mind which enabled them to receive the Word with sincerity, mixed with faith which transformed their hearts, renewed their mind and empowered their walk with the attitude of victory.

1 Peter 2:1-3 (KJV) *1 Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, 2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: 3 If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.*

The reality that saints congregated essentially to study the Word, break bread and prayers (Acts 2:42) created a 'School Paradigm' which ensured that learning was thorough and not flaky. There was no way any one could last the distance with cherry picked scriptures.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (KJV) *16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*

To this extent, the word which abided in them became a vital instrument in enabling the early church to face and overcome intense persecution including martyrdom. The saints at Berea epitomized this approach to holistic study of the Word, comparing Scripture with Scripture as Isaiah recommended:

Isaiah 28:10 (KJV) *10 For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little:*

Acts 17:10-11 (KJV) *10 And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. 11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.*

2 Timothy 2:15 (KJV) *15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth.*

By avoiding the Broadway of cherry picking Scriptures to suit itching ears and appeal to their emotions, the Alpha Church was essentially saved from errors, heresies and apostasies. False doctrines are fatal in that they destroy spirit and soul.

Today, let us examine a few issues which required a balanced understanding. When they were practiced, saints were built up into strong Kingdom communities which overcame all pressure from the outside as we saw in previous chapters. Examining the following:

#1. The issue of unequal yoke in Marriage

In writing to the Corinthian saints, Paul emphatically made a case for why they could not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. Here is the passage:

2 Corinthians 6:14-18 (KJV) *14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? 15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? 16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. 18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.*

A passage like this clearly forbid single Christians from considering unbelievers for marriage. On the other hand, it could be used by immature, ignorant or insincere Christians to separate from or divorce their unbelieving spouses. It was only by rightly dividing the whole counsel of Truth concerning marriage that such rash decisions could be avoided.

In that regard, any who wanted to separate from or divorce their spouses on the grounds of spiritual incompatibility needed to consider other Scriptures which brought greater clarity on limits of 2 Corinthians 6:14-18.

Two of such passages are these:

1 Corinthians 7:12-19 (KJV) *12 But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. 13 And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. 14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy. 15 But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace. 16 For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife? 17 But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so, ordain I in all churches. 18 Is any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised. 19 Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.*

This powerful word from Peter made the case that women who converted after marriage were not permitted to break the marriage vow but to allow their witness for Yeshua as disciples impact their husbands for good:

1 Peter 3:1-6 (KJV) *1 Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; 2 While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. 3 Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; 4 But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. 5 For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: 6 Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.*

By understanding and walking in the whole counsel of Elohim concerning this matter, they avoided unnecessary reproach.

#2. Concerning the Law of Marriage

The early disciples understood that through redemption, all became sons of Elohim – neither male nor female.

John 1:11-13 (KJV) *11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not. 12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: 13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*

Galatians 3:26-29 (KJV) *26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

Yet, by rightful division of the Word, the saints knew that Marriage is an institution to be willfully entered on the understanding that sisters would be subject to their husbands (not as Gentile rulers) for purpose of order in Christian homes.

Ephesians 5:22-24 (KJV) *22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. 24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.*

This clear charge notwithstanding, saints were taught, and the husbands were not to lord it over their wives but to love, nourish, cherish and regard them as co-heirs of the grace of life! They were not to be threatened by the spiritual gifts or talents of their wives but to nurture them for excellence!

Ephesians 5:25-33 (KJV) *25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; 26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. 28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. 29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: 30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. 31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. 32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. 33 Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.*

If a man lorded it over his wife, mistreating her because he is the head, he risked incurring the wrath of Elohim and the family could suffer under a closed heaven where nothing prospered!

1 Peter 3:7-8 (KJV) *7 Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered. 8 Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous:*

#3. Concerning serving unbelieving Masters

It was also possible for saints in the Alpha Church to also use 2 Corinthians 6: 14-18 as basis of considering themselves barred from serving unbelieving Masters. Rightful division of scriptures would reveal that this was not the intent of the Lord.

1 Corinthians 7:20-24 (KJV) *20 Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called. 21 Art thou called being a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather. 22 For he that is called in the Lord,*

being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant. 23 Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men. 24 Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God.

Proper study of the Word to understand the whole counsel of Elohim reveals that saints are clearly called upon to consider service to unbelieving masters a witnessing opportunity.

1 Peter 2:18-23 (KJV) *18 Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. 19 For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. 20 For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. 21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: 22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: 23 Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:*

#4. Concerning care of Widows

Rightly dividing the word of scripture also applied to the issue of care of widows. Right from the early days, the Church had taken this duty seriously

Acts 6:1 (KJV) *1 And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.*

When James wrote his epic epistle, he made it clear that care of widows was a sacred responsibility of saints.

James 1:27 (KJV) *27 Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.*

With time, this gracious disposition of the Alpha Church must have been abused by some of the beneficiaries. Holy Spirit used Paul to put in place a fair balance which ensured that compassion was not squandered on those who used widow-hood as an occasion to idleness or mischief. He also addressed the need for families to step up the plate and care for widows as much as they could so that all the responsibility was not dumped on local assemblies, draining up their resources:

1 Timothy 5:3-16 (KJV) *3 Honour widows that are widows indeed. 4 But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God. 5 Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day. 6 But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth. 7 And these things give in charge, that they may be blameless. 8 But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. 9 Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man. 10 Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work. 11 But the younger widows refuse: for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry; 12 Having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith. 13 And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not. 14 I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully. 15 For some are already turned aside after Satan. 16 If any man*

or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed.

#5. Ministers/Leaders and the Royal Priesthood

If you read only one part of scripture, you could walk away with the impression that the Royal Priesthood had no need for order and authority of ministers.

1 Peter 2:9 (KJV) *9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light;*

Rightly dividing the word of truth reveals however that the Lord truly made the Royal Priesthood of Melchizedek a universal one for all saints. But He also set in place ministers that were set apart to serve the saints and be instruments of their empowerment.

The brethren were charged to submit to His authority in such ministers, obey them so that there would be order, rather than chaos in the Household of Faith.

Romans 13:1 (KJV) *1 Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.*

Hebrews 13:7, 17 (KJV) *7 Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.*

17 Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

1 Peter 5:5 (KJV) *5 Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.*

#6. Care of sincere ministers who give up all in other to serve

The Alpha Church knew from experience of the 12 Apostles that those called to full time ministry were required to serve sincerely, pouring out all that the Father had vested in them freely for feeding the flock.

Matthew 10:8 (KJV) *8 Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.*

They did not turn the sacrifices of such ministers into a one-sided matter where they carried the entire burden. Various scriptures made it clear while all saints are called, those who the Father set aside by Himself for full time ministry would be effectively backed up and supported by He Who sent them.

Matthew 10:9-10 (KJV) *9 Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, 10 Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat.*

But He would not drop resources they need from heaven but rather inspire saints they served to be instruments of providing for their material wellbeing. This leads to spiritual; balance that took away reproach from ministers in the form of destitution or avoidable poverty:

Matthew 10:11-13 (KJV) *11 And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence. 12 And when ye come into an house, salute it. 13 And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you.*

1 Corinthians 9:7-11 (KJV) *7 Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? 8 Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? 9 For it is written in the law of Moses, thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? 10 Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. 11 If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?*

Galatians 6:6-7 (KJV) *6 Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. 7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*

No true saint would love to see those the Lord used to feed them, end up in destitution.

1 Timothy 5:17-19 (KJV) *17 Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. 18 For the scripture saith, thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward. 19 Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.*

With this approach saints in the Alpha Church were completely transformed and their lives were so other worldly compared with non-Christians that the difference was clear to all! What we examined in this chapter is just a sample. The whole of the New Covenant needs to be studied, understood in the right context and allowed to power lives of saints. This is the way to go and be safe!

Colossians 3:16 (KJV) *16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.*

Review Questions

1. Please share three of the new things you learned (or were reminded of) in this chapter.
2. Please share what adjustments the chapter requires you to make (if any)?

Chapter 37

Christian Religion: History of Roman Catholicism

Introduction and Caveat

We will start this section in an unusual way. Lesson 37 will be a presentation of the history of Roman Catholicism from a secular point of view. Let us warn that most secular writers start with a wrong assumption: That Roman Catholicism is equivalent to Christianity. But as anyone familiar with the wide divergences between Biblical truths and Catholic doctrines knows, the most charitable description of the Roman Catholic Church is that; it is a Religion with some Christian features but which in its real essence is a departure from New Testament presentation of the Gospel of Yeshua, Jesus and the Kingdom of Elohim.

Let us be equipped with understanding of how Roman Catholicism has sought to be known and regarded so we will be able to appreciate the simplicity of the true gospel of Yeshua, Jesus and the Kingdom!

The Source for this lesson is Britannica.com/topic/Roman-Catholicism

The Emergence of Catholic Christianity

At least in an inchoate form, all the elements of catholicity: Doctrine, authority, universality are evident in the New Testament. The Acts of the Apostles begins with a depiction of the demoralized band of the disciples of Jesus in Jerusalem, but by the end of its account of the first decades, the Christian community has developed some nascent criteria for determining the difference between authentic (“apostolic”) and inauthentic teaching and behaviour. It has also moved beyond the geographic borders of Judaism, as the dramatic sentence of the closing chapter announces: “And thus we came to Rome” (Acts 28:14).

The later epistles of the New Testament admonish their readers to “guard what has been entrusted to you” (1 Timothy 6:20) and to “contend for the faith that was once for all handed down to the holy ones” (Jude 3), and they speak about the Christian community itself in exalted and even cosmic terms as the church, “which is [Christ’s] body, the fullness of the one who fills all things in every way” (Ephesians 1:23). It is clear even from the New Testament these catholic features were proclaimed in response to internal challenges as well as external ones; indeed, scholars have concluded the early church was far more pluralistic from the very beginning than the somewhat idealized portrayal in the New Testament might suggest. As such challenges continued in the 2nd and 3rd centuries, further development of catholic teaching became necessary.

The schema of apostolic authority formulated by the bishop of Lyon, Irenaeus (c. 130–c. 200), sets forth systematically the three main sources of authority for catholic Christianity: the Scriptures of the New Testament (alongside the Hebrew Scriptures, or “Old Testament,” which Christians interpret as prophesying the coming of Jesus); the episcopal centers established by the Apostles as the seats of their

identifiable successors in the governance of the church (traditionally at Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, and Rome); and the apostolic tradition of normative doctrine as the “rule of faith” and the standard of Christian conduct.

Each of the three sources depended on the other two for validation; thus, one could determine which purportedly scriptural writings were genuinely apostolic by appealing to their conformity with acknowledged apostolic tradition and to the usage of the apostolic churches, and so on. This was not a circular argument but an appeal to a single catholic authority of apostolicity, in which the three elements were inseparable. Inevitably, however, there arose conflicts—of doctrine and jurisdiction, of worship and pastoral practice, and of social and political strategy—among the three sources, as well as between equally “apostolic” bishops. When bilateral means of resolving such conflicts proved insufficient, there could be recourse to either the precedent of convoking an apostolic council (Acts 15) or to what Irenaeus had already called “the preeminent authority of this church [of Rome], with which, as a matter of necessity, every church should agree.” Catholicism was on the way to becoming Roman Catholic.

The Emergence of Roman Catholicism

Internal factors

Several historical factors, which vary in importance depending on the time, help to account for the emergence of Roman Catholicism. The two factors that are often regarded as most decisive—at any rate by the champions of the primacy of Rome in the church—are the primacy of Peter among the Twelve Apostles of Christ and the identification of Peter with the church of Rome. Although there are considerable variations in the enumerations of the Apostles in the New Testament (Matthew 10:2–5; Mark 3:16–19; Luke 6:14–16; Acts 1:13) and further variations in the manuscripts, what they all have in common is that they list (in Matthew’s words) “first, Simon called Peter.” “But I have prayed,” Jesus said to Peter, “that your own faith may not fail; and once you have turned back, you must strengthen your brothers” (Luke 22:32) and “Feed my lambs....Tend my sheep....Feed my sheep” (John 21:15–17).

In perhaps the most important passage, at least as it was later understood, Jesus said to Peter; “And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock [Greek *petra*] I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” (Matthew 16:18–19)

According to Roman Catholic teaching, this is the charter of the church—i.e., of the Roman Catholic Church. The identification of this obvious primacy of Peter in the New Testament with the primacy of the church of Rome is not self-evident. For one thing, the New Testament is almost silent about a connection between Peter and Rome. The reference at the close of the Acts of the Apostles to the arrival of the apostle Paul in Rome gives no indication that Peter was there as the leader of the Christian community or even as a resident, and the epistle that Paul had addressed somewhat earlier to the church at Rome devotes its entire closing chapter to greetings addressed to many believers in the city but fails to mention Peter’s name. On the other hand, in what is presumably a reference to a Christian

congregation, the first of the two epistles ascribed to Peter uses the phrase “the chosen one at Babylon” (1 Peter 5:13), Babylon being a code name for Rome.

It is, moreover, the unanimous testimony of early Christian tradition that Peter, having been at Jerusalem and then at Antioch, finally came to Rome, where he was crucified (with his head down, according to Christian tradition, in deference to the Crucifixion of Christ); there was and still is, however, disagreement about the exact location of his grave. Writing at about the end of the 2nd century, the North African theologian Tertullian (c. 160–c. 225) spoke of “Rome, from which there comes even into our own hands the very authority of the apostles themselves. How happy is its church, on which apostles poured forth all their doctrine along with their blood! where Peter endures a passion like his Lord’s! where Paul wins his crown in a death like that of John [the Baptist]!”

Indeed, Rome could claim affiliation with two apostles, Peter and Paul, as well as numerous other martyrs for the faith. In addition to this apostolic argument for Roman primacy—and often interwoven with it—was the argument that Rome should be honored because of its position as the capital of the Roman Empire: the church in the prime city ought to be prime among the churches. Rome drew tourists, pilgrims, and other visitors from throughout the empire and beyond and eventually became, for church no less than for state, what Jerusalem had originally been called, “the church from which every church took its start, the mother city [metropolis] of the citizens of the new covenant.”

Curiously, after the newly converted emperor Constantine (died 337) transferred the capital of the Roman Empire from Rome to Constantinople in 330, Rome’s civil authority was weakened, but its spiritual authority was strengthened: the title “supreme priest” (pontifex maximus), which had been the prerogative of the emperor, now devolved upon the pope. The transfer of the capital also occasioned a dispute between Rome (“Old Rome”) and Constantinople (“New Rome”) over whether the new capital should be entitled to a commensurate ecclesiastical preeminence alongside the see (seat of a bishop’s office) of Peter.

The second and fourth ecumenical councils of the church (at Constantinople in 381 and at Chalcedon in 451) both legislated such a position for the see of Constantinople, but Rome refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of that prerogative. It was also at the Council of Chalcedon—which was convoked to resolve the doctrinal controversy between Antioch and Alexandria over the person of Jesus Christ—that the council fathers accepted the formula proposed by Pope Leo I (reigned 440–461), which offered the orthodox teaching of Christ’s Incarnation and of the union of both his natures. Recognizing the authority with which Leo spoke, the council fathers declared, “Peter has spoken through the mouth of Leo!”

The council was only one in a long series of occasions when the authority of Rome, sometimes by invitation and sometimes by its own intervention, served as a court of appeal in jurisdictional and dogmatic disputes that had erupted in various parts of Christendom. During the first six centuries of the church, the bishop of every major Christian center was, at one time or another, charged with and convicted of heresy—except the bishop of Rome (though his turn would come). The titles that the see of Rome gradually assumed and the claims of primacy that it made within the life and governance of the church were, in many ways, little more than the formalization of what had become widely accepted practice.

External factors

In addition to various internal developments, at least two external factors contributed decisively at the beginning of the Middle Ages to the development of Roman Catholicism as a distinct form of Christianity. One was the rise of Islam in the 7th century. During the decade following the death of the Prophet Muhammad in 632, his followers captured three of the five “patriarchates” of the early church—Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem—leaving only Rome and Constantinople, located at opposite ends of the Mediterranean and, eventually, also at opposite ends of the Schism of 1054. The other external force that encouraged the emergence of Roman Catholicism as a distinct entity was the collapse of governmental and administrative structures in the Western Roman Empire in 476 and the migration into Europe of Germanic and other tribes that eventually established themselves as ruling elites. (The Eastern Roman Empire, with its capital at Constantinople, survived as the Byzantine Empire until 1453.)

Some of these peoples, particularly the Goths, had already become Christian before their arrival in western Europe. The form of Christianity they had adopted in the 4th century, generally known as Arianism, was, according to the ecumenical Council of Nicaea, heretical in its doctrine of the Trinity. Therefore, the future of medieval Europe belonged not to the tribes that had converted to an unorthodox Christianity but to the tribes, particularly the Franks, that had adhered to traditional Germanic religion and later became Christian. The Franks, after their arrival in Gaul, accepted Catholic teaching on the doctrine of the Trinity as well as the authority of the Catholic bishops of Gaul. The coronation by the pope of the Frankish king Charlemagne (c. 742–814) as emperor of the Romans on Christmas Day 800 was the culmination of the long-standing alliance of the Franks and the church.

Notwithstanding the contributions of these popes, medieval Roman Catholicism would not have taken the form it did without the conversion of the emperor Constantine in 312. Constantine legalized Christianity, promoted its interests, and took an active role in its institutional and doctrinal development. Even though some supported a heretical version of Christianity, all subsequent emperors except Julian the Apostate favored the faith. Theodosius, I (347–395), however, made Catholic Christianity the official religion of the empire in 381 and prohibited the worship of pagan gods in 392. It was as the church approached the conclusion of the first millennium of its history, it had become the legatee of the spiritual, administrative, and intellectual resources of the early centuries.

The Early Medieval Papacy

During the centuries that marked the transition from the early to the medieval church, Roman Catholicism benefited from the leadership of several outstanding popes. Two of these popes—who are called “Saint” by the Roman Catholic Church and who are the only two popes called “the Great” by historians—merit special consideration, even in a brief article. Pope Leo I was, even for his pagan contemporaries, the embodiment of the ideal of “Romanness” in his resistance to the barbarian conquerors. In 452, with the help of the apostles Peter and Paul and a host of angels (according to papal tradition), he convinced Attila and the Huns to withdraw to the banks of the Danube, thus saving Rome from destruction. He repeated this triumph in 455, when his intercession with the Vandals mitigated their depredations in the city.

His aforementioned intervention in the doctrinal controversy among Eastern theologians over the person of Christ and the role played by his Tome of 449 in the formula of the Council of Chalcedon in 451 were part of a concerted campaign by Leo to consolidate and extend the jurisdiction of the see of Rome to remote areas such as Gaul, Spain, and North Africa; this extended jurisdiction was officially acknowledged by the Roman emperor. Pope Gregory I (reigned 590–604), more than any pope before or after him, laid the foundations for the Roman Catholicism of the Middle Ages.

He sent Augustine of Canterbury (died 604/605) to bring about the conversion of England to the Christian faith, and he corresponded with the rulers of the Merovingian Franks and with the bishops of Gothic Spain. He built up papal administration in central Italy and negotiated with the Lombard rulers who occupied the peninsula. Rejecting the universalist claims of the patriarch of Constantinople, Gregory asserted papal primacy over moral issues and emphasized the humility of his office by styling himself the “servant of the servants of God.”

His commitment to a life of service is demonstrated in his Pastoral Rule, a guidebook for bishops that outlines their obligations to teach and to serve as moral exemplars to their flocks. Gregory the Great was also one of the most important patrons of the Benedictine monastic movement, to which he owed a considerable part of his spiritual upbringing; he wrote a life of St. Benedict of Nursia (c. 480–c. 547).

Papacy/Popes

Pope, (Latin *papa*, from Greek *pappas*, “father”), the title, since about the 9th century, of the bishop of Rome, the head of the Roman Catholic church. It was formerly given, especially from the 3rd to the 5th century, to any bishop and sometimes to simple priests as an ecclesiastical title expressing affectionate respect. It is still used in the East for the Orthodox patriarch of Alexandria and for Orthodox priests. (See also *papacy*.) The *Annuario Pontificio*, the official directory of the Holy See, describes the office of the pope by the following titles: Bishop of Rome, Vicar of Jesus Christ, Successor of the Prince of the Apostles, Supreme Pontiff of the Universal Church, Patriarch of the West, Primate of Italy, Metropolitan Archbishop of the Province of Rome, Sovereign of the State of Vatican City, Servant of the Servants of God. The title *pope* or *papa* (abbreviated *PP.*) is officially used only as a less solemn style. Doctrinally, in Catholic churches, the pope is regarded as the successor of St. Peter, who was head of the Apostles. The pope, as bishop of Rome, is thus seen to have full and supreme power of jurisdiction over the universal church in matters of faith and morals, as well as in church discipline and government.

The twofold basis of this doctrine of papal primacy is the place of Peter in the New Testament (in which there are various metaphors expressing his prerogatives) and the place of the Roman church in history. The understanding of papal primacy developed as the church developed, two notable factors being the role of Rome as the imperial city until the 5th century and the religious and political role of the bishop of Rome afterward. The teaching of the Second Vatican Council (1962–65) on the role of bishops counterbalanced the emphasis on papal prerogatives while maintaining the view that the authority of the bishops as a body cannot be separated from that of the pope as its head. Although the Eastern Orthodox have long been willing to give the bishop of Rome the primacy of honour accorded to patriarchs, and although many Protestants have appreciated the moral leadership shown by some

recent popes, the Catholic doctrine of papal primacy was still a major obstacle to ecumenical efforts that began in the 20th century.

A list of popes and antipopes is provided in the table.

(Master Class Students: please study this list carefully and note that such personalities and grandeur ascribed to their offices do not line up with the biblical narratives in the Acts of the Apostles, Pauline Epistles, Epistles of Peter; James, Jude; the Epistles of John and the Book of Revelation. From a date point of view, John is believed to have written the book of Revelations in AD 95-97 and clearly decried the Roman empire as a mortal enemy of the true Church. A study of the writings and lifestyle of Peter clearly do not in any way present him in a papal cast!)

Popes and anti-popes

Peter ?-c. 64 Linus c. 67-76/79 Anacletus 76-88 or 79-91; Clement I 88-97 or 92-101 Evaristus c. 97-c. 107; Alexander I 105-115 or 109-119 Sixtus I c. 115-c. 125 Telesphorus c. 125-c. 136; Hyginus c. 136-c. 140; Pius I c. 140-155; Anicetus c. 155-c. 166; Soter c. 166-c. 175; Eleutherius c. 175-189; Victor I c. 189-199 Zephyrinus; c. 199-217; Calixtus I (Callistus) 217?-222; Hippolytus 217/218-235 Urban I 222-230; Pontian 230-235; Anterus 235-236; Fabian; 236-250 Cornelius 251-253; Novatian 251; Lucius I 253-254; Stephen I 254-257 Sixtus II 257-258; Dionysius 259-268 ; Felix I 269-274; Eutychian 275-283 Gaius 283-296; Marcellinus 291/296-304; Marcellus I 308-309 Eusebius 309/310; Miltiades (Melchiades) 311-314; Sylvester I 314-335

Let us proceed to see what the Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica say of the Pope under whom Constantine 1, Emperor of Rome embraced the Roman Church and played a major role in shaping its direction as the greatest Religion the world has ever seen.

Saint Sylvester I

Saint Sylvester I, also spelled Silvester (born, Rome [Italy]—died 335, Rome; Western feast day December 31, Eastern feast day January 2), pope from 314 to 335, whose long pontificate saw the beginnings of the Christian Roman Empire. A presbyter when elected to succeed Pope St. Miltiades (Melchiades), Sylvester was consecrated on Jan. 31, 314. The most important event of his reign was the Council of Nicaea (May 325), which condemned the Alexandrian Christian priest Arius, founder of Arianism, a heretical doctrine teaching that the Son was neither equal with God the Father nor eternal. While the Roman emperor Constantine I the Great favored Christianity and was a major controller of its ecclesiastical affairs, neither he nor his immediate successors gave any official recognition to papal primacy over the church. Thus, it was a rare and significant exception when Sylvester was accorded a preeminent role in the Arian crisis. Although invited, he did not attend the Council of Nicaea personally but was represented by two legates, who were treated with great honour and respect yet did not preside at the debates.

According to subsequent legend, Sylvester converted and baptized Constantine, who was the first Roman emperor to become a Christian, and miraculously cured him of leprosy, for which the emperor allegedly gave him the Donatio Constantini (Donation of Constantine), a grant of spiritual supremacy

over the Eastern patriarchates and over all matters of faith and worship as well as temporal dominion over Rome and the entire Western world.

The Donation is now universally admitted being an 8th-century forgery, but it was important in the development of the medieval theory of church and state. Sylvester is believed to have built at the Cemetery of St. Priscilla on the Via Salaria a church, where he was buried. His relics were transferred in 762 by Pope St. Paul I to the Church of San Silvestro in Capite, now the national church of English Catholics in Rome.

Review Questions

1. Please study this lesson carefully and mention at least 3 things about this secular account of the beginning of Roman Catholicism which do not align with the New Testament Teachings.

We trust Holy Spirit to reveal to us through the Holy Scriptures, the things which occasioned the rise of this great Religion which has literally played a major role in world affairs for over 1700 years. We will see how it led people away from relationship with Elohim; took away the sovereign rule of Yeshua, Jesus; replaced the Word with traditions and rituals of man; and re-defined Salvation and the new birth experience to mean something other than what the Bible defined. To understand the Roman Themed Church is to understand one of the greatest mysteries of the ages!

Chapter 38

The Journey Down the Broad way of Religion

Four Foundation Pillars which supported emergence of Christian Religion as an alternative to the true gospel.

In lesson 37, we saw a secular perspective of the Roman Catholic Church influenced heavily by what it says of itself as having apostolic succession based on its interpretation of Matthew 16:18. Students of the Bible know that to pick verse 18 and leave off the entire passage (Matthew 16: 13-19) is dangerous cherry picking of the Word to suit pre-determined objectives.

However, from a biblical narrative approach, the Roman Catholic Church emerged progressively over a period, moving away from the nature of the spiritual organism which Yeshua, Jesus the Head purposed towards an organization with tangible structures which Rome could embrace. That embrace served the interests of both parties:

- Rome used the Roman Catholic Church to serve its imperial purposes until the Western section fell in AD 476. The story is similar in the Eastern Section (Byzantine Empire) which survived at least 1000 years more before it fell to the Ottoman Turks in AD 1453.
- On the other hand, the Roman Catholic Church used the structures and power of Rome to expand throughout the empire and consolidate its hold over Parishes, Dioceses and even for some periods of time, the City of Rome itself. Ambitious Priests, Bishops and Popes either ruled indirectly as lords spiritual or even combined same with temporal rule at certain points in history.

It is essential that end time reformers be fully aware of the circumstances cited in various New Testament texts which laid the foundation for emergence of Roman Catholicism as a Religion which accepted some texts of the gospel, preached some of the truths in the Word, formulated some into doctrines, sought to present itself as the custodian of Christianity but essentially rejected the full essence of the message and mission/assignment of Yeshua, Jesus.

7 Things to Bear in Mind Concerning Roman Catholics

As saints of the Most High, we are called upon to be charitable in assessing other people. To walk back through nearly 2000 years of history of which the last 1800 are particularly relevant to emergence of Roman Catholicism as a dominant world power, it is essential we understand:

1. The average Roman Catholic is a human being who desires to know and serve Elohim and is interested to be identified with Yeshua, Jesus.
2. Many Roman Catholics are nice, moral people who are even zealous of their faith and assume that they are saved through affiliation and faithful participation in its sacraments and liturgies.

3. Majority of Roman Catholics are so by birth and have little or no understanding of their Religion and its true history.
4. This study is not to arm saints with information to profile, abuse, insult or fight Roman Catholics. To use the revelation herein for such purposes is to work against its essence.
5. The revelations in this lesson and subsequent ones are truths grounded in the Holy Scriptures and confirmed by History. They will therefore empower us to walk in true liberty as Yeshua said in John 8:32.
6. From that stand point, the lessons in this section should place a burden on all true saints to intercede for salvation of their natural brethren, friends and colleagues who obviously are ignorant in holding onto belief systems that are clearly unbiblical.
7. The reality is Roman Catholicism and Islam are the largest Religions in the earth realm, each accounting for over 1.2 billion persons. Because some degree of Bible truths is already known and accepted in Roman Catholicism, it offers to saints the greatest mission opportunity. Approaching this opportunity requires much prayers, spiritual warfare and wisdom which comes from the Lord and based on knowledge of what it really is as a Religion which imitates the Gospel!

The Four Factors Which Led to Emergence of Roman Catholicism as a Dominant Religion:

Let us wait on the Lord and patiently receive various insights which combine to give us the whole picture of the dark period of spiritual history when Truth was hidden.

#1. Intense Persecution opened many Christians to seek instant gratification. Backsliding in the heart and mind thus prepared many to be open to the relief which would be offered by Imperial Rome.

The rejection and persecutions which Christians suffered created a weariness among generality of saints. Some were weary while waiting for fulfilment of two main promises of scripture given by the three leading Apostles of the Apostolic Age whose writings circulated freely throughout the early church: Writings of Paul, John the beloved, and Peter. Their writings warned of the dangers of complacency and necessity to be ever alive in the spirit since the Lord had said His coming would be without prior notice. Peter had warned about intensity of the fires they would face.

1 Peter 4:1-2, 12-19 (KJV) *1 Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; 2 That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.*

12 Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: 13 But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. 14 If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. 15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. 16 Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. 17 For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? 18 And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner

appear? 19 Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

As we saw in a previous lesson, many saints gladly paid the supreme price when required. But, as history also captured, many Christians ended up betraying their Master rather than die the cruel deaths. They chose the broad way of cavorting with Rome to gain their lives. When spared, such people were ashamed to walk with the faithful and they were open to 'new expressions of the faith' which was liberal and acceptable to Rome. Accordingly, they participated in Gentile Feasts, Emperor deification when required and an 'easy' approach to their 'Faith.' We shall examine this matter of how intense persecution prepared the ground not just for the falling away from the true gospel but also prepared many to embrace the 'lifeline' offered by union of Rome and Church in greater detail in a future lesson.

#2. 'Delay' of the Rapture, Resurrection of the dead and the Lord's return

Matthew, John, Paul, Peter were used by the Lord to bring revelation to the Church concerning His return to reward the faithful and punish the wicked. This classic by John concerning the words of Yeshua reassured many faithful over the years to embrace their fires, knowing that one day with the King would compensate for all tears suffered while in the body:

John 14:1-4 (KJV) *1 Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. 4 And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.*

Let us remember, the Epistles were not just written. They were messages which were aimed at encouraging saints to hold firm to their faith, running their portions of the earthly race till the end. In this regard, while the word of the Lord concerning the end of the age and His return seemed cryptic to many, in reality, the divine intent was to keep each generation of saints on their toes, unspotted from the world, watching, praying, waiting and occupying or doing Kingdom business until Yeshua returned on a day and time no one knew. In other words, each generation of saints was supposed to live as if He would return in their own time! In the face of intense persecution suffered under Roman authorities, some epistles were specifically designed to sustain them to look beyond the present afflictions and look up to when Yeshua would return.

As early as the days of Paul (who himself died in his mid-60's), some believers were beginning to despair when fellow saints who were friends, family or members of their congregations completed their earthly pilgrimage and died. The Lord used him to explain the correlation between death, the Kingdom and the eternal crown urging them not to give up.

1 Corinthians 15:50-58 (KJV) *50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. 51 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. 55 O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? 56 The sting of death is sin; and the strength*

of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (KJV) *13 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. 15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. 16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. 18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11(KJV) *1 But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. 2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. 3 For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. 4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. 5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. 6 Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. 7 For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. 8 But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. 9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. 11 Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.*

From the tone of these epistles, it is fairly obvious some people were already impatient that the Lord had not yet returned. To worsen matters, some backslidden preachers or false prophet had seized on the seeming delay to preach errors designed to overthrow the faith of saints. Peter was used by the Lord to address this matter:

2 Peter 2:1-3 (KJV) *1 But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. 2 And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. 3 And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.*

2 Peter 3:1-4, 8-10 (KJV) *1 This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: 2 That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour: 3 Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, 4 And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.*

8 But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. 10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

These potent scriptures which encouraged the faithful was also the basis of despair by those who had started to crumble or backslide in their heart.

#3. Backsliding and Falling Away from the Truth were also prophesied in the writings of Paul and John as things which would precede end of the age.

Concerning return of the Lord, one often ignored or glossed over passages in the epistle of Paul to the saints at Thessalonica. While this passage is generally used to describe the time immediately preceding public unveiling of the anti-Christ to come, the reality is it was also describing, by the Law of double application, the reality that the early church would be buffeted by 'defections' from the faith.

2 Thessalonians 2:3, 10-12 (KJV) *3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;*

10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: 12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

Before writing the Book of Revelation, John had tracked the danger posed by love of the world and its fancies that seemed to have crept into brethren of his day. His warning about the toxicity of the world and its operating system of carnality (the standard fare of religion) can now be better appreciated:

1 John 2:12-17 (KJV) *12 I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake. 13 I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father. 14 I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one. 15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. 17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.*

John also warned of a falling away of which he was eye witness. Those who fell away from the truth of the Gospel (the new birth experience, holiness, separation from the world, simplicity of life, occupying or doing Kingdom business with expectation of soon return of Yeshua) were not content with separating themselves from the holy assembly of true saints. They invested in trying to seduce those who remained true to the gospel. John had to ask them to trust Holy Spirit for discernment of motives of those who came to offer them something different:

1 John 2:18-28 (KJV) *18 Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. 19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. 20 But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. 21 I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth. 22 Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. 23 Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also. 24 Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father. 25 And this is the promise that he*

hath promised us, even eternal life. 26 These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. 27 But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him. 28 And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

The Revelations granted to John the beloved shared the message of great hope that a remnant of Israel would be saved (Chapter 7); that there would be great troubles at end of the age; that Good would triumph over Evil (Chapter 19); and that the Kingdom of Elohim would be established on earth where saints would reign as co-heirs with Yeshua, Jesus for 1000 years (Chapter 20) and endless eternity with Elohim (Chapters 21 and 22). Let us note however Yeshua also showed John the pathetic state in which some of the churches had fallen, not up to 70 years after Pentecost. Let us repeat the warnings Yeshua issued to five of the unfaithful Churches which represented what was going on, not just in Asia Minor but possibly all over the Roman Empire:

3.1. State of the Church at Ephesus which Paul and John laboured amongst and whose first Bishop was Timothy:

Revelation 2:2, 4 (KJV) *2 Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write;*

4 Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

The Charge and Promise:

5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. 7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

3.2: State of the Church at Pergamos

Revelation 2:12 (KJV) *12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;*

Their Sin/Indictment:

14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. 15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate.

The Charge and Promises:

16 Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. 17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.

3.3: State of the Church at Thyatira

Their Sin/Indictment:

20 Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. 21 And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.

The Charge and Promises:

22 Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. 23 And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works. 24 But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. 25 But that which ye have already hold fast till I come. 26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: 27 And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. 28 And I will give him the morning star. 29 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

3.4. State of the Church at Sardis

Their Sin/Indictment: Spiritual Dead:

Revelation 3:1 (KJV) *1 And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.*

The Charge and Promises:

2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. 3 Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. 4 Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. 5 He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. 6 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

#4: State of the Church at Laodicea

Their Sin/Indictment: worldliness and material pursuits

15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. 16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. 17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

The Charge and Promises

18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou

mayest see. 19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. 20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. 21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. 22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Out of 7 Churches, 5 flunked the test within the first 70 years of the Church! There is no record they repented and changed their ways. Today, that whole region where they were located is now one vast swathe of Islamic Turkey. Christians are a net minority in the nation! Let us remember that region was an integral part of the Eastern Roman Empire whose capital, Constantinople is the same as Istanbul in modern day Turkey

5. Creation of Christian Religion amenable to the world as an alternative to the true gospel which requires separate identity from it.

It must be noted people who backslide do so because they cannot meet up with the standards of holiness required by the New birth experience. While some go out rightly into visible perdition, a more practical pattern which generality of people tend to follow is the creation of religious systems which suit their taste and fancies. That was the charge against Israel when it turned the Torah on its head and used it as basis to reject the Ultimate Revelation of the Torah: Yeshua, Jesus Himself.

Romans 10:1-4 (KJV) *1 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. 2 For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. 3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. 4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth.*

It is needful to be reminded that when Elohim gave the Torah to Moses, His stated expectation was that they would be a kingdom of priests unto Him and Israel as a nation would be the visible representation of His Kingdom:

Exodus 19:5-6 (KJV) *5 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: 6 And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.*

Before long, Israel had turned the desired relationship with Elohim into Religion. It was a shift of heart that prepared them, even at that earliest time to desire and accept a Golden Calf as their god. Evidently though they had come out of Egypt in a physical sense, Egypt still dominated their consciousness. The way Egyptians venerated the Cattle must have pulled at their imagination that day at the foot of Mount Sinai. By the time the Ultimate Torah appeared on the scene, they not only rejected Him but turned the Holy Word of Elohim into a dry religious tome mixed with traditions and rituals that had a form of godliness but clearly lacking in the power of a vibrant relationship between humanity and Divinity which was originally desired. Look at what Yeshua told religious leaders of his day:

Matthew 15:7-9 (KJV) *7 Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, 8 This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me . 9 But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.*

If this tendency is juxtaposed with realities of the era between the first and fourth centuries it is fairly obvious the larger wing of the Church which was weary of the extensive rejection and persecution suffered at the hands of the Roman Empire may have been steadily prepared for union of Church and state which came in the 4th century.

Review Questions

1. In a few words summarize the central issue in each of the 4 things in this lesson which tracked the descent of a larger wing of the Church in the first four centuries towards
2. What new thing did you learn today.

Chapter 39

Role of the Nicolaitanes in emergence of Roman Catholic Priesthood

In lesson 38, we saw four ways in which the gospel fell on hard ways and created the enabling environment for Christian Religion to emerge as an alternative reality. To refresh our memories, they are:

#1. Intense Persecution opened many Christians to seek instant gratification. Backsliding in the heart and mind thus prepared many to be open to the relief which would be offered by Imperial Rome.

#2. 'Delay' of the Rapture, Resurrection of the dead and the Lord's return' created weariness and impatience.

#3. Backsliding and Falling Away from the Truth were also prophesied in the writings of Paul and John as things which would precede end of the age.

#4. Creation of Christian Religion amenable to the world as alternative to the true gospel which requires separate identity from it.

We will press on to see how two things decried by John the beloved and Yeshua Himself were indicative that a massive re-definition of the gospel was underway within the first 70 years of Pentecost. In bringing these two factors to the fore, let us remember Yeshua had clearly warned His true saints not to be taken in by sweet words or nice gestures by those who claim to represent Him. He asked them to discern all things by one simple principle: check out the fruits!

Matthew 7:16-20 (KJV) *16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? 17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. 19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. 20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.*

The Test of Priesthood

Every system of worship is sustained by a Priesthood pattern. This is true of both personal relationship (as in the Gospel of Yeshua and the Kingdom) as well as in Christian Religion (with its rituals and regulations).

Yeshua gave to His Church a Universal Priesthood: The Royal order of Melchizedeck.

In a subsequent Course, we will study this topic in depth. Suffice it, for this lesson to present a summary of what the Melchizedeck or Royal Priesthood is all about. Concerning Yeshua, here was what the Father spoke through the mouth of David:

Psalms 110:4 (KJV) *4 The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.*

When scripture is compared with scripture, we will note that Yeshua appeared to Abraham as Melchizedek, Priestly King of Salem well before the Law was given to Moses (and therefore before the Levitical/Aaronic priesthood was inaugurated to supervise it).

Genesis 14:18-20 (KJV) *18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. 19 And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: 20 And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.*

In the gospel according to John, Yeshua reminded the incredulous Hebrews of His day about that spectacular meeting with Abraham to prove that He was a pre-existent Personality and therefore divine.

John 8:56-58 (KJV) *56 Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. 57 Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? 58 Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.*

In the Book of Hebrews, there is an in-depth presentation of the Melchizedek Priesthood as the only acceptable one which Yeshua inaugurated in the earth realm. Its superiority relative to the Levitical/Aaronic priesthood which undergirded the Old Covenant was well articulated.

Hebrews 5:5-10 (KJV) *5 So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee. 6 As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. 7 Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; 8 Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; 9 And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; 10 Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.*

Hebrews 6:17-20 (KJV) *17 Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: 18 That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: 19 Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; 20 Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.*

Hebrews 7:1-3 (KJV) *1 For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; 2 To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; 3 Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.*

Hebrews 7:9-21 (KJV) *9 And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham. 10 For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him. 11 If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron? 12 For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. 13 For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. 14 For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood. 15 And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of*

Melchisedec there ariseth another priest, 16 Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. 17 For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. 18 For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. 19 For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God. 20 And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest: 21 (For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:)

The whole point is this:

1. Yeshua is the High Priest of the New Covenant and after completing His earthly assignment is now enthroned in heaven as the High Priest of that order of Priesthood.

Hebrews 7:22-28 (KJV) *22 By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament. 23 And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: 24 But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. 25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. 26 For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; 27 Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. 28 For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.*

2. All saints redeemed by His Blood are to function as the Royal Priesthood (having authority of kings and capacity to stand in the gap between Elohim and humanity). In other words, under this Order, saints are qualified entirely by Grace to serve Him, other saints and fellow humans. In other words, the Lord does not call the qualified (religious leaders with long years of seminary training who are born into priestly lineages like the Levitical order) but He rather qualifies those He calls:

In the economy of the Kingdom, all the redeemed are inducted to this priestly order as evidence that they are vibrant parts of His One Body in the earth realm.

1 Peter 2:9-12 (KJV) *9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light; 10 Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. 11 Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; 12 Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.*

Romans 12:4-5 (KJV) *4 For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: 5 So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.*

1 Corinthians 12:4-7 (KJV) *4 Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. 6 And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. 7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.*

1 Corinthians 12:11-14 (KJV) *11 But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. 12 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. 13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be*

Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. 14 For the body is not one member, but many.

1 Corinthians 12:25-27 (KJV) *25 That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. 26 And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. 27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.*

Ephesians 4:7-10 (KJV) *7 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. 8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. 9 (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)*

John 15:16 (KJV) *16 Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.*

Reasons for Raising the Fivefold

To ensure that His vision of an organic spiritual Body which functions as a living, loving organism in the earth realm, Yeshua also gave to His Church, the Fivefold themed leadership to serve and be empower them:

Ephesians 4:11-16 (KJV) *11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: 14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; 15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: 16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.*

Supplanting the Melchizedeck Priesthood was to be a game changer by Satan.

If Satan wanted to turn the spiritual organism which Yeshua made His Body in the earth realm to be, the starting place would be to change the priesthood system. And that is exactly what happened.

'Protestants', 'Pentecostals', 'Charismatics', 'Evangelicals', 'Independents' and 'Kingdom' Ministers who do not understand and practice the reality and essence of the Melchizedeck Priesthood are in organized religion masked by self-deception. Neglecting to understand and practice this Royal Priesthood is evidence of the DNA of Rome as we shall see from further study. Within 70 years of Pentecost, the clear directives of King Yeshua as Head of The Church had been jettisoned by a group called the Nicolaitanes. Interestingly the Nicolaitanes combined the Nimrodic principle of owning and lording it over Christians and elements of the Levitical Priesthood which had exclusive access to Elohim, standing between Him and the sinful people into its operating system. Just one error by one person can begin a Moral Descent!

Many believe the Nicolaitanes sect was championed by Nicholas, the proselyte of Antioch who was chosen to be one of the first 7 deacons in Acts 6. The spiritual profile of this personality is indeed interesting: Nicholas was a Gentile who converted to Judaism. When Yeshua emerged, and birthed the Church as Kingdom agency in the earth realm, he converted and became a Christian. This 'church

hopping' may be indicative of a true seeker or a restless, ambitious spirit seeking to be counted in whatever was current. Let us remember that in those days, Yeshua was the biggest news in town. Let us acknowledge that it is possible that this view that Nicholas the proselyte of Antioch was spearhead of this movement may be off the mark. In any case, let us proceed to understand the substantive issue concerning the Nicolaitanes which emerged as a power-hungry sect which deemed saints as unworthy to approach Elohim directly and so needed an exclusive male dominated priestly caste to function as intermediary.

Dangerous Theology of the Nicolaitanes

In essence, the Nicolaitanes repudiated the priesthood of all saints as instituted by Yeshua. It opted to:

1. Create a priestly Class based on principles and practices opposed to the Royal Priesthood after Order of Melchizedek. In this regard, it embraced the Levitical priesthood system with its colorful robes and rituals that inspired awe.
2. Position leaders as 'owners' of the saints who were to behave as a subservient 'conquered' people. In this regard, it embraced elements of the Nimrodic priesthood named after the man who in Genesis 10:8-10 was described as a mighty hunter (evidently hunting after souls to 'own', not animals).
3. To sustain this system, the Nicolaitanes created an ecclesiastical system with hierarchies of authority which were strictly demarcated. These were regarded as the 'Clergy' or special class of people called to lead or rather Lord it over the sheep who were to be dormant 'consumers' of their anointing.
4. Special robes in different colors were instituted to mark them out from the laity.
5. In effect, the Nicolaitanes created a priestly Class based on combination of Nimrodic and Levitical paradigms of leadership.
6. This carnal and unspiritual priesthood system attracted ambitious people who saw in the Church an opportunity to carve out personal religious empires. It is entirely possible that one of such people in the days of John the beloved was a discourteous, ambitious fellow called Diotrephes.

3 John 9:9-11 (KJV) *9 I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not.*

3 John 1:9-11 (KJV) *10 Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church. 11 Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.*

For this Nicolaitane priesthood to work, it jettisoned the Fivefold Kingdom governmental structure Yeshua gave to the Church and opted for a pyramidal structure. It is interesting that the emergent Roman Catholic Church seemed to have whole heartedly embraced the powerful administrative strength the Nicolaitane priesthood offered. Its application made it easier for:

- 7.1. A Priest to be lord in the Parish at head of the pyramid.

7.2. In the Diocese, the ruling Bishop was lord, sitting right on top of the pyramid.

7.3. Whoever is Pope had a global pyramidal structure to sustain dominion.

Assessment of the Nicolaitanes by Yeshua, Jesus as Head of the Church

The Nicolaitanes may have brought some seeming Order and 'security' to congregations and city churches where they developed roots. They may have earned the acceptance and recognition of the order prone Roman authorities. They may also have quenched the fire and zeal of saints within their loop of influence in order to attract recognition of Roman authorities. But the Ultimate authority over the Church had a scathing rebuke for this system of manmade priesthood which took away personal liberties guaranteed and rather exercised Lordship over saints. Here are His own words to the Churches in Ephesus and Pergamos:

Revelation 2:6 (KJV) *6 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.*

Revelation 2:15 (KJV) *15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate.*

Yeshua, High Priest after the Order of Melchizedeck considered the priestly pretensions of the Nicolaitanes a dangerous aberration which had no place in the Church that is His Own Body! If scripture is compared with scripture, it is possible Peter had the activities of such people in mind when he wrote about the nature of true Kingdom leadership in his epistle:

1 Peter 5:1-4 (KJV) *1 The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: 2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; 3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock. 4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.*

Paul had been used by Holy Spirit to define the core responsibility of Fivefold leaders in the New Testament Church as Empowerment rather than Enslavement (Ephesians 4:11-16). Paul had also defined what the New Testament office of Bishop is (an administrative title for leaders who coordinate several ministries rather than a 'lordship' of the flock. For that reason, he was used by Holy Spirit to detailed qualifications of those who desired the office:

1 Timothy 3:1-7 (KJV) *1 This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. 2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; 3 Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; 4 One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; 5 (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) 6 Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. 7 Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.*

Writing to Titus who was placed in charge of Crete, Paul was used by Holy Spirit to also reveal these spiritual qualifications of Elders and Bishops:

Titus 1:5-9 (KJV) *5 For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: 6 If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having*

faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. 7 For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; 8 But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; 9 Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.

While the Fivefold took care of spiritual formation of saints with Bishops and Elders, Deacons were ordained to take charge of the normal business of the ministry as well as welfare of saints. The qualifications outlined for them had heavy spiritual content:

Acts 6:1-7 (KJV) *1 And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. 2 Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. 3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. 4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. 5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: 6 Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them. 7 And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.*

1 Timothy 3:8-13 (KJV) *8 Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; 9 Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. 10 And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. 11 Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. 12 Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. 13 For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.*

Summary of Lessons 38 and 39: The Great Switch!

Let us note that at one point in history:

- There was a change of the nature of the greater part of the Alpha Church from a living, loving Organism of active body parts, to a stiff, pyramidal, religious Organization with extreme wealth and other assets.
- For this to be sustained, there was also a change of the priesthood pattern from the Royal Order of Melchizedek of saints who served Elohim, each other and humanity; to one which 'owned' and 'lorded' it over saints called whose precursors are the Nicolaitanes.

In a sense, the deeds of the Nicolaitanes played a key role in shaping emergence of the Roman Catholic Priesthood and Bishopric! As we know, spirits do not die. They simply find new humans to influence! It is equally sad that majority of 'Protestant' Denominations arising from the Reformation of 1517 have embraced, rather than repudiate the Nicolaitane-themed priesthood.

Review Questions

1. Please provide a short but robust summary of this Lesson.
2. What new things did you learn today?

Chapter 40

Prophecies of the Empire which would re-configure the world

Within the pages of the Holy Scriptures are several prophecies which defined the past, present, and future. In the kingdom economy, those whose hearts are open to understand the mysteries of times and seasons relative to what is already written are often given a heads-up by Holy Spirit who inspired the prophetic Scriptures in the first place. Those who are careless remain in blissful ignorance, unable to comprehend the past, present, and future just like unbelievers. From the days of Israel, the Lord commends those who have open hearts and minds. No wonder it was said of the sons of Issachar:

1 Chronicles 12:32 (KJV) *32 And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do; the heads of them were two hundred; and all their brethren were at their commandment.*

In the New Covenant, saints are charged with understanding of the times to escape the trap of ignorance!

Romans 13:11-12 (KJV) *11 And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. 12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.*

Ephesians 5:14-16 (KJV) *14 Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. 15 See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, 16 Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*

In this regard, when Daniel was waiting on the Lord, he persisted in seeking understanding and was rewarded with revelation of the times in which the Babylonian captivity was to be accomplished.

Daniel 9:1-3 (KJV) *1 In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; 2 In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. 3 And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes:*

He even received much more: An insight into when the Messiah would come and make the Sacrifice of the ages over 600 years into the future!

Daniel 9:24-26 (KJV) *24 Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. 25 Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. 26 And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.*

This introduction is needful because emergence of the Religious Juggernaut or Behemoth out of Rome was not a happenstance or unconnected piece of history. It was a marker of epic proportions in the long march of prophetic history which will culminate in restoration of the Kingdom in the earth realm! If you understand how the Roman Religious Empire came into being as fulfillment of prophetic scriptures, you will understand its role in desensitizing those who claim to be in Christ to the degree they will neither experience the New birth of Salvation by Grace through faith, nor would allow His sovereign rule. Ultimately, they would be unable to be ready for His return. These truths apply not just to the Roman Church but to all of its seed: The 'Protestants' who manifest various strains of its religious DNA. That is what Babylon is all about: Offering an alternative gospel.

Key Prophecies concerning Rome as a Power that would re-define human power on earth

About 600 years before Yeshua was Incarnated, Elohim revealed through Daniel there would arise a world power like none before it and none afterwards. This empire would crush things before it and re-define the world so much so a residue/remnant of it would take center stage when Yeshua would return to set up the manifest Kingdom. Establishment of the Kingdom in the earth realm was the essence of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. It is very important to remind ourselves the dream of Nebuchadnezzar had as ultimate purpose, a revelation of the time in world history when Yeshua would return to restore in the earth realm, the Kingdom Adam and Eve lost! It is possible to get caught up in the accuracy of the rise and fall of various empires to the degree of forgetting this central message!

Daniel 2:31-36 (KJV) *31 Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. 32 This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, 33 His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. 34 Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. 35 Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth. 36 This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king.*

Daniel 2:40-45 (KJV) *40 And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. 41 And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. 42 And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. 43 And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay. 44 And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. 45 Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.*

Careful consideration of all Biblical texts indicates these prophecies pin pointed the strategic role Rome (Legs of Iron) would play in events leading to end of the age. Rome was to start a process leading to end of the age which would be finished in the days of its successor, a pseudo-empire that is inchoate!

Daniel 2:40 (KJV) *40 And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise.*

This prophecy spoke of the military and administrative acumen of Rome which would stamp out empires before it and assimilate other cultures to suit its imperial purposes. As we saw in an earlier lesson, the other part of the 'Legs of Iron' referred to the religious behemoth which would emerge from Rome. Significantly, after giving the dream to Nebuchadnezzar, Elohim subsequently decided to reveal the spiritual characteristics of the same Rome to His faithful servant, Daniel. Here is how the empire was described:

Daniel 7:7 (KJV) *7 After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns.*

Daniel 7:15-16, 19, 23 (KJV) *15 I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me. 16 I came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things.*

19 Then I would know the truth of the fourth beast, which was diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful, whose teeth were of iron, and his nails of brass; which devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet;

23 Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces.

Just like in Daniel 2 where it was revealed that after Rome would emerge an inchoate 'empire' during which Yeshua would return to establish the Kingdom in a manifest, global sense, there is clarity that the successor empire would feature various rulers who would pave the way for the grand master of perdition, the anti-Christ to come!

Daniel 7:24-27 (KJV) *24 And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. 25 And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time. 26 But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end. 27 And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.*

Rome: The tipping point of world History!

In prophetic scriptures, Rome is clearly established as the tipping and turning point of world history leading to the First and Second coming of Yeshua Ha Mashiach, Jesus the Messiah. In this regard, the Book of Daniel Chapters 2 and 7 are documentations of significant things Elohim was saying about Rome ahead of time! During the days of Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel, Rome was merely a tiny city state founded in BC753. It became a Republic in 503 BC which defeated the mighty Greco-Macedonian Empire in 146 BC at the Battle of Corinth. Rome morphed into an Empire in 27 BC under Octavian who assumed the title Augustus Caesar. It is significant that Yeshua was incarnated in the days of Augustus Caesar

(Luke 2), lived under imperial Roman colonial rule, was condemned to death by a Roman Governor, and crucified by Roman soldiers to fulfil the role of Lamb of Elohim Who took away sins of the people.

It was this same Roman Empire which did everything humanly possible to stamp out the true Church of Yeshua, Jesus which He left in the earth realm as His Spiritual Body to complete the work of reconciling the Lost to their heavenly Father and thus be citizens of the Kingdom. With each oppression and persecution, the Church multiplied, watered by the blood of Martyrs. Rome was to later in the fourth century come up with another strategy of assimilating what it could not crush! That ground game will be explored in full in another lesson. Let us continue to see the prophetic scriptures about this great empire.

How Rome and its Alternative Christian Religion was viewed in the Book of Revelations

If Daniel is the beginning of revelations concerning end of the age, the Revelation granted to John the beloved was the culmination. After resurrection and before His ascension, the following dialogue with His disciples revealed there would be a span of time between birth of the Church at Pentecost and when He would return to the earth realm.

Acts 1:6-8 (KJV) *6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? 7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. 8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*

Among the disciples He commissioned to proclaim the gospel was John who was specially preserved from death to receive a panoramic revelation of life from the Alpha Church years till when the Kingdom is restored followed by endless eternity. Among the things revealed to John was the reality of emergence of an Alternative church which would be marked by these features, amongst many others:

1. Disconnected from Him, it would go about to establish a litany of works of religion which would turn humans into worshippers of a 'distant, unknown God'
2. Infidelity to Yeshua. It would get into Marriage with the world in direct contradiction of 1 John 2:15-17
3. It would manifest the Laodecian spirit and boast in abundance of its wealth
4. It would drink the blood of uncountable number of saints
5. It would at end of the age produce the False Prophet who would validate and endorse the anti-Christ figure (Revelation 13)
6. It would be judged in the fullness of time

Let us see some of those specific prophecies in the Book of Revelations:

Revelation 17:1-18 (KJV) *1 And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters:*

2 With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. 3 So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. 4 And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: 5 And upon her forehead was a name written, Mystery, Babylon The Great, The Mother Of Harlots And Abominations Of The Earth. 6 And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration. 7 And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns. 8 The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is. 9 And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. 10 And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. 11 And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition. 12 And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. 13 These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. 14 These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful. 15 And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues. 16 And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. 17 For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled. 18 And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.

Revelation 18:1-24 (KJV) 1 And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. 2 And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. 3 For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. 4 And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. 5 For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. 6 Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double. 7 How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. 8 Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her. 9 And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning 10 Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come. 11 And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more: 12 The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, 13 And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men. 14 And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all. 15 The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of

her torment, weeping and wailing, 16 And saying, Alas, alas that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls! 17 For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off, 18 And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city! 19 And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate. 20 Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her. 21 And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all. 22 And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee; 23 And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived. 24 And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.

Saints, as we delve into the deeper waters of revelation, let us be reminded it is very necessary to know that understanding the Religion of Christendom constructed by the union of Empire and State should in no way cause saints to have a negative view of Roman Catholic adherents! If we are truly in the Spirit, gaining understanding should release a burden for their salvation just as Paul was burdened for the religious Jews of his day:

Romans 10:1-4 (KJV) *1 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. 2 For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. 3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. 4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth.*

To hate on multitudes trapped in a religious system of rituals, seeking to please Elohim is to be possessed with spirit of Religion, even if momentarily! By all means hate the lies and religiosity, but please, love the people as Yeshua would. And if it so, the time has come to invest our all, to help them receive the Truth about Salvation by Grace through Faith in Yeshua and the completeness of His Sacrifice on the Cross! Let us ask the Father for wisdom for sharing His love with those who are caught up with this religious system!

Review Questions

1. What did you understand from this lesson in as concise language as you can?
2. What new insight did you gain today?

Spiritually, the Gentiles missed it with the Divine Purpose

Spiritually, the Gentiles also missed their time; just like the Hebrews/Jews! As noted in an earlier chapter, the Hebraic people of Israel had a head start in the relationship of humans with Elohim. His desire was to make them a peculiar people and ambassadors of His Kingdom, sign posting the Gentiles to seek Him.

Exodus 19:5-6 (KJV) *5 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: 6 And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.*

But, the Sinful nature of man led Israel to exercise individual and national will away from the Divine purpose. The result was rather than a vibrant relationship with Him, Israel drifted steadily into a religious paradigm. The rituals people engaged in the Tabernacle and later Temple on certain 'holy days' such as the Sabbath and Feast days sucked the life out of the people to the degree their hearts were far from Him. With their Adamic hearts, they just could not be justified in His sight. Elohim, who is rich in mercy, did not destroy them. He allowed the Torah to serve as a School Master, whose provisions and punishments would hold Israel in check before the Messiah came to the earth realm:

Galatians 3:19-25 (KJV) *19 Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. 20 Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one. 21 Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. 22 But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. 23 But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. 24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. 25 But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.*

Galatians 4:1-5 (KJV) *1 Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; 2 But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. 3 Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: 4 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, 5 To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.*

By the time the Messiah, who Moses and the Prophets spoke of, manifested to take away their sins, the veil of Religion was too thick to allow them to see Him and His assignment.

2 Corinthians 3:12-16 (KJV) *12 Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech: 13 And not as Moses, which put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished: 14 But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which vail is done away in Christ. 15 But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart. 16 Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away.*

When ultimate Torah appeared in the form of Yeshua, they roundly rejected Him and His redemptive mission (except the remnant who embraced and walked with Him).

Ultimately, the lot fell on Paul to make the most unpleasant announcement to the Hebrews/Jews of his day, the baton of the gospel of Salvation by grace through faith and the Kingdom of Elohim in the earth realm was moving to the hands of the despised Gentiles!

Acts 28:17-29 (KJV) *17 And it came to pass, that after three days Paul called the chief of the Jews together: and when they were come together, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. 18 Who, when they had examined me, would have let me go, because there was no cause of death in me. 19 But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar; not that I had ought to accuse my nation of. 20 For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you: because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain. 21 And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judaea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came shewed or spake any harm of thee. 22 But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against. 23 And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening. 24 And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not. 25 And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, 26 Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: 27 For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. 28 Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it. 29 And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves.*

Warning to Gentiles: You would be rejected if you mess up!

In His Omniscience, Elohim had allowed a mystery of extraordinary proportions to unfold: Rejection of His gospel by Hebrews/Jews was the very basis on which room was made for the Gentiles to come into His Commonwealth/Kingdom in the earth realm. The divine plan was after the Gentiles found their place, the next chapter of dealings of Elohim with the world would revert to Israel and its Hebraic people.

Romans 11:7-36 (KJV) *7 What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded. 8 (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day. 9 And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompence unto them: 10 Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway. 11 I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. 12 Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness? 13 For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: 14 If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them. 15 For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? 16 For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches. 17 And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; 18 Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. 19 Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. 20 Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: 21 For if God*

spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. 22 Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. 23 And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again. 24 For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? 25 For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. 26 And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: 27 For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. 28 As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the father's sakes. 29 For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. 30 For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: 31 Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. 32 For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. 33 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! 34 For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? 35 Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? 36 For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen.

The Church has a Master Plan

The Church has been described as the Body of Yeshua, His Bride, House of Elohim in the earth realm. It is also the Kingdom agency through which the Gentiles would find common ground with Hebrews and take their place as fellow citizens of the Kingdom in the earth realm.

Galatians 3:26-29 (KJV) *26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

Ephesians 3:5-7 (KJV) *5 Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; 6 That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: 7 Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.*

But the Church was not to be a happy go lucky, DIY (Do it yourself) entity. It had a clear Master Plan with specific details revealed in the Pauline epistles. The things He found commendable and which were forbidden were also articulated by Yeshua in Revelation chapters 2 and 3. Regarding that Master plan, here is the bold claim of Paul, who by election was chosen as Master builder.

1 Corinthians 3:10-15 (KJV) *10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. 11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; 13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. 14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. 15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.*

1 Timothy 3:14-15 (KJV) *14 These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: 15 But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.*

2 Timothy 2:19-21 (KJV) *19 Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. 20 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. 21 If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.*

In other words, the way Paul went about building what Yeshua showed him selflessly was a model for all saints of all generations to follow.

1 Corinthians 11:1 (KJV) *1 Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.*

Kingdom Culture

Of this Kingdom model, we take note especially of 11 prominent realities, among many others which Paul demonstrated in his very productive ministry. They combine with other qualities to be evidence of Kingdom Culture by which all congregations, ministries, movements, and networks can be assessed:

1. Though sinners by birth and deeds, all humans; both Hebrews/Jews and Gentile; have the privilege through the Blood shed by Yeshua, to receive the Grace of Elohim to be saved by Faith and be members of the Body of Yeshua in the earth realm and citizens of His Kingdom (Romans 10:5-12; Ephesians 2:1-10).
2. All those saved in this way are members of the Church as a Kingdom agency in the earth realm. The Church is a spiritual Organism of living body parts, not a religious organization (Romans 12:1-8; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:7-10).
3. In this regard, ALL saints are called into ministry to serve the Lord, each other, and humanity simply by 'expression of what they are impressed' with by Holy Spirit. He Who convicted them unto repentance and salvation also sealed them into Yeshua unto the day of redemption; transforms their lives; unites them in Yeshua and empowers them with specific gifts with which to function. In this way, the Priesthood after the Order of Melchizedeck which Yeshua inaugurated and is High Priest of is sustained in the earth realm (Hebrews 5, 6, 7). Peter was to corroborate this reality in 1 Peter 2:9-12 and 1 Peter 4:10-11 while John did likewise in John 15:16.
4. The Fivefold is the instrument which Yeshua uses to bring these realities in 1-3 to pass. He Himself chooses who to impart any aspect of the Five-fold functions of Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, and Teachers (Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Corinthians 12:28-29).
5. Bishops and Elders are administrative offices requiring high spiritual qualifications for coordinating administratively, the Kingdom Church, in specific locations (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9).

6. Deacons are to be put in place to serve local congregations and City Churches with skills for managing issues like welfare and normal business functions of ministry (1 Timothy 3:8-13). This corroborated a reality in the Church at Jerusalem after Pentecost in Acts 6:1-7.

7. People are not to exercise their spiritual gifts anyhow. The Liberty they have is balanced by Order. This was well articulated in 1 Corinthians chapter 14.

8. Kingdom Culture required all saints to love Elohim above all else to the degree of laying down their lives for His sake and living, not for themselves, but entirely for Him and for the benefit of other people. In this regard, there is need for all things to be done in Charity/Love as 1 Corinthians 13 articulates.

9. Saints are to be primarily invested in the Kingdom and its righteousness, seeking it above all else, just as Yeshua demanded in Matthew 6:19-34 and Luke 19:11-27. This is accomplished through two focal activities all saints can and should engage in regularly: Reconciling the Lost to their Father (2 Corinthians 5:17-21) and turning the saved into disciples of Yeshua (2 Timothy 2:2; Matthew 28:18-20).

10. Saints are to live by Faith, not sight. In this regard, they are to tap into the power of Elohim by prayer and subdue all contrary spirits, resist Satan and be victorious in spiritual warfare (2 Corinthians 5:7; Ephesians 6:10-18).

11. Leaders who are to be used by the Lord to bring these things into reality are to do so as vessels of honour, grateful He chose them. With the perspective of being servants of Yeshua, they fulfil the Master's desire and empower all saints to know and grow in Him. In this way, they posture as vessels He uses to build His One Indivisible Church. In this way, they have no appetite or propensity to build personal brands or religious empires. When all the elect is of this mind, the unity of the Faith in the bond of peace becomes a reality (Ephesians 4:1-6).

12. Kingdom perspectives required all the remnant to reject the replacement theology rooted in anti-Semitism, knowing the state of the Hebrews/Jews relative to the Gospel of Yeshua and the Kingdom is temporary and was designed to make room for the remnant of Gentile stock.

With these 12 realities and others not stated here, the Church would have a universal outlook – Catholic (Not Roman Catholic)! In other words, as all saints embraced these realities wherever they were, regardless of their races, ages, socio-political, economic outlook, and gender, we all would speak the same Kingdom language, building in accordance to His Divine pattern.

1 Corinthian 1:10 (KJV) *10 Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.*

Unfortunately, Gentiles to whom this awesome responsibility came, chose not to build according to plan. What happened is upon receiving the baton of the Kingdom basically cast it to the ground! In its stead, Gentiles have given the world Christian Religion and all its variations each of which represents a step or more away from the Kingdom pattern. This is true not only of Roman Catholicism but also of the Protestant movement. That DNA of diversion from the Kingdom pattern is accepted as the norm by

Evangelicals, Pentecostals, Episcopal, Full Gospel, 'Kingdom' and a thousand and one denominations that litter the earth realm since the Protestant Reformation of 1517.

Conclusion of the Matter: All have sinned

Romans 3:9-12 (KJV) *9 What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; 10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: 11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. 12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.*

Romans 3:19-23 (KJV) *19 Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. 20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. 21 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; 22 Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: 23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;*

The point is this: Just as the Hebrews/Jews missed it with the program of Elohim, so also did Gentiles miss it. But, none of these things took Elohim by surprise! He foreknew and allowed these diversions so room will be made in the Last days before Yeshua returns to raise up a new breed in the earth realm: His remnant with whom He will close out the human age and usher in the return of Yeshua and the manifest phase of the Kingdom!

Hebrews 11:39-40 (KJV) *39 And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: 40 God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.*

If we are indeed His peculiar remnant, it follows we need to examine our lives and ministry patterns with a sharp microscope of His Word to locate and root out all the leaven of Babylonian Christendom; which the enemy injected into the gospel in the past 1700-1800 years.

1 Corinthians 5:6-8 (KJV) *6 Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? 7 Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: 8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*

Review Questions

1. In what way did the Gentiles also miss it with the Divine Purpose and Pattern?
2. Which aspect of the 12 elements of Kingdom Culture do you consider missing in your experience of Church' that needs to be restored?

Chapter 42

From Adversary to Partner!

In this lesson, we will now focus on the tracking developments in the Roman Empire which prepared the grounds for the ultimate shift in the relationship between the Roman Empire and its Adversary, The Church. The dramatic nature of the change in the relationship was simply breath taking: From intense persecution by Rome to a state of partnership which laid the grounds for an eventual union. We will examine several documents from three sources to get a holistic view of the underlying factors (role of persecution) which prepared the hearts of majority of Christians and Bishops to see the emergence of a Charismatic personality (Constantine the Great) as a literal saviour to be embraced and even canonized as a saint and even regarded by Orthodox groups as 'equal in rank' to apostles of Yeshua, Jesus!

Persecution was the sword which revealed and separated the Remnant from the crowd of believers! Looking back to the period of Roman history from Nero to Diocletian, we can see Christians responded to the fire of persecution according to the strength of their convictions. To those whose faith was not deeply anchored in a warm personal relationship with Yeshua, the response was to fall away. Of these, let us place these scriptures in that context:

Philippians 2:19-21 (KJV) *19 But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state. 20 For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. 21 For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.*

Philippians 3:17-21 (KJV) *17 Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. 18 (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: 19 Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.) 20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: 21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.*

2 Timothy 4:10-11 (KJV) *10 For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia. 11 Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.*

To those who were dead to self, enthroned Yeshua as Lord, who lived entirely for the Kingdom to come, death was simply translation into the spirit realm and resting in the King until that Day when He would return. Of these, the testimonies of Paul who is believed to have been beheaded and Peter who is believed to have been crucified during the reign of Nero (Nero died in June of AD 67):

2 Timothy 4:6-8 (KJV) *6 For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. 7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: 8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.*

2 Peter 1:13-15 (KJV) *13 Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; 14 Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed*

me. 15 Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.

These two sets of people were walking down two parallel lanes: The Narrow and Broad ways spoken of by Yeshua!

Matthew 7:13-14 (KJV) *13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: 14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*

Knowing the sold-out state of their fixed hearts, Yeshua sustained the remnant by His Grace. By the time the Edict of Milan was issued by Emperors Constantine (of the Western Roman Empire) and Licinus (of the Eastern Roman Empire), the distance between the two sets of Christians had widened considerably. The remnant was wary of the olive branch offered and remained in a 'primitive' state of intense personal relationship with Elohim, submission to the sovereign rule of Yeshua and sold out to His Kingdom Business. The remnant basically remained an organism devoid of stiff organizational norms and hierarchies. Ministers functioned according to grace given to them by Holy Spirit sustained by their love for Elohim and each other. Their raw faith and simple lifestyles did not draw the crowd but rather put off many. Suspicious of the Roman authorities at various levels, their best approach was to remain under the radar, avoiding publicity or noise which could attract attention. In any case, they were not visible, so to say. Let us review these materials from Wikipedia:

"Prior persecutions"

Further information: Persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire

From its first appearance to its legalization under Constantine, for the first two centuries of its existence, Christianity and its practitioners were unpopular with the people at large. Christians were always suspect, members of a "secret society" whose members communicated with a private code and who shied away from the public sphere. It was popular hostility—the anger of the crowd—which drove the earliest persecutions, not official action. In Lyon in 177, it was only the intervention of civil authorities that stopped a pagan mob from dragging Christians from their houses and beating them to death. The governor of Bithynia–Pontus, Pliny, was sent long lists of denunciations by anonymous citizens, which Emperor Trajan advised him to ignore.

To the followers of the traditional cults, Christians were odd creatures: not quite Roman, but not quite barbarian either. Their practices were deeply threatening to traditional mores. Christians rejected public festivals, refused to take part in the imperial cult, avoided public office, and publicly criticized ancient traditions. Conversions tore families apart: Justin Martyr tells of a pagan husband who denounced his Christian wife, and Tertullian tells of children disinherited for becoming Christians. Traditional Roman religion was inextricably interwoven into the fabric of Roman society and state, but Christians refused to observe its practices. In the words of Tacitus, Christians showed "hatred of the human race" (*odium generis humani*). Among the more credulous, Christians were thought to use black magic in pursuit of revolutionary aims, and to practice incest and cannibalism.

Nonetheless, for the first two centuries of the Christian era, no emperor issued general laws against the faith or its Church. These persecutions were carried out under the authority of local government officials. At Bithynia–Pontus in 111, it was the imperial governor, Pliny; at Smyrna (İzmir) in 156 and Scilli near Carthage in 180, it was the proconsul; at Lyon in 177, it was the provincial governor. When Emperor Nero executed Christians for their alleged involvement in the fire of 64, it was a purely local affair; it did not spread beyond the city limits of Rome. These early persecutions were certainly violent, but they were sporadic, brief and limited in extent. They were of limited threat to Christianity as a whole. The very capriciousness of official action, however, made the threat of state coercion loom large in the Christian imagination.”

Persecutions from the Third Century

In the 3rd century, the pattern changed. Emperors became more active and government officials began to actively pursue Christians, rather than merely to respond to the will of the crowd. Christianity, too, changed. No longer were its practitioners merely "the lower orders fomenting discontent"; some Christians were now rich, or from the upper classes. Origen, writing at about 248, tells of "the multitude of people coming in to the faith, even rich men and persons in positions of honour, and ladies of high refinement and birth." Official reaction grew firmer. In 202, according to the *Historia Augusta*, a 4th-century history of dubious reliability, Septimius Severus (r. 193–211) issued a general rescript forbidding conversion to either Judaism or Christianity. Maximin (r. 235–38) targeted Christian leaders. Decius (r. 249–51), demanding a show of support for the faith, proclaimed that all inhabitants of the empire must sacrifice to the gods, eat sacrificial meat, and testify to these acts. Christians were obstinate in their non-compliance. Church leaders, like Fabian, bishop of Rome, and Babylas, bishop of Antioch, were arrested, tried and executed, as were certain members of the Christian laity, like Pionius of Smyrna. The Christian theologian Origen was tortured during the persecution and died about a year after from the resulting injuries.

The Decian persecution was a grave blow to the Church. At Carthage, there was mass apostasy (renunciation of the faith). At Smyrna, the bishop, Euctemon, sacrificed and encouraged others to do the same. Because the Church was largely urban, it should have been easy to identify, isolate and destroy the Church hierarchy. This did not happen. In June 251, Decius died in battle, leaving his persecution incomplete. His persecutions were not followed up for another six years, allowing some Church functions to resume. Valerian, Decius's friend, took up the imperial mantle in 253. Though he was at first thought of as "exceptionally friendly" towards the Christians, his actions soon showed otherwise. In July 257, he issued a new persecutory edict. As punishment for following the Christian faith, Christians were to face exile or condemnation to the mines. In August 258, he issued a second edict, making the punishment death. This persecution also stalled in June 260, when Valerian was captured in battle. His son, Gallienus (r. 260–68), ended the persecution and inaugurated nearly 40 years of freedom from official sanctions, praised by Eusebius as the "little peace of the Church". The peace would be undisturbed, save for occasional, isolated persecutions, until Diocletian became emperor.

The Diocletianic or Great Persecution

Wikipedia further states that this “was the last and most severe persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire. In 303, the Emperors Diocletian, Maximian, Galerius, and Constantius issued a series of edicts rescinding the legal rights of Christians and demanding that they comply with traditional Roman religious practices. Later edicts targeted the clergy and ordered all inhabitants to sacrifice to the Roman gods (a policy known as universal sacrifice). The persecution varied in intensity across the empire— weakest in Gaul and Britain, where only the first edict was applied, and strongest in the Eastern provinces. Persecutory laws were nullified by different emperors at different times, but Constantine and Licinius's Edict of Milan (313) has traditionally marked the end of the persecution.

Diocletian's accession in 284 did not mark an immediate reversal of disregard to Christianity, but it did herald a gradual shift in official attitudes toward religious minorities. In the first 15 years of his rule, Diocletian purged the army of Christians, condemned Manicheans to death, and surrounded himself with public opponents of Christianity. Diocletian's preference for autocratic government, combined with his self-image as a restorer of past Roman glory, presaged the most pervasive persecution in Roman history. In the winter of 302, Galerius urged Diocletian to begin a general persecution of the Christians. Diocletian was wary, and asked the oracle of Apollo for guidance. The oracle's reply was read as an endorsement of Galerius's position, and a general persecution was called on February 24, 303.

Persecutory policies varied in intensity across the empire. Where Galerius and Diocletian were avid persecutors, Constantius was unenthusiastic. Later persecutory edicts, including the calls for universal sacrifice, were not applied in his domain. His son, Constantine, on taking the imperial office in 306, restored Christians to full legal equality and returned property that had been confiscated during the persecution. In Italy in 306, the usurper Maxentius ousted Maximian's successor Severus, promising full religious toleration. Galerius ended the persecution in the East in 311, but it was resumed in Egypt, Palestine, and Asia Minor by his successor, Maximinus. Constantine and Licinius, Severus's successor, signed the Edict of Milan in 313, which offered a more comprehensive acceptance of Christianity than Galerius's edict had provided. Licinius ousted Maximinus in 313, bringing an end to persecution in the East.

Edict of Toleration of Galerius

Ever since the fall of the Severan dynasty in 235, rivals for the imperial throne had bid for support by either favoring or persecuting Christians. The previous Edict of Toleration by Galerius had been recently issued by the emperor Galerius from Serdica and was posted at Nicomedia on 30 April 311. By its provisions, the Christians, who had "followed such a caprice and had fallen into such a folly that they would not obey the institutes of antiquity", were granted an indulgence. Wherefore, for this our indulgence, they ought to pray to their God for our safety, for that of the republic, and for their own, that the commonwealth may continue uninjured on every side, and that they may be able to live securely in their homes.”

Their confiscated property, however, was not restored until 313, when instructions were given for the Christians' meeting places and other properties to be returned and compensation paid by the state to the current owners: “the same shall be restored to the Christians without payment or any claim of recompense and without any kind of fraud or deception. “It directed the provincial magistrates to

execute this order at once with all energy so that public order may be restored and the continuance of divine favor may "preserve and prosper our successes together with the good of the state." The persecution failed to check the rise of the church. By 324, Constantine was sole ruler of the empire, and Christianity had become his favored religion. Although the persecution resulted in death, torture, imprisonment, or dislocation for many Christians, the majority of the empire's Christians avoided punishment. The persecution did, however, cause many churches to split between those who had complied with imperial authority (the traditores), and those who had remained "pure". (Note: Elohim preserved a remnant that was pure unto Himself amid a great falling away!)

Roman Catholicism emerges from War: Victory and 'Conversion' of Emperor Constantine

For those on the other side of the spectrum, the Edict of Milan was the best news that promised rest! They settled down to build and to play the beautiful Bride with resources across the vast empire which caught the eyes of the Roman authorities. The final turning point leading to transition of the larger wing from an organic Kingdom community of saints called out of the world to demonstrate the Body of Yeshua, Jesus in the earth realm came about by the 'conversion' of Constantine the Great to Christianity in AD 312. The larger than life role Emperor Constantine subsequently played in shaping the content and outline of the emergent Religious giant cannot be glossed over. As the first Roman Emperor to officially be a Christian convert, many things naturally gravitated towards his taste being a Charismatic leader. We need to examine two insights into the life and contributions of Constantine to nature of the emergent publicly accepted Church in his time.

Let us use this material culled from National Geographic online:

"Emperor Constantine I is often credited with converting the Roman Empire to Christianity. In fact, though he ended the persecution of Christians and eventually converted, some historians debate the true nature of his faith. His association with Christianity began with a fateful battle for control of the Western Roman Empire. Constantine faced Western Roman Emperor Maxentius at the Tiber River's Mulvian Bridge in A.D. 312. Fourth-century historian and bishop Eusebius of Caesarea reported that before the great battle Constantine saw a flaming cross in the sky bearing the words "in this sign thou shalt conquer." Constantine did indeed conquer, routing and killing his enemy on a day that loomed large not only for the emperor but for the Christian faith.

The next year Constantine, now the Western Roman Emperor, and Eastern Roman Emperor Licinius signed the Edict of Milan, which finally ensured religious tolerance for Christians. The agreement granted freedom of worship to all, regardless of deity, and brought an end to the Age of Martyrs, which had begun after Jesus' death. Christians were also given specific legal rights such as the return of confiscated property and the right to organize dedicated churches. After unifying the Roman Empire under his rule in A.D. 324, Constantine rebuilt his seat of his power in largely Christian Byzantium, which was renamed Constantinople and today is Istanbul. The growth of a Christian ruling class under Constantine ensured the faith's increasing and enduring prominence through the Roman, and later Byzantine, Empire.

Constantine convened and took part in the first meeting of Christian churches, the Council of Nicea, held in 325 in what is today Iznik, Turkey. He hoped to help church leaders find common ground on some contentious aspects of Christian doctrine. Chief among these issues was the relationship and relative divinity of God the Son (Jesus) and God the Father. Arianism was popular during this period. This Christian belief championed by Arius, a priest of Alexandria, Egypt, held that Jesus, though the Son of God, was inferior to God the Father.

The Council of Nicea established the equality of Father and Son and documented this in a creed, or universal statement of faith, to which all but two attending bishops agreed. The dissenting bishops were exiled, as was Arius himself. After this council, orthodox Christians agreed on the critical point that Jesus and God were equally divine and created of the same substance. The council also condemned the practice of money lending by clerics and attempted, unsuccessfully, to standardize the date of Easter.

Ancient Christian historians enthusiastically portrayed Constantine as a pious Christian convert. In later years, some scholars suggested that the emperor simply used the faith to his political advantage. The truth may lie somewhere in between, but Constantine's importance to his adopted religion is beyond doubt." Orthodox Christians view Constantine as a saint, equal in stature with the apostles! Robert Arakaki published in *Again Magazine* (2005) which was reproduced in Antiochian.org, the official website of the Antiochian Orthodox Diocese of North America the following excerpts which give us an insight into the way Orthodox Christians view Constantine:

"Constantine the Great"

Constantine was born at Naissus on February 27, 272 or 273, to Flavius Constantius and his wife Helena. Flavius Constantius was an army officer, and in 289 he divorced Constantine's mother to marry Theodora, the daughter of his commanding officer. Constantine embarked on his own military career, which took him all over the Roman Empire, from Palestine and Asia Minor to Britain, Spain, and Gaul. While crossing the Alps with his army, Constantine had a vision (or dream) of a cross of light shining in front of the sun and the words: In this sign conquer. Shortly after that vision, Constantine defeated his rival, Maxentius, captured Rome, and was acclaimed the next emperor.

History often turns upon certain pivotal events or individuals. Early Christianity faced two significant perils: one external—violent persecution by the Roman government, and one internal—the Arian heresy, which denied Christ's divinity. In a providential twist of events, God raised up an emperor who would play a key role in confronting each of these perils, becoming one of Christianity's greatest defenders. Constantine's rule precipitated an avalanche of events that radically altered the course of the history of Christianity.

External Danger - Persecution

Prior to Constantine's becoming emperor, the early Church was going through one of the fiercest and bloodiest of the persecutions by the Roman government, the Diocletian persecution. During this wave of persecution thousands of Christians lost their lives, churches were destroyed, and scriptures were burned. Then in 313, the situation reversed itself. Constantine (with his co-emperor Licinius) issued the famous Edict of Milan, declaring Christianity to be a legal religion. Christianity was not yet the official

religion of the Empire—this would not happen until 380 under Emperor Theodosius. And Constantine's edict of toleration was not the first—Galerius had issued a similar edict in 311. But it marked a major turning point for the Roman government. With the Edict of Milan, the three-centuries-long era of persecution came to an end.

Contrary to popular belief, Constantine did not rescue Christianity from extinction. Even if he had not adopted the Christian cause, the majority of the Roman population was well on its way to becoming Christian. What Constantine did do was hasten the process of evangelizing the Roman Empire. Constantine's conversion marked the climax of a centuries-long process of evangelization that began in an obscure corner of the Roman Empire. For the first time, the entire structure of Roman civilization, from the emperor down to the lowliest slave, shared the Christian faith.

Internal Danger - Heresy

In the early fourth century, a theological controversy broke out that threatened to derail the Christian faith. Arius taught that the Son of God had a beginning and was a created being. The controversy threatened deeply to divide the Christian Church, and in so doing to imperil the unity of the Roman Empire. Concerned for the unity of the empire, Constantine wrote letters to Bishop Alexander and to Arius, urging them to make up their differences and forgive each other. When that failed, he convened an ecumenical council of the entire Church. Previously there had been regional and local synods, but this was the first worldwide gathering of bishops. Constantine aided this historic gathering by covering the travel expenses of bishops coming from the far-flung corners of the empire.

In order to repudiate the Arian heresy, the bishops inserted the word *homoousios* ("of the same essence") into the baptismal creed. By asserting that Christ was of the same essence as God the Father, the Council decisively affirmed the divinity of Christ. This was approved by an overwhelming majority of the Council (only three persons—including Arius—out of three hundred disagreed). Although Constantine may have suggested that *homoousios* be inserted into the creed, the word was not invented by him. Even Arius made use of it, albeit in his arguments against the divinity of Christ.

Although he presided over the council, it is an exaggeration to claim that Constantine controlled the direction of the Council of Nicea, as many Protestants argue. Many of the bishops present at the council were survivors of the Diocletian persecution and would have been more than willing to put their lives on the line for the gospel of Christ once more. Another weakness of the Protestant stereotype of Constantine is that it gives short shrift to the theological genius of Athanasius. Anyone who reads Athanasius' theological classic *Against the Arians* will see that it was Athanasius, not Constantine, who turned the tide against the Arian heresy. Also, the limitations of Constantine's ability to coerce the Church into doing his will can be seen in his earlier failure to resolve the Donatist controversy in 320. As W. H. C. Frend notes in *The Rise of Christianity*, "The lesson, however, had been learned. Never again did he seek to beat into submission a movement within the church."

Equal-to-the-Apostles

Constantine's legacy can be seen in Christianity's transformation from a private sect into a public church that encompassed the whole of society. He put it on an institutional footing, which enabled the Church

to be the leading cultural force in the ancient world. The Christianization of Roman society can be seen as a partial fulfillment of Revelation 21:24: "The nations . . . shall walk in its [New Jerusalem] light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it." The Church is the New Jerusalem—replacing the Jerusalem of the Old Testament—which brings spiritual enlightenment to the pagan nations throughout the Roman Empire. However, a balanced assessment of the historical evidence shows that, as much as Constantine may have contributed to the Christianization of the Roman Empire, he did not originate Holy Tradition as many Protestants believe.

Constantine a Saint?

Constantine died in 337. Shortly before his death, he was baptized by Eusebius of Nicomedia. Following his baptism, Constantine refused to wear the imperial purple and died wearing the white baptismal robe. He was buried in the Church of the Holy Apostles just days after he had dedicated it. The day of his death—May 21—is commemorated in the Orthodox Church as a major feast day. Skepticism about the sincerity of Constantine's Christianity stems from many factors. Constantine did not openly repudiate the pagan gods, but tolerated pagan belief even as he began favoring the Christians. Another source lies in his execution of his son, Crispus, and his wife, Fausta, in 326, a year after the Council of Nicea. A third factor was Constantine's delaying of his baptism until just a few days before his death.

On closer examination, however, the basis for this skeptical attitude becomes problematic. Constantine's participation in the pagan rites most likely stemmed from his obligations as military and political leader. Regarding his execution of his son and wife, it is not clear what the reasons were. Unless the reasons for this drastic action are known, it is not fair to condemn Constantine. Also, modern evangelicalism may frown on deathbed conversions, but in the early Church such delaying of one's baptism was not uncommon. Constantine's conversion follows more closely the Orthodox understanding of salvation than the Protestant understanding. Where Protestants, especially evangelicals, tend to see salvation in terms of a one-time conversion experience, Orthodoxy sees salvation as a mystery and as a process that unfolds over time. While Constantine's personal faith may be a matter of debate, his historical contributions to the Church under his reign are undeniable. Frend writes, "The 'Age of the Fathers' would have been impossible without Constantine's conversion. The church's councils under the emperor's guidance became assemblies where the new, binding relationship with the Christian God, on which the safety of the empire depended, was established."

The Orthodox Church sees Constantine as the emperor who assisted the early Church in evangelizing the Roman Empire. For this reason, it honors him as Saint Constantine Equal-to-the-Apostles.

Constantine and the Church

For Orthodoxy, Constantine represents an important link to the past. The persecuted underground Church and the official state Church are the same Church. Constantine played a key role in the historic transition from the former to the latter. For Orthodox Christianity, there is no "fall of the Church." The Orthodox Church believes that it stands in unbroken continuity with the Church of the first century. There is a popular belief among evangelicals that the true Church was the underground Church, which refused to compromise with the worldly state Church, and that this true Church remained in hiding over

the following centuries, leaving few records of its existence until it was rediscovered by the Protestants in the sixteenth century.

Symphonia—The Harmony of Faith and Politics

Constantine's support for the early Church laid the foundation for the doctrine of symphonia—the ideal of political and religious leaders working in harmony to realize God's will here on earth. This ideal is rooted in the Lord's Prayer: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Symphonia avoids two extremes: the separation of Church from State on the one hand, and the fusion of Church and State on the other. Despite his active participation in the Ecumenical Council, Constantine did not view himself as one of the bishops, but rather as "bishop of those outside." This ideal found concrete expression in the Byzantine Empire, which lasted for a thousand years. Under Constantine's rule began the transformation of Roman culture. Execution by crucifixion ceased, gladiatorial battles as punishment ended."

Conclusion

The history of Roman Catholicism cannot be divorced from the life and reign of Constantine. His place in its history is securely fastened together.

Review Questions

1. Please share with us your thoughts on the role of persecution in preparing the larger wing
2. From the materials we read today, kindly share your thoughts on significance of Emperor Constantine to emergence of Christianity as a Religion embraced by Rome.

Chapter 43

From Relationship/Kingdom to Religion/Christendom

As seen from Lesson 42, Orthodoxy celebrates the embrace and benefice of Emperor Constantine as a boost from heaven and a well needed breadth of fresh air for the long-persecuted Church. As evidence, they cite the apparent Christianization of the empire in subsequent years. While there is no doubt that the Roman empire was indeed impacted by the Church it had despised and oppressed for centuries, by the time Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity (relying on accounts of Orthodox Christianity), the larger wing of the Church was on the way to be ready for a new groom. Like the Church in Laodicea which by opening its heart to the World ejected Yeshua, Jesus to the outside of it (See Revelations 3:14-22), the embrace of Rome, predominant worldly power of the age was a strategic detour out of the narrow way Yeshua spoke of in Matthew 7.

Focusing on the spiritual life of Constantine as evidence of that miss-step is not enough evidence that the larger wing of the Church had taken a turn for the worse. Those who defend the role of Constantine point to the Council of Nicaea which he convened and chaired for the purpose of dealing with Arianism which denied the Divinity of Jesus. Significantly, the Bishop of Rome, Silvester (supposedly the reigning Pope) did not attend the Council of Nicaea but was rather represented by two delegates. This historical reality was sure enough proof that a 'new Sheriff' was in town. The supposed 'personal representative of Jesus' as Roman Catholic Popes were regarded was not present to personally chair the Nicaea Council but rather a 'convert' who had not been baptized; a man whose only claim to the chair of that Council was the fact that as Emperor of Rome, he was now 'benefactor of the Church'. He represented the new groom, Rome!

Arianism: A Boost for Constantine

Arianism was an anti-Christ heresy (departure from truth) of the fourth century which rocked the Church. Advocated by Arius the infamous priest of Alexandria, here is how Encyclopedia Britannica describes the false teaching. It was the Council of Nicaea which Constantine convened and presided over in AD 325 which officially denounced the heresy:

"Arianism, in Christianity, the Christological (concerning the doctrine of Christ) position that Jesus, as the Son of God, was created by God. It was proposed early in the 4th century by the Alexandrian presbyter Arius and was popular throughout much of the Eastern and Western Roman empires, even after it was denounced as a heresy by the Council of Nicaea (325).

Arianism is often considered to be a form of Unitarian theology in that it stresses God's unity at the expense of the notion of the Trinity, the doctrine that three distinct persons are united in one Godhead. Arius's basic premise was the uniqueness of God, who is alone self-existent (not dependent for its existence on anything else) and immutable; the Son, who is not self-existent, cannot therefore be the self-existent and immutable God. Because the Godhead is unique, it cannot be shared or communicated. Because the Godhead is immutable, the Son, who is mutable, must, therefore, be deemed a creature

who has been called into existence out of nothing and has had a beginning. Moreover, the Son can have no direct knowledge of the Father, since the Son is finite and of a different order of existence.”

An article in Wikipedia provides some clue that the motives of Constantine in delving into the sphere of spirituality may have been driven more by need to preserve the peace and harmony of the Roman Empire:

“The reign of Constantine established a precedent for the position of the emperor as having great influence and ultimate regulatory authority within the religious discussions involving the early Christian councils of that time, e.g., most notably the dispute over Arianism. Constantine himself disliked the risks to societal stability that religious disputes and controversies brought with them, preferring where possible to establish an orthodoxy. His influence over the early Church councils was to enforce doctrine, root out heresy, and uphold ecclesiastical unity; what proper worship and doctrines and dogma consisted of was for the Church to determine, in the hands of the participating bishops” (Wikipedia).

As Wikipedia further observed, even some of the Bishops of the day drew him into the role of umpire when they could not resolve some of their theological disputes:

“Most notably, from 313 to 316 bishops in North Africa struggled with other Christian bishops who had been ordained by Donatus in opposition to Caecilian. The African bishops could not come to terms and the Donatists asked Constantine to act as a judge in the dispute. Three regional Church councils and another trial before Constantine all ruled against Donatus and the Donatism movement in North Africa. In 317 Constantine issued an edict to confiscate Donatist church property and to send Donatist clergy into exile. More significantly, in 325 he summoned the Council of Nicaea, effectively the first Ecumenical Council (unless the Council of Jerusalem is so classified), most known for its dealing with Arianism and for instituting the Nicene Creed.”

In tracing, also how Constantine’s supposed faith clashed with some of his royal actions, these passages from Wikipedia are worthy of consideration:

“Apparently Constantine did not patronize Christianity alone. After gaining victory in the Battle of the Milvian Bridge (312), a triumphal arch—the Arch of Constantine—was built (315) to celebrate his triumph. The arch is decorated with images of the goddess Victoria. At the time of its dedication, sacrifices to gods like Apollo, Diana, and Hercules were made. Absent from the Arch are any depictions of Christian symbolism. However, as the Arch was commissioned by the Senate, the absence of Christian symbols may reflect the role of the Curia at the time as a pagan redoubt.

In 321, he legislated that the venerable day of the sun should be a day of rest for all citizens. In the year 323, he issued a decree banning Christians from participating in state sacrifices. Furthermore, Constantine's coinage continued to carry the symbols of the sun. After the pagan gods had disappeared from his coinage, Christian symbols appeared as Constantine's attributes: the chi rho between his hands or on his labarum, as well on the coin itself.

Constantine enforced the prohibition of the First Council of Nicaea against celebrating the Lord's Supper on the day before the Jewish Passover (14 Nisan)

(see Quartodecimanism and Easter controversy). This marked a definite break of Christianity from the Judaic tradition. From then on the Roman Julian Calendar, a solar calendar, was given precedence over the lunisolar Hebrew Calendar among the Christian churches of the Roman Empire.”

Equally troubling is the reality that Emperor Constantine signed the warrant for execution of both his son Crispus and wife Fausta in 326 AD barely a year after Nicaea! Interestingly, he still tolerated paganism across the empire among both nobles and commoners and was not baptized until when on his deathbed.

Debunking the claim that Constantine and Council of Nicaea formulated theology of Elohim

Those who claim that the Council of Nicaea defined the Triune nature of Elohim do a disservice to the Kingdom and Truth in the Holy Scriptures! The reality of the Triune Personality of Elohim had been an existential reality starting from the Creation Day!

Genesis 1:26 (KJV) *26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.*

It had been declared in the response of Elohim to the Fall of Adam, and Eve

Genesis 3:22 (KJV) *22 And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:*

It was also manifested when Elohim deemed it necessary to deal with those who gathered to build the Tower of Babel

Genesis 11:5-7 (KJV) *5 And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. 6 And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. 7 Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.*

Abraham had encountered the Triune Elohim as a careful reading of Genesis 18 shows

David had spoken about the mystery of Elohim in some of His Psalms dealing with the Messiah.

In the days of His Incarnate State, the manifest declarations of Scripture of His Divine origin are simply spot on:

The way Yeshua was conceived revealed how the mystery unfolded in the earth realm (Luke 1:34-35). At His Baptism, attestation of the Triune Elohim was clear (Matthew 3:16-17)

Yeshua Himself taught the disciples two profound realities of His dual nature:

i. He and the Father are of one essence John 8:12-59

John 10:29-30 (KJV) *29 My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. 30 I and my Father are one.*

John 14:6-11 (KJV) *6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. 7 If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. 8 Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. 9 Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father? 10 Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. 11 Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.*

John 17:11, 21-23 (KJV) *11 And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are*

21 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. 22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: 23 I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

ii. To undertake His redemptive assignment, He needed to function as a human whose will was totally submitted to that of the Father as an example to the redeemed of how to live in such a way to please the Father

John 4:34 (KJV) *34 Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.*

John 5:30 (KJV) *30 I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.*

John 6:38 (KJV) *38 For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.*

In the Gospels, we also see that Holy Spirit was clearly presented not as a Force or Thing but as a Person. As a Person, these clearly Divine attributes were manifested through the Bible:

iii. He is Spirit of Elohim

Genesis 1:1-2 (KJV) *1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. 2 And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.*

iv. He planted Yeshua in the womb of Mary (Luke 1:29-35)

v. He empowered Yeshua for the work of ministry

Acts 10:38 (KJV) *38 How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.*

vi. He raised Yeshua from the dead (Romans 8:11)

vii. He was the other Comforter that would be with the Church after Ascension of Yeshua

John 14:16 (KJV) *16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;*

John 14:26 (KJV) *26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.*

John 15:26 (KJV) *26 But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:*

John 16:7 (KJV) *7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.*

x. He was to be everything to humans: convict them of Sin; reveal Yeshua as sufficient sacrifice for their sins; Seal them unto day of redemption; transform their lives from glory to glory; unite them as one Kingdom nation in the earth realm and endue them with power from heaven to witness for Yeshua throughout the earth realm

2 Corinthians 1:22 (KJV) *22 Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.*

Ephesians 1:13 (KJV) *13 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,*

Ephesians 4:30 (KJV) *30 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.*

Acts 1:4-5, 8 (KJV) *4 And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. 5 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence*

8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

The point is this: Saints who lived in the Alpha Church did not need the Theological formulations of Nicaea to know their Elohim! In the almost 300 or so years preceding that Council, all the original apostles, leaders and brethren knew Yeshua Who called them was divine. The words of John was an accepted truth all these centuries:

John 1:1-3 (KJV) *1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 The same was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men.*

Saints ever since the first 120 at the Upper Room knew by experience that Yeshua was Divine; that Holy Spirit Is Divine and that there was only one Elohim, not three Gods! They also knew that it is not entirely possible for a finite mind to fully grasp an infinite Elohim. The issue of Elohim as the God Head was a mystery they knew would be one day accomplished according to the revelation granted John the beloved and were content to walk with Him by Faith in His Word!

Revelation 10:7 (KJV) *7 But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.*

Those who were truly born again may not have had all the theological arguments but nevertheless, they knew experientially the King Who ruled in their hearts was not a mere human or Prophet or Rabbi. They knew Him to be Elohim made flesh, Emmanuel to dwell amongst them! How did they know? They knew because they were in a vibrant, personal relationship with Him! Because of this relationship, Holy Spirit illuminated the pages of scripture and released grace for them to walk by Faith not by sight.

Consequently, they lived like Paul who in Romans 8:28-39 declared defiantly that nothing could separate

them from the love of Elohim in Yeshua. They were citizens of the Kingdom of Elohim and did not cower in fear to the kingdoms of humans. This was the reason why the intensity of martyrdom and other forms of persecution did not move them away from the hope of the gospel!

Nicaea did not stamp out Arianism!

In any case, the Council of Nicea did not successfully stamp out Arianism. History of the Roman Empire reveals that various Emperors took the Church in the direction they favored. Those, who like Constantine favored the Trinity ensured it was the prevalent theology in the empire. When they died, and were succeeded by Arianist Emperors, the order was reversed. Consequently, Bishops and Priests were favored or demoted according to the whims of the various Emperors!

Each generation till today, Arianism – just like other heresies and errors - has continued and will remain so as long as humans have itchy ears to hear what sounds exotic! A strain of Arianism we dub the pseudo-Kingdom teachings of a man from the Caribbean basin in the 21st Century has captured the hearts and imaginations of some diehard fans. At the center of his theology is this postulation: The Kingdom is greater and more significant than Jesus and the Salvation that is obtainable by Faith in Him. This twisted logic counsels that saints should not preach Jesus but rather the Kingdom. Unfortunately for those caught up in this error, the word of scripture makes it clear that the true Holy Spirit will never lead a saint to depreciate the centrality of Yeshua!

1 Corinthians 12:3 (KJV) *3 Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.*

The King of Kings is the Center and Circumference of His Kingdom! The Kingdom derives from His benefice and is not external to Him. To receive Him and submit to His sovereign rule is to be part of His Kingdom! Here is a short description of the True Kingdom Message which Yeshua preached:

The Kingdom He spoke of had three dimensions:

- i. Submitting totally to His Sovereign rule. Saints are to die to self; become his disciples, make their vessels available as instruments through which the presence of the King and reality of His kingdom within them is manifested to those outside. The Kingdom is not about accumulation of stuff but is rather Righteousness, Peace and Joy in the Holy Ghost (Romans 14:17-18) The evidence of this reality is Fruit of the Spirit and absence of works of the flesh (Galatians 5:13-26)
- ii. Kingdom Nation. This is the spiritual reality that all who live as described above though in the world, are not of the world. United in Him and each other by Holy Spirit, they are in a state of spiritual unity as His Royal Priesthood, Peculiar people and Holy Nation distinct from the world from which they were redeemed. (1 Peter 2: 9-12; Ephesians 4:1-6; Philippians 4:12-16; John 17)
- iii. Kingdom Come: This is the manifest or physical state of the Kingdom which will occur when Yeshua returns to rule and reign in the earth realm. All saints are to have their eyes firmly fixed on this reality and be willing to suffer whatever it takes to be part of those who will rule and reign with Him as Priests and kings (in a sense, saints are in a dress rehearsal in this present life for that role which will manifest in fullness in the age to come). It was this reality which energized all saints of all ages to gladly suffer and

be killed for the sake of faith in Yeshua. (Matthew 16:24-26; Matthew 10; Matthew 24; Romans 8:14-23; 1 Timothy 2:12).

By embracing the temporary gain offered by the Roman Empire, the larger wing of the Church basically gave up the grand crown of the Kingdom to come! It was indeed a case of temporary gain being preferred to the lasting glory of the manifest Kingdom! The Deal was Sealed with the Union of the universal (Catholic) Church with the Roman Empire.

The fruit: The Roman Catholic Church

If Emperor Constantine proposed the marriage between the larger wing of the Church with the reigning empire of the day, the deal was sealed finally by Emperor Theodosius. Let us consider this piece of historical information by National Geographic online:

“Though Constantine I (circa A.D. 280 to 337) was the first Christian emperor of Rome, it was not until decades after he died that Christianity became the official religion of the empire.

Ruling from 379 to 395, Emperor Theodosius I was the first emperor to decree that all citizens should be Christian. He was also the last ruler to preside over a united Eastern and Western Roman Empire. Indeed, east and west had been diverging since long before his reign.

Theodosius allowed most pagans to worship in peace. But he forcibly removed "heretic" Arian or Gnostic bishops from Christian churches throughout the eastern empire.

These officials were replaced with "catholic" Christians, as defined by the circa-325 Council of Nicea. The creed recognized the equal divinity of the holy Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”

Knowing human nature, it is obvious that even if well intentioned, the attempt to expand Christianity by imperial fiat ensured that the gospel would become Religion! Nobles, Soldiers and commoners became ‘Christian’ by decree, not by repentance and conversion. They learnt how to dress and look the part even though their spirit-man and souls were filled with the nature of Sin. Six days a week, they lived any how that was convenient in sin but dressed up on Sundays and Feast days to attend services as spectators of the religious performance of priests and engage in endless rituals seeking to appease what was essentially an ‘Unknown God’.

Christian religion was born, alive and well. The Roman Empire helped to structure and empower it as an instrument of advancing its imperial designs for expansion and dominance of humans from various cities, nations and cultures.

Review Questions

1. Please present a brief summary of why the assumed blessings derived from the reign of Constantine was, spiritually speaking, a dangerous leaven which eventually destroyed the pure gospel of the Kingdom
2. Please explain why the Kingdom cannot be greater than King Yeshua Himself

Chapter 44

Pillars for Consolidation of Roman Catholic Religion Part 1

The Roman Catholic Church is the face of Christianity most of the world knows. Its claim to pre-eminence is largely accepted by humanity. A brief synopsis of what it wants people to believe and some of the powers it ascribes to itself can be found in this text from Wikipedia:

“The theology of the Catholic Church is based on natural law, canonical scripture, divine revelation, and sacred tradition, as interpreted authoritatively by the magisterium of the Catholic Church. The teachings of the Catholic Church are summarized in various creeds, especially the Nicene (Nicene-Constantinopolitan) Creed and the Apostles' Creed, and authoritatively summarized in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Catholic teachings have been refined and clarified by major councils of the Church, convened by popes at important points throughout history. The first such council, the Council of Jerusalem, was convened by the Apostles c. AD 50. The most recent was the Second Vatican Council, which was held from 1962 to 1965.

The Catholic Church believes that it is guided by the Holy Spirit, and that it is protected from definitively teaching error on matters of faith and morals. According to the Church, the Holy Spirit reveals God's truth through sacred scripture and sacred tradition. Sacred tradition consists of those beliefs handed down through the church since the time of the Apostles. Sacred scripture and sacred tradition are collectively known as the deposit of faith. This is in turn interpreted by the magisterium, the teaching authority of the Church. The magisterium includes those pronouncements of the popes that are considered infallible, as well as the pronouncements of ecumenical councils and those of the College of Bishops in union with the pope when they condemn false interpretations of scripture or define truths. The first person to distinguish Catholic theology from secularism was the Italian Protestant Alberico Gentili.

Formal Catholic worship is ordered by means of the liturgy, which is regulated by church authority. The celebration of the Eucharist, one of seven sacraments, is held at the center of Catholic worship. There are numerous additional forms of personal prayer and devotion including the Rosary, Stations of the Cross, and Eucharistic adoration. The Church community consists of the ordained clergy (consisting of the episcopate, the priesthood, and the diaconate), the laity, and those like monks and nuns living a consecrated life under rule.

According to the Catechism, Christ instituted seven sacraments and entrusted them to the Church. These are Baptism, Confirmation (Chrismation), the Eucharist, Penance, the Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders and Matrimony. They are vehicles through which God's grace is said to flow into all those who receive them with the proper disposition. The Church encourages people to engage in adequate preparation before receiving certain sacraments.

Pillars of Roman Catholic Christianity

For the new entity which emerged from the union of State and Church – Roman Catholic Church - to thrive, it needed an identity befitting its status as official religion of the greatest empire in the then world. Every Religion is sustained by pillars which make it distinct from others.

Because it was a fusion of State and Church, the pillars of the Roman Catholic Church derive their origins from some biblical texts as well as Roman and Greek culture. Without factoring in this reality, critics will always miss the mark in assessing this extremely powerful entity which captured the imagination and hearts of the most ardent followers on planet earth equaled only by Islam.

1. Replacement Theology

Rome conquered and colonized the land of Israel. The Hebrews/Jews as a people had a reputation as fiercely independent people. They had suffered under various empires before Rome notably, Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia and even Greco-Macedonia. When the Greco-Macedonian Empire was divided into four after death of Alexander the Great, the Seleucid Empire based in Syria became overlord to Israel. One of the most wicked and anti-Semitic ruler to have lived on earth, Antiochus Epiphannes IV did the unthinkable by defiling the Temple with sacrifice of the unclean animal, a Pig on the altar.

In response, the Maccabean – family of zealots raised up what many considered a rag-tag guerrilla army which was fired by zeal to take away the reproach to Elohim. This tiny band of soldiers prevailed over the mighty army of Antiochus Epiphannes IV. Cleaning up the Temple to restore it for worship led to the miraculous supply of oil for the Menorah which led to establishment of the Festival of Lights, the Hanukkah.

The Hasmonean dynasty which followed ensured Judah lived as an independent entity for about 105 years. When Rome defeated the Seleucids the reputation of the Hebrews/Jews preceded them as a rugged people. Rome went on to exert proper colonial rule over Israel on a two-track way:

- It appointed an Idumean/Edomite, Herod to be King with limited powers
- It permitted the reigning High Priest to be spiritual leader of Judaism
- It appointed Roman Governors backed by a large Garrison of Soldiers to exercise Administrative rule and ensured that the person and name of the reigning Caesar was honoured

At various times, the Hebrews/Jews of Israel tried to defy Roman authority. Each was met with the crushing power of the imperial Roman army.

In AD 70, Roman General Titus led his army to destroy Jerusalem and the Temple

The Bar Kokhba revolt between 132-136 was another major rebellion of the people against Roman rule which was met with drastic measures.

In seeking union of Church and State, Roman Emperors including Constantine were not about to hand over Roman Identity to it. The rather desired to adapt its identity to fit into that of Rome. Throughout

history, victorious side in any war often end up writing the story. The history of Roman Catholicism followed that trend.

The solution was simple: recreate history! In this scenario, Replacement Theology became the way forward. Under this new theology, these features were prominent:

- i. Since the Hebrews/Jews as a people rejected Yeshua, Elohim was through with them.
- ii. The Gentiles of the Roman Empire who embraced the gospel are now inheritors of the Blessings of Israel.
- iii. The City of Rome, capital of the Empire was now the new Jerusalem

Knowing how dangerous this trend of thought – Replacement Theology was, Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write a powerful; refutation of it in his epistle to the Church at Rome (Romans chapters 9, 10, 11). Elohim is not through with Israel and its Hebraic people. Their temporary falling away was a divine mechanism for the Gentiles to come into the Commonwealth.

1. Change of Priesthood

Whereas Yeshua came to inaugurate the Royal Priesthood of Melchizedek – where all saints are called, the new Church of Rome needed to borrow from the playbook of the defunct Aaronic/Levitical Priesthood. It was one in which a tiny, exclusive male priestly class would function as Clergy with real spiritual, administrative and social lordship over the people in their spheres of influence.

- A single Priest with either two or three assistants could in effect rule a Parish of say 1000 – 5000 persons. He was their intermediary with God. He alone had access to the high altar and could celebrate the Eucharist (Communion). He heard their confessions of sins and gave them particular prayers for repentance and decided what level of penance (flagellation of their physical bodies) was sufficient to attract forgiveness. With this arrangement, the Roman Church had real control over the people and more importantly the nobles of the empire. To elevate the esteem and prestige of the office of Parish priest, he needed to be clothed with elaborate costumes whose colors matched various types of occasions – celebrating mass; conducting weddings, baptisms or funeral mass. The Parish priest was automatically in the middle class, attended major civic occasions as the lord spiritual. Often the Parsonage or residence of the Parish was one of the best houses in the area and situated close to the Church building
- A Bishop was over all the priests and ecclesiastical assets in his diocese. Automatically, such people were in the upper class and lived in elaborate bishopric manors complete with all that made life comfortable.
- The Archbishop literally ruled his ecclesiastical province or Archbishopric
- The Pope ruled as ‘supreme pontiff’. Over the years, there have been all kinds of human occupying this office. Some like the current Pope Francis are wonderful humans with excellent public relations techniques that win the hearts of multitudes. Others were extremely wicked, reveling in the blood of saints spilled.

Levitical Priesthood with emergence of Priests as 'lords spiritual'/Clergy whereas the Lord instituted the Melchizedek Priesthood Division of Church into two: The Clergy as a tiny professional, male priestly caste which attends to a large dormant laity

Theatre of Action moves from human hearts to Cathedrals & Church buildings

In gospel of the Kingdom, the heart of humans is the main theatre of action where Elohim meets with His Own. This is because that is where the new birth experience takes place (John 3:3-16; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:1-8). Religions of this world are united in rejecting the new birth experience and transformation from sinner to saint in a split of time. That is why they are all particular about places where their adherents gather to worship.

Because the new church was the religion of the empire, there was need to provide befitting buildings designated as "church". The best architects were commissioned to design the elaborate buildings fit for use by the nobles and emperors of the empire. The best of materials – from stone, brick, to glass, wood was employed to build the imposing structures which have stood the test of time. Well-known artists and painters of each era were commissioned to produce high works of art either as frescos on ceilings/roofs or stained-glass paintings to give the buildings the befitting look they deserved as House of God.

From being conscious of their bodies as temples of Elohim (1 Corinthians 6:18-20), adherents of the new religion were programmed to see Him as resident in the Church building or Cathedral. Practically speaking, Roman Catholicism again borrowed from the concepts of Judaism where the Temple was the physical residence of Elohim.

1. Division of days to be either 'holy' or secular

The tendency to position the Church as a building people went into naturally fostered another error: where there were specified 'holy days' while others were regarded as 'secular'. The result was that people felt 'His presence' when they got close to or inside the church buildings. When outside it, they felt 'ordinary' and lived as they deemed fit. Ahead of the next religious day, they made necessary ablutions and acts of penitence to qualify to enjoy the holy communion.

2. Spectators, not participants

Inside church buildings, Priests were the actors. They said the mass and the people were basically spectators who came in their best dresses to meet up with a vital requirement of their faith. There were of course some lines or responses they were required to memorize and recite. But the essential work inside the building was done by the priest or Bishop.

3. Membership of the Church was by Infant Baptism rather than the New Birth

Membership of the church was by Baptism through sprinkling of water upon infants who were too tender to know what was going on. As people grew older, they were required to maintain membership through payment of annual dues, works of penance and partaking of the Eucharist. It was a case of

Salvation by works rather than Salvation by Grace through faith. This was contrary to what Yeshua instituted: The New birth experience as basis of being part of His Universal Body

4. Essential Nature: An Organization rather than organism

The essential nature of the emergent church was designed to be a powerful religious organization with a pyramidal structure. At the apex, would be the papacy while the parish would be the bottom with the Bishopric and Archbishopric and Cardinals in between. The organism that Yeshua left on planet earth could not fit this new robe. By organizing the new church, the people could be controlled through the levers of ecclesiastical authority. Organizations are external entities that people 'join' to belong. What Yeshua left on earth was an organism comprising all who are born again.

5. The Language Factor

A factor which suited the redefinition of the church and its replacement themed theology is the way Roman Empire embraced Greek language as an instrument of education in its vast empire. Greek language and literature were already of global application before Rome took over as world power. Writers of the biblical texts used Greek to document their accounts.

6. Canonization of dead people

Roman culture was rife with many deities and cults centered on the spirit-world. In ancient Rome, the cults had patron deities that were revered and honoured. As Roman Catholicism emerged from fusion of State and Church, it embraced the concept of canonization of dead people who lived good lives so that they would intercede for the living. The annual calendar of the Roman Catholic Church is thus clogged with days dedicated to various saints who are patrons of various causes.

7. Arrogation of the right to define Doctrines, Dogma, and Traditions of men which are not substantiated by the Word

The power of the Holy Scriptures as central instrument through which the righteousness received by Grace through Faith is sustained is well explicated in the New Covenant.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (KJV) *16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*

It is for this reason ministers and saints are exhorted to study the Holy Scriptures intently:

2 Timothy 2:15 (KJV) *15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

The way Peter puts it no human or council of humans has the right or liberty to use human wisdom to interpret any portion of scriptures.

2 Peter 1:20-21 (KJV) *20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. 21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*

Once there is any diversion from the Truths of the Holy Scriptures, the basis is laid for error and diversion into religion. It is not surprising therefore to note that the Roman Catholic Church arrogated to itself the power to determine doctrine and dogma. Writing in a 2011 article posted in Catholic.com, Jim Blackburn released this insight into the kind of authority the Roman Catholic Church ascribes to itself for defining Doctrines and dogmas:

Full Question: I have heard that the teaching on Mary as Mediatrix of All Graces is official Catholic doctrine but not a dogma of faith. I am not clear on the difference between doctrine and dogma. Can you clear it up for me?

Answer: In general, doctrine is all Church teaching in matters of faith and morals. Dogma is more narrowly defined as that part of doctrine which has been divinely revealed and which the Church has formally defined and declared to be believed as revealed.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church explains,

The Church's magisterium exercises the authority it holds from Christ to the fullest extent when it defines dogmas, that is, when it proposes, in a form obliging the Christian people to an irrevocable adherence of faith, truths contained in divine Revelation or also when it proposes, in a definitive way, truths having a necessary connection with these. (CCC 88)

Concerning the Church's teaching that Mary is the Mediatrix of All Graces, while this doctrine has been divinely revealed, it has not yet been—although could be—elevated to dogma. In Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma, Dr. Ludwig Ott explains, "The doctrine of Mary's Universal Mediation of Grace based on her co-operation in the Incarnation is so definitely manifest in the sources of the faith, that nothing stands in the way of a dogmatic definition" (215)."

The power to add or subtract from the Word is given to no human and therefore dangerous in the extreme!

Revelation 22:18-19 (KJV) *18 For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: 19 And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.*

1. Papal Authority went way beyond what the Lord could ever have permitted

The basis of what Rome did was re-definition and wrong interpretation of Matthew 16:18. To the Roman Catholic Church, this was a sign that Yeshua built His Church on Peter and that all its popes who claim succession to him automatically walk in that same authority of infallibility.

Fortunately, the whole counsel of the Word of Yeshua is documented so we can understand what He meant

Matthew 16:13-20 (KJV) *13 When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? 14 And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. 15 He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? 16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. 17 And Jesus answered and said unto*

him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. 18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. 19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. 20 Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.

Yeshua was commending Peter for getting the revelation that He Is the Messiah! He was proclaiming that upon the revelation and acceptance of His Divinity would His Church in the earth realm be built. In other words, the Divine nature and Personality of Yeshua is the ultimate Rock or Cornerstone of His Church. Anyone who receives this truth becomes a lively stone placed thereon! In his epistle, Peter confirmed this interpretation

1 Peter 2:4-6 (KJV) *4 To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, 5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. 6 Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.*

Nowhere did Peter ascribe to himself infallibility of interpretation of doctrine. As a matter of fact, he commended the vastness and depth of the revelations committed to the trust of Paul:

2 Peter 3:14-16 (KJV) *14 Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. 15 And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; 16 As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.*

The Divine origin of Yeshua had been the main issue of contention for the Hebrews/Jews of His day and so He was delighted that His disciples received the truth!

Review Question

1. Please briefly described what you learnt from any 5 of these Pillars of Roman Catholicism.

Chapter 45

Pillars for Consolidation of Roman Catholicism Part 2 Another Mary

Let us continue our study of Doctrinal errors of Rome, the Alternative Church. The Pillar today happens to be perhaps the most profound and bold!

Pillar #.12. Veneration of Mary as the Mediatrix

One of the most outstanding pillars of the Religion of Roman Catholicism is the veneration of Mary to an extent that is entirely unhelpful and dangerous to souls because it bothers on creation of something which directly contradicts both the Torah and the New Covenant. The real biblical Mary was a humble vessel chosen and favored by Elohim as instrument of bearing the Holy Seed. Both Matthew chapters 1 and 2 and Luke Chapters 1 and 2. Unfortunately, in dealing with this doctrinal error, most Protestants go to extreme lengths to denounce Mary. This is equally reprehensible because it contradicts what the Bible says. On the day Mary went to visit with Elizabeth, the words spoken by both reveal that indeed Elohim desires that Mary be deemed a blessed personality!

Luke 1:40-49 (KJV) *40 And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth. 41 And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: 42 And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. 43 And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. 45 And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord. 46 And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, 47 And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. 48 For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. 49 For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name.*

As one elected for the assignment of receiving the Holy Seed for Incarnation of Yeshua as Emmanuel (Elohim amongst His people), this blessedness is already a done deal!

Luke 1:30-35 (KJV) *30 And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. 31 And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. 32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: 33 And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. 34 Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? 35 And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.*

As the uniform testimony of the Holy Scriptures reveal, after this awesome assignment of bringing forth the Baby Yeshua, Mary and Joseph enjoyed their full conjugal relationship as spouses and were blessed with four other sons (James, Joses, Simon and Judas) and at least two daughters

Matthew 1:24-25 (KJV) *24 Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: 25 And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name Jesus.*

Matthew 13:54-57 (KJV) *54 And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? 55 Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? 56 And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things? 57 And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house.*

Yeshua even shut down anything which would lead to idolization of Mary

Luke 11:27-28 (KJV) *27 And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked. 28 But he said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.*

As the Roman Gentile led Church began to evolve within the fourth and fifth centuries, various strange doctrines were introduced by advocates with power of the pen and speech through which they swayed the hearts and minds of many. In this way, the emergent church developed doctrines, dogma and traditions which directly contradict the Holy Scriptures in both Spirit and Truth of the letters. Here is an entry by Wikipedia concerning how the matter evolved from the 4th-5th century till date:

“In the 5th century, the Third Ecumenical Council debated the question of whether Mary should be referred to as Theotokos or Christotokos. Theotokos means "God-bearer" or "Mother of God"; its use implies that Jesus, to whom Mary gave birth, is truly God and man in one person. Nestorians preferred the title Christotokos meaning "Christ-bearer" or "Mother of the Messiah" not because they denied Jesus' divinity, but because they believed that God the Son or Logos existed before time and before Mary, and that Mary was mother only of Jesus as a human, so calling her "Mother of God" was confusing and potentially heretical. Both sides agreed that Jesus took divinity from God the Father and humanity from his mother. The majority at the council agreed with the Pope that denying Mary the title Theotokos would either imply that Jesus was not divine, or that Jesus had two separate personhoods, one of whom was son of Mary and the other not. Ultimately, the council affirmed the use of the title Theotokos and by doing so affirmed Jesus' undivided divinity and humanity.

Thus, while the debate was over the proper title for Mary, it was primarily a Christological question about the nature of Jesus Christ, a question which would return at the Fourth Ecumenical Council. Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, Lutheran and Anglican theological teaching affirms the title Mother of God, while other Christian denominations give no such title to her.”

In speaking of Ambrose, Bishop of Milan who provided much of the logical foundation of Mariology, we see that the basic premise was essentially a human attempt to use logic to discern spiritual things as stated in a Wikipedia entry on:

“The theological treatises of Ambrose of Milan would come to influence Popes Damasus, Siricius and Leo XIII. Central to Ambrose is the virginity of Mary and her role as Mother of God.

- The virgin birth is worthy of God. Which human birth would have been more worthy of God, than the one, in which the Immaculate Son of God maintained the purity of his immaculate origin while becoming human?

- We confess, that Christ the Lord was born from a virgin, and therefore we reject the natural order of things. Because not from a man she conceived but from the Holy Spirit.
- Christ is not divided but one. If we adore him as the Son of God, we do not deny his birth from the virgin... But nobody shall extend this to Mary. Mary was the temple of God but not God in the temple. Therefore, only the one who was in the temple can be worshipped.
- Yes, truly blessed for having surpassed the priest (Zechariah). While the priest denied, the Virgin rectified the error. No wonder that the Lord, wishing to rescue the world, began his work with Mary. Thus she, through whom salvation was being prepared for all people, would be the first to receive the promised fruit of salvation”.

This seemingly harmless treatise has now morphed into a global religious movement full of statues of all shapes and sizes dedicated to Mary, holy orders of male priests and female nuns; apparitions of her and mass veneration experiences which are indeed troubling.

All this arise because Roman Catholics have been indoctrinated with the belief that because she was the vessel used to bring forth Yeshua:

1. She is elevated as Mother of God
2. Since Yeshua was conceived without Sin, the vessel who bore Him must also have had an Immaculate Conception (born without Sin)
3. Accordingly, they formulated another fantastic tradition that because of 1 and 2 above, Mary’s body could not have seen corruption and she therefore experienced an Assumption into heaven in her body
4. Because of these 3-preceding point, Mary is enthroned as the Mediatrix standing in the gap between those who venerate her and Jesus. So, whatever you need from heaven, all you need to do is invoke the name of Mary which guarantees that her ‘Son’ would speedily grant same!

This four-point logic represents human reason gone haywire:

1 Corinthians 2:4-14 (KJV) *4 And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: 5 That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. 6 Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: 7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: 8 Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 9 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. 10 But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. 11 For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. 13 Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. 14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

Let us note that after pronouncing in Genesis 3:15 that redemption would come forth through Seed of the woman, Elohim all through history laid hold of sinful men and women as instruments of bringing Him forth! The lineage of Yeshua is thus filled with normal humans whose life stories or backgrounds are less than noble! Chief among them, let us consider these:

- Noah, the man who in Genesis 6:8 found Grace in the eyes of Elohim and was saved with his family from the Great Flood. As Genesis 9 reports, he got drunk after the Flood and lay naked, a situation which led his son Ham to stumble. In rage, Noah issued a proclamation which defined the history of humanity.
- Abraham was a direct progenitor of Yeshua and therefore carrier of the promised Seed. He had flip flops in his walk with Elohim in the matter of Hagar (trying to help Elohim with the Seed) in Genesis 16 and 21. In Genesis 20 we see that he lied to Abimelech about Sarai his wife just to save his skin. Despite these infractions, Elohim still chose and used him.
- Judah, great grandson of Abraham who received the promise of the Sceptre (bearer of the Seed and Authority) from Jacob his father went on to deliver it through the most unimaginable process: incest with his daughter in law, Tamar who disguised as a prostitute. The seed of that unholy relationship, Pharez, became bearer of the Seed, not all the other children and grandchildren who lived 'good lives'! (Genesis 38; Ruth 4:12; 1 Chronicles 2:4)
- Rahab, the common prostitute of Jericho became part of the lineage when she saved the spies sent by Israel. She evidently married one of the invading army when Israel entered the Promised land. Joshua chapters 2 & 6; Hebrews 11:31; James 2:25
- Ruth who married Boaz and became part of the lineage of the Seed was a Moabites. Moab and Ammon were products of the incestuous relationship of Lot and his two daughters after they were rescued from Sodom (Genesis 19:30-38; Ruth chapters 1, 2, 3, 4 and Matthew 1:5)
- David who was a revered personality in the lineage of the Seed was a man who messed up big time. He committed adultery with Bathsheba, wife of Uriah, one of his most loyal military officers. To cover it up, he had Uriah compromised unto death in battle and went on to marry the widow. (2 Samuel chapters 11 and 12; 1 Kings chapter 1; Matthew 1:6)
- Solomon was product of that very negative relationship between David and Bathsheba. Of all the children of David, he was the one through which the Seed would come. His life was an example of vanity, with 1000 wives and Concubines as well as gross idolatry. 2 Samuel chapters 11 and 12; 1 Kings chapter 1; Matthew 1:6,7)
- Some of those in the lineage from Solomon to Yeshua were very terrible human beings. The full list of ancestors of Yeshua in both Matthew Chapter 1 and Luke chapter 3 confirm the reality that Elohim does not consult the past to determine who to call or His determinate counsel and Purpose in that vessel! in His Pre-eminence laid hold of various vessels to serve His determinate counsel!

The point being made here is that in the economy of Elohim, any vessel can be used for Divine purpose. This knocks down the humanistic arguments of why Mary needed to be conceived Immaculately and why she had to be taken up to heaven in her 'immaculate' body! Like every other person who lived since Adam, Mary is *part of this scripture*

Romans 3:23 (KJV) *23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;*

She was a vessel who found favor with Elohim and experienced His election to be the vessel who was used to consummate the Incarnation as Luke 1:29-35 says.

Luke 1:26-35 (KJV) *26 And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, 27 To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. 28 And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. 29 And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. 30 And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. 31 And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. 32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: 33 And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. 34 Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? 35 And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.*

The Roman Catholic teaching and practice of regarding Mary as Mediatrix totally contradicts the express provisions of the Holy Writ which states:

1 Timothy 2:5 (KJV) *5 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;*

It is this positioning of Mary that is responsible for the nearly endless invocation of her name through both the Rosary and in normal daily lives of Roman Catholics. Kevin Rudd in his 'Overview of how Catholic Faith contradicts the Bible' notes that

"Catholics also engage in more praising of Mary than Jesus Christ himself and actually pray to her to have their prayers answered. Rosary Beads graphically represent how Roman Catholics heap 10 times more praise upon Mary than God himself. Of the 59 total beads of the Rosary, 53 beads are "Hail Marys", but only 6 beads are "Our Father". The Rosary most often ends with a "Hail, Holy Queen" prayer to Mary, not God

Let us examine this take from Wikipedia on how the veneration of Mary dominates the liturgical year of Rome:

"The Roman Catholic Church celebrates three Marian solemnities which are also holy days of obligation in many countries during the liturgical year (in liturgical order): December 8 Feast of the Immaculate Conception. January 1 Mary, Mother of God. August 15 The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary."

The only Biblical Conclusions

The only biblical conclusion we can arrive at is this:

#.1. The Roman Catholic Mary is not the same as the Biblical Mary! That of Rome has been used to cause multitudes to roundly reject the simplicity of Salvation by Grace through Faith which brings former sinners into a place of vibrant personal relationship with Elohim in which Yeshua alone reigns Supreme in their lives as they are led by Holy Spirit.

#.2. The Roman Catholic Mary is more like a divine personality, The Queen of Heaven. The Biblical Mary was a humble, holy woman who saw herself as a vessel of honour made fit for the Master's use entirely by His Grace.

Luke 1:46-55 (KJV) *46 And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, 47 And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. 48 For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. 49 For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name. 50 And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation. 51 He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. 52 He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. 53 He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away. 54 He hath helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; 55 As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.*

#.3. The Roman Catholic Mary was a Mediatrix almost supreme in herself. The Biblical Mary knew the limit of her access and influence on Yeshua. She followed the footsteps of John the Baptist and pointed people to Yeshua as ultimate solution:

John 2:1-5 (KJV) *1 And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: 2 And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage. 3 And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. 4 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come. 5 His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.*

#.4. The Roman Catholic Mary did not have a conjugal relationship with Joseph. The Biblical one had a fulfilled conjugal relationship with Joseph until he died:

Matthew 13:55-56 (KJV) *55 Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? 56 And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things?*

Initially and possibly until He was crucified, died and arose, it appears his siblings had the same attitude of familiarity deception like the people of Nazareth who doubted his Divinity:

John 7:2-8 (KJV) *2 Now the Jew's feast of tabernacles was at hand. 3 His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest. 4 For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world. 5 For neither did his brethren believe in him. 6 Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come: but your time is alway ready. 7 The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil. 8 Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet unto this feast: for my time is not yet full come.*

Of these children, two went on to become apostles: James and Jude who wrote the epistles with their names. One of them James was the Chair/Moderator of the first Jerusalem Council (significantly, not Peter who the Bible never cast as a Pope):

Acts 15:13-22 (KJV) *13 And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: 14 Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. 15 And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, 16 After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: 17 That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who*

doeth all these things. 18 Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world. 19 Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: 20 But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. 21 For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day. 22 Then pleased it the apostles and elders with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas and Silas, chief men among the brethren:

#.5. The Roman Catholic Mary was without Original Sin and had Immaculate Conception. The Biblical Mary had a relationship with Yeshua as her Saviour and Lord and followed Him to the end. She was there at the Cross until Yeshua gave up His Spirit. She was also there at the Upper Room on the day of Pentecost and was filled with Holy Spirit just like others:

John 19:25-27 (KJV) *25 Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. 26 When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! 27 Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.*

Acts 1:12-14 (KJV) *12 Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey. 13 And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James. 14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.*

The Father wants to equip the remnant of the end times with the Truth backed by deep compassion for those who are trapped in this great Religion so that they can be enabled to also know the Truth which sets free. John 8:32. Let no one therefore be puffed up with the revelation of these truths or to be contemptuous of fellow humans. To be instruments of saving their souls will require true agape love!

Review Questions

1. Please summarize this lesson.
2. What new thing did you learn from it?

Chapter 46

Pillars of Roman Catholicism Part 3 Purgatory, Indulgence + others

We cannot be careful enough to posture before the Lord to receive further insight into the human philosophies and dangerous doctrines/dogma which collectively make up the theology and determine the liturgy of the Alternate Church of Rome. Steve Rudd wrote an insightful article titled "Overview of how Catholic faith contradicts the Bible" which was published in <http://www.bible.ca/cath-overview-false-teaching.htm>. You are encouraged to read all of it for as there is no need to re-invent the wheel of truth. What we will do is to provide a running commentary which links the issues he flags up concerning this Alternate Christian Religion which Rome offered the world and which will continue to dominate the religious scene until Yeshua consummates His union with His True Remnant Church and establishes the manifest phase of the Kingdom. Most of what we will share is from the work of Rudd. His style is to state a fact, ask questions and cite the biblical passages. We have taken off the snap tests in the questions to ensure there is smoother flow of the message.

All Christians are saints

FACT: The Pope says only very special dead Catholic people qualify to be called "saints". For example, Pope John Paul II could not make Mother Teresa a saint (official canonization) until after she was dead. The average Catholic in the pew is never called a "saint" dead or alive! In fact, if a pew dwelling Catholic started calling himself a "saint", he would be rebuked by the parish priest!

Question #1: Was every living Christian in the church in Corinth called a saint?

Answer: 1 Corinthians 1:2 (KJV) 2 To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and our's:

Question #2: Did Paul write the book of Ephesians to dead saints?

Answer: Ephesians 1:1 (KJV) 1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:

Question #3: Was the average Christian in the church at Philippi called a saint, in distinction to bishops and deacons?

Answer: Philippians 1:1 (KJV) 1 Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: Question #4: Was every Christian living in Rome called to be a saint?

Answer: Romans 1:7 (KJV) 7 To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

All Christians are Priests

FACT: The Pope decided to reserve the title of "priest" to be worn by church leaders only. The average pew dwelling Catholic never refer to themselves as "priests". In fact, if a lay Catholic started calling himself a "priest", he would be rebuked by "the parish Priest"!

Question #1: Did Jesus make all Christians to be priests, including the average member in the pew?

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

1 Peter 2:9 (KJV) 9 But you (all Christians) are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvellous light;

Revelation 1:6 (KJV) 6 Jesus has made us (all Christians) to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Revelation 5:10 (KJV) 10 You have made them (all Christians) to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth."

Bishops Must be Married

FACT: In 1079 AD, celibacy was first enforced for priests and bishops by Pope Gregory VII. Before this time, they were permitted to marry.

Question #1: Does the Bible teach that a bishop (overseer) must be married AND ALSO have children as one of the conditions of being qualified to be a bishop?

Answer: 1 Timothy 3:2-5 (KJV) 2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; 3 Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; 4 One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; 5 (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)

Note: Paul was not saying only married people who had children could be Bishops as interpreted by Rudd.

Question #2: In the very next chapter of the Bible after bishops are told they must be married with children, does the Holy Spirit warn that "forbidding to marry" is a "doctrine of demons"?

Answer: 1 Timothy 4:1-3 (KJV) 1 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; 2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; 3 Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.

Peter was Married

FACT: Most Catholics believe that Apostle Peter was the first Pope and was not married. As one Roman Catholic leader said, "if Peter had a wife when he first met Jesus, he got rid of her quick!"

Question #1: Did Peter have a wife?

Answer: Mark 1:30 (KJV) 30 But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and anon they tell him of her.

Question #2: Did Paul say all the apostles including Peter had a right to be married?

Answer: 1 Corinthians 9:5 (KJV) 5 Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?

Let us note this important fact here: Celibacy (ability to live without pressure for drives for sexual satisfaction so that one can serve the Lord) is a gift from heaven. Those who, considering the weight of their calling abstain from marriage like Paul the apostle are in a world of consecration which cannot and should not be imposed by fiat on those have no such gift.

Matthew 19:7-12 (KJV) 7 They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? 8 He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. 9 And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery. 10 His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry. 11 But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given. 12 For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.

It is noteworthy that according to some accounts, Celibacy was required from priests to safeguard the Roman Catholic Church assets from claims by their widows and orphans. Unfortunately, while that economic problem seemed to have been resolved with compulsory celibacy, the sexual scandals that plagued the Roman Catholic Church for many years can be directly traceable to that very concept of forced celibacy!

Observance of Special Days Condemned

FACT: The Roman Catholic church has invented an entire yearly calendar of non-Biblical holy Days like Lent, Easter, Christmas.

Historical note: No one prior to 335AD celebrated the birthday of Jesus. The word "Christmas" (Christ + Mass) was first used in 1038AD. Before 335AD, the pagan cult of Mithra, the Iranian "god of light", had long celebrated December 25 as Mithra's birthday. December 21, being the winter solace, marked the beginning of days with increasing amount of light, hence December 25 celebrated Mithra's triumph over darkness. Because the pagan festival that celebrated Mithra's birthday was so popular, the Roman Catholic church adopted the day, but changed the meaning from the birthday of Mithra, the "god of light", to Christ's birthday, God the son, "light of the world". The old meaning of December 25 was

connected with Mithra's triumph over physical darkness. The new meaning celebrated Jesus triumph over spiritual darkness. Eventually Christmas became dominant, the Mithra cult went extinct and today this origin is not widely known among Roman Catholics. None of the apostles or the early church celebrated the birthday of Jesus.

Question #1: Did the early Christians celebrate Christmas, Lent and Easter?

Answer: Galatians 4:10-11 (KJV) 10 Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. 11 I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.

Worshipping Idols, Icons and Images Violates the 2nd Commandment

FACT: Catholics regularly bow down to idols, icons and images of Jesus, Mary and the apostles, kissing the feet of the statues and praying to them. Now Catholics get very upset when you accuse them of worshipping Mary. They deny they are worshipping Mary with loud illogical and irrational protests. What they need to understand, is that the Bible teaches that WE ONLY PRAY TO DEITY and Christians considers it paganism and polytheism to pray to anyone EXCEPT the Father, Son or Holy Spirit.

So, while Catholics pray to Mary, they fail to comprehend that only deity is to be prayed to, and this is the underlying reason why non-Catholics correctly lay the charge they worship Mary AND ALL THE SAINTS, they pray to. The Bible clearly teaches that all dead humans, though conscious in the spirit world, are unable to know anything, much less hear prayers addressed to them. Bowing down to icons and kissing them etc. so closely resemble idol worship it is actually shocking that any Roman Catholic would attempt to defend the practice. But again, they simply do the practice but deny it is worship.

Catholics get mad when you point out they are worshipping the Mary and the saints when they pray to them. When a child stands in the middle of a room and puts his hand over his eyes and says, "you can't see me", that doesn't mean they are invisible, except in the mind of the child. Roman Catholics put their hands over their eyes and say, "We do no worship idols and we do not consider praying to Mary and act of worship". Saying so doesn't make it so. Roman Catholic apologists who harshly criticize protestants who accuse them of worshipping idols and Mary need to take a close look in the mirror and be honest with reality. At the very least, they could tone down their ranting against protestants "misrepresenting Catholic faith" with a bit of self-reflection and a good history lesson.

Historical note: The Pope deleted the 2nd of the 10 commandments so they could use statues & images in worship. They split the 10th commandment on coveting into two commandments so they could still have 10 in number. Don't believe this? Look at the list of 10 commandments published by the Roman Catholic church! The issue here is not how the Ten Commandments are numbered, rather the issue is that most published lists of the 10 commandments do not include the words, "you shall not for yourself an idol". Open your Catholic Bible and look for yourself!

Question #1: Does the 2nd commandment approve of bowing down and kissing idols?

Answer: Exodus 20:4 (KJV) 4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

Baptism is Full Immersion in Water, not Sprinkling

FACT: The Catholic church baptizes babies by sprinkling a little water on them.

Historical note: Greek word for baptism literally means immersion. There are separate words in Greek for sprinkling, pouring and immersion. Only the Greek word for immersion is ever used for Baptism in the Bible. The first recorded case of sprinkling was in 257 AD to someone on a sick-bed. It was then an exception to the rule and brought about fierce opposition from the whole church. Not until 757 AD did the church accept sprinkling in such sick-bed cases of necessity. It wasn't until 1311 AD, when the Catholic council of Ravenna, declared that sprinkling was an acceptable substitute for immersion and from that time forward sprinkling replaced immersion in the Roman Catholic church. The Orthodox church refused sprinkling and still immerses to this day.

Question #1: Was Jesus baptized by full immersion in the Jordan River?

Answer: Matthew 3:16 (KJV) 16 And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:

Question #2: When Philip baptized the Eunuch, did both of them go into the water?

Answer: Acts 8:38-39 (KJV) 38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. 39 And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.

Question #3: Can babies be baptized since they do not first believe?

Answer: Mark 16:16 (KJV) 16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

Acts 8:36-37 (KJV) 36 And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? 37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Question #4: Can babies be baptized since they do not first repent?

Answer: Acts 2:38 (KJV) 38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Every Christian can Understand the Bible by Merely Reading it

FACT: Catholics are taught that only the priests can understand the Bible and the common man in the pew cannot understand the Bible without the priests help.

Question #1: Do the scriptures say that when anyone reads the Bible, they can understand for themselves?

Answer: Ephesians 3:4 (KJV) 4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)

Human Tradition and Man-made Doctrine is Apostasy

FACT: The Pope teaches that he can change what is in the Bible if he wants.

Question #1: Did Jesus say it was OK for man to change what the word of God teaches for man-made Catholic doctrine?

Answer: Mark 7:7-9 (KJV) 7 Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. 8 For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. 9 And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.

Credit: Steve Rudd in Bible.ca/catholic-doctrine

Two Other Errors: Purgatory and Indulgences

Before we conclude, let us examine two more unbiblical and extremely dangerous doctrine of the Roman Catholicism: Purgatory and indulgences These two doctrines combine to essentially give people a false hope concerning their eternal destinations.

Purgatory

According to Wikipedia, "In Roman Catholic theology, Purgatory (Latin: Purgatorium, via Anglo-Norman and Old French) is an intermediate state after physical death in which some of those ultimately destined for heaven must first "undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven," holding that "certain offenses can be forgiven in this age, but certain others in the age to come." And that entrance into Heaven requires the "remission before God of the temporal punishment due to [venial] sins whose guilt has already been forgiven," for which indulgences may be given which remove "either part or all the temporal punishment due to sin," such as an "unhealthy attachment" to sin. Only those who die in the state of grace but have not yet fulfilled the temporal punishment due to their sin can be in Purgatory, and therefore no one in Purgatory will remain forever in that state nor go to hell.

What the Bible Teaches on Fate of the Dead

In the holy scriptures, those living have opportunity to hear the gospel, repent of their sins and live righteously by grace until the date of death or the rapture. This story by Yeshua makes the case clear:

Luke 16:19-31 (KJV) 19 There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: 20 And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, 21 And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. 22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; 23 And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. 24 And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. 25 But Abraham said,

Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. 26 And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. 27 Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: 28 For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. 29 Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. 30 And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. 31 And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

Mortal life therefore is an opportunity to determine where one will spend eternity! Those who die in Yeshua have hope while those who reject him while alive seal their fates at death!

John 3:16-19 (KJV) *16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. 17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. 18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. 19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*

Hebrews 9:27-28 (KJV) *27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: 28 So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.*

Indulgences

The Catholic doctrine of Purgatory is the direct cause of the practice of selling indulgences. Wikipedia explains the concept in this way: In the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, an indulgence is "a way to reduce the amount of punishment one has to undergo for sins". It may reduce the temporal punishment after death, in the state or process of purification called Purgatory. The Catechism of the Catholic Church describes an indulgence as "a remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven, which the faithful Christian who is duly disposed gains under certain prescribed conditions through the action of the Church which, as the minister of redemption, dispenses and applies with authority the treasury of the satisfactions of Christ and the saints".

The recipient of an indulgence must perform an action to receive it. This is most often the saying (once, or many times) of a specified prayer, but may also include the visiting of a particular place, or the performance of specific good works. Indulgences were introduced to allow for the remission of the severe penances of the early Church and granted at the intercession of Christians awaiting martyrdom or at least imprisoned for the faith. They draw on the Treasury of Merit accumulated by Christ's superabundantly meritorious sacrifice on the cross and the virtues and penances of the saints. They are granted for specific good works and prayers in proportion to the devotion with which those good works are performed or prayers recited.

In other words, the concept of indulgence encouraged people to remain in their assumed 'venal/minor sins' and use works and money to buy their way out of purgatory and therefore escape hell! Some

Religious leaders, in the desire to expand revenue of the church added the fantastic offer that people could buy indulgence for their deceased friends and family!

The dangers that these erroneous and clearly unbiblical beliefs had on people can only be imagined. Centuries of teaching doctrines which contradict clear provisions of scripture has caused many to remain in a state of religion and works which weary the flesh but produces no inward transformation and readiness for eternity!

Protestants, especially Pentecostals must also beware that 'Seed sowing' is taking the form of 'indulgence as many remain in sin but feel smug because they 'sow' into a popular minister or ministry and regard the branded gift items they receive as 'evidence' of divine acceptance! In the same way, the doctrine of eternal security and the hyper Grace movement preached so glibly and out of scriptural balance are leading many onto the broad way of Hell by making Christians live carelessly, unmindful of the reality that sin cannot be excused as Hebrews 6:1-8 and Hebrews 10:28-31 say.

Review Questions

1. Please discuss any 3 of the doctrinal errors of Rome which you consider most significant.

Chapter 47

Pillars of Roman Catholicism Part 4 The Dark Ages

Roman Catholic Church of the Middle

We will utilize materials from a file compiled by the Research Team of the Global Advanced Mentorship Program led by Apostle Eva Powell Grant and comprising Minister Mary Alice Gooch and Minister Dionne Maxwell. Minister Mary Alice Gooch located this excellent and comprehensive work attributed to Dr. Jack Arnol. Some of the things we will learn from him have been covered in previous lessons. However, he brings some fresh insight and depth that is evidently necessary for our full understanding of what many are convinced is 'Mystery Babylon'! In any case, our brother Paul was used of Holy Spirit to espouse the principle that repeating of truth leads to safety for the hearers!

Philippians 3:1 (KJV) 1 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH OF THE MIDDLE AGES:

Reformation Men and Theology, Lesson 1 of 11 by Dr. Jack L. Arnol

From 590 to 1517, the Roman Church dominated the western world. The Roman Catholic Church controlled religion, philosophy, morals, politics, art and education. This was the dark ages for true Christianity. The vital doctrines of Biblical Christianity had almost disappeared, and with the neglect of true doctrine came the passing of life and light that constitutes the worship of the One True God as declared in Christ. The Roman Catholic Church was theologically sick and its theology led to atrocious corruptions. It was spiritually exhausted, enfeebled and almost lifeless. Rome had seriously departed from the teaching of the Bible and was engrossed in real heresy.

There can be no appreciation for the Reformation until one sees the great spiritual need of the western world in the 16th century. No Christian, Roman Catholic, Protestant or Independent can gloss over the period of history from 590 to 1517. This period is a "black spot" to all who name the name of Christ, but it is Christian history. This was the beginning of the heretical teachings some which continue today.

ROME'S THEOLOGY BEFORE THE REFORMATION

1. Infallibility of the Pope. While this was not an officially declared dogma of the Roman Church (it became official dogma in 1870), it was an assumed fact. As early as 590, Gregory the Great called himself "the servant of servants," believing that he was supreme among all bishops. Another pope, Hildebrand or Gregory VII (11th century), held that, as vicar of Christ and representative of Peter, he could give or take empires. Everyone from the lowest peasant to the highest ruler was to recognize him as Christ's representative on earth and supreme ruler over all religious and political matters. Another pope (14th century) Boniface VII, said,

"We declare, state, define and pronounce that for every human creature to be subject to the Roman pope is altogether necessary for salvation" (Caper, *The Church in History*).

2. Salvation in the Roman Church Only. Rome taught that all who did not acknowledge the pope as God's representative on earth and the Roman Catholic Church as the only true church were damned. Salvation was confined within the teachings of the Roman Church. Every person who disagreed with the Roman Church was in line for a heresy trial and perhaps excommunication. Excommunication meant the loss of one's soul.

3. Salvation by Works. By the 14th century, Augustinian theology was lost or badly neglected. Rome had accepted almost in totality the freewill teaching of Pelagius (5th century) that it had formerly repudiated. Salvation was not caused by God's grace through a supernatural new birth, but by assent to Roman Catholic dogma and practice. Faith was not trust in Christ for salvation, but submission to the church. Salvation was not by grace through faith in Christ alone, but by faith in the church and good works prescribed by the church. Practically speaking, "good works" consisted of mere external obedience to the church, and did not necessarily flow from a life of faith in Christ. The Roman Catholic Church stressed external actions, legal observance and penitential works. Man, actually gained heaven by his works.

4. Complete Sanctification. Rome taught sinless perfectionism. They confused justification and sanctification, teaching that men were justified by God's work in their own hearts and experience. Justification became subjective rather than objective. God was said to infuse grace and transform the sinful nature. By this transforming change within him, the believer was said to be made just in God's sight. As the Christian received more grace, he was said to become less sinful and therefore more just in God's sight.

"Rome held out to men the possibility of becoming pure and sinless saints (ontological perfection), and those who attained this perfection reached sainthood and were qualified to enter heaven at the hour of death. Those who did not become perfect and absolutely sinless in the flesh would need to go to purgatory after death and thus be made completely just and qualified to enter heaven" ("*The Great Issues of the Reformation*," *Present Truth*).

5. Worshiping of Saints. The more a person practiced external works, the more saint like he became and the closer he came to heaven. Some men, who were good enough to be called saints, lived lives advanced in holiness beyond what was required of them. They were made saints by the church. Many of these saints were worshiped by the Roman Catholic Church and became mediators between God and man.

"When Pelagianism laid down the doctrine that man could attain a state of perfect sanctification, it affirmed also that the merits of saints and martyrs might be applied to the Church. A peculiar power was attributed to their intercession. Prayers were made to them; their aid was invoked in all the sorrows of life; and a real idolatry thus supplanted the adoration of the living and true God" (J. H. Merle D'aubigne, *History of the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century*, 1848).

6. Exaltation of the Clergy. The doctrine of sinless perfectionism strengthened the position of the Roman hierarchy. The clergy were thought to be more holy than the average people. Being more holy, they were special channels of the grace of God. Thus, the clergy had the authority from God to dispense God's grace.

"Salvation, taken from the hands of God, fell into those of the priests, who set themselves in the place of our Lord. Souls thirsting for pardon were no more to look to heaven, but to the Church, and above all to its pretended head. To these blinded souls the Roman pontiff was God. Hence the greatness of the popes - hence unutterable abuses" (D'aubigne).

ROME'S PRACTICE

7. System of Penance. From a "works" theology flowed the idea of penance. Men had to do certain external acts to prove the reality of their faith. At first penance consisted of certain public expressions of repentance for people involved in scandal, but it was soon extended to every sin, even to the most secret. Penance was considered as sort of a punishment to which it was necessary to submit to obtain the forgiveness of God through the priest's absolution. Instead of looking to Christ alone for forgiveness, it was sought in the church principally through penitential works.

"Great importance was soon attached to external marks of repentance --to tears, fasting, and mortification of the flesh; and inward regeneration of the heart, which alone constitutes a real conversion, was forgotten.

"As confession and penance are easier than the extirpation of sin and the abandonment of vice, many ceased contending against the lusts of the flesh, and preferred gratifying them at the expense of a few mortifications.

"The penitential works, thus substituted for the salvation of God, were multiplied in the Church from Tertullian down to the thirteenth century. Men were required to fast, to go barefoot, to wear no linen, etc.; to quit their homes and their native land for distant countries; or to renounce the world and embrace a monastic life.

"In the eleventh century, voluntary flagellations were super added to these practices; somewhat later they become quite a mania in Italy, which was then in a very disturbed state. Nobles and peasants, old and young, even children of five years of age, whose only covering was a cloth tied round the middle, went in pairs, by hundreds, thousands, and tens of thousands, through the towns and villages, visiting the churches in the depth of winter. Armed with scourges, they flogged each other without pity, and the streets resounded with cries and groans that drew tears from all who heard them" (D'aubigne).

8. System of Indulgences. Indulgences were a system of exchange whereby the priests employed their special rapport with God to perform certain religious acts for laymen. For a price, Clergy would pray, fast and read scripture for a person. In other words, priestly services were bought. This was later developed into buying up time one might have to spend in purgatory.

"Incest, if not detected, was to cost five groats; and six, if it was known. There was a stated price for murder, infanticide, adultery, perjury, burglary, etc. 前 disgrace of Rome!" exclaims Claude d'Espence, a

Roman divine: and we may add, O disgrace of human nature! for we can utter no reproach against Rome that does not recoil on man himself. Rome is human nature exalted in some of its worst propensities" (D'aubigne).

9. System of Confession. Since the clergy through the church were dispensers of God's grace, they also had the authority to forgive sins. Private confession was abandoned for auricular confession to the priest.

ROME'S SCANDALS

10. Immorality of the Clergy. Celibacy for clergy became Roman Church law in 1079. This mandate tempted all kinds of immorality. The abodes of the clergy were often dens of corruption. It was a common sight to see priests frequenting the taverns, gambling, and having orgies with quarrels and blasphemy. Many of the clergy kept mistresses, and convents became houses of ill fame. In many places, the people were delighted at seeing a priest keep a mistress, that the married women might be safe from his seductions.

"In many places, the priest paid the bishop a regular tax for the women with whom he lived, and for each child he had by her. A German bishop said publicly one day, at a great entertainment, that in one year eleven thousand priests had presented themselves before him for that purpose. It is Erasmus who relates this" (D'aubigne).

11. Immorality of the People. Morality declined with the decline of faith. Take away supernatural salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone and you take away sanctification and good works. Indulgences were looked upon by the common man as a license to sin, for men could buy their forgiveness.

12. Ignorance of Clergy. Many of the clergy had come to their offices through political maneuvering. In a country parish one person called the clergy "miserable wretches . . . previously raised from beggary, and who had been cooks, musicians, huntsmen, stable boys and even worse." Clergy no longer had to learn and teach the Scriptures, for the church told them what to do. Even the superior clergymen were sunk in great ignorance in spiritual matters. They had secular learning, but knew very little of the Bible.

A bishop of Dunfeld congratulated himself on having never learnt either Greek or Hebrew. The monks asserted that all heresies arose from those two languages, and particularly from the Greek. The New Testament,' said one of them, is a book full of serpents and thorns. Greek,' continued he, is a new and recently invented language, and we must be upon our guard against it. As for Hebrew, my dear brethren, it is certain that all who learn it immediately become Jews.'

"Even the faculty of theology at Paris scrupled not to declare to the parliament: Religion is ruined, if you permit the study of Greek and Hebrew'" (D'aubigne).

13. Inquisition. This organization was designed to inquire into the spread of heresy and to call before its tribunal Catholics suspected of heresy with a view to securing their repentance. The accused were sometimes tortured and even put to death. The Inquisition was a disgrace to men who call themselves followers of God. (Please see additional text after #.16)

14. The Papal Schism. From 1378-1417 there were three simultaneous popes, each claiming to be the true pope: Urban VII, an Italian; Clement VII, a Frenchman; and a third pope elected by the Council of Pisa. For several years there were three popes anathematizing and excommunicating one another.

15. The Practice of Simony. Simony was the sinful practice of giving or obtaining an appointment to a church office for money. This was a common practice in the Middle Ages, even in the obtaining of the office of pope.

16. Relics. Rome, playing on the ignorance of people, held all kinds of relics in veneration.

"In the church of All Saints at Wittenberg was shown a fragment of Noah's ark, some soot from the furnace of the Three Children, a piece of wood from the cradle of Jesus Christ, some hair from the beard of St. Christopher, and nineteenth.

The inquisition was the way to make those who were not Roman Catholics convert if they did not the easy way. Again, terrible things were used to dissuade, particularly Hebrew believers and true believers in YESHUA, to become Catholics. One of the inventions for this was the rack where one was stretched until either chose to convert or die. Many were burnt at the stake. It is not surprising to understand why there is a gigantic gulf between Hebrew people converting to believing in the MESSIAH. There were many put in a church then the doors locked shut and then set on fire. While the Hebrew people were dying, the so-called Christians were singing "Onward Christian Soldiers" and other hymns. Who would think that this was a loving GOD after hearing these things happening?

Even today some of these Dark/Middle age beliefs are still practiced by the Roman Catholic Church.

(1) ESCAPING the GREAT DECEPTION, Derek Frank and Francoise Frank. Roaring Lion Publications 2014

To understand the extent of these deviations in dogma, doctrine and practices from the Holy Scriptures is to understand the spiritual atmosphere which necessitated the Reformation championed by Martin Luther in 1517.

The Dark Ages or Middle Ages lasted for nearly a thousand years (by Mary Alice Gooch). The Roman Empire went from being the greatest civilization to being over taken by barbarians and godless people. The population went from being relatively comfortable to poor, under someone's foot, and a horrific view of a loving God to Someone who was a tyrant like in the real world. The population merely existed and had no life of their own. Greed was dominant of the kings, princes and land owners. There was seemingly no "light" in the lives of most people of type. Their lives were made harder working for someone else or being taken advantage of by someone who had wealth who wanted more and more production or money. There were Barbarians, who invaded countries and causing death and destruction of large portions of a town or area. People lived in great fear of having invaders of their towns.

The greatest problem during this time was the Catholic Church has taken over the religious thinking. The monks and priests were the only ones who knew who ELOHIM/FATHER, YESHUA/SON and maybe about RUACH HAKODESH/HOLY SPIRIT was. The people were not able to read the Scriptures or know about a personal relationship with a GOD who loved them. He was a GOD of fear, punishment, and total hopelessness. The Loving ABBA that we know as our FATHER was portrayed as a vengeful, judgmental

GOD. There was no hope of spending eternity in heaven. Women were called witches and severely tortured and died in the agonizing ways. All someone would have to do is accuse another woman of some little thing she had done and it was a sure sign of her being a witch. She was then made to endure many horrible devices used to make her repent or die from the torment. Men were dragged to death or torn in half or spent years in a prison cell with little or nothing to eat and suffering. Many of the accusers were a member of the clergy who "could do no wrong." and were in the pocket of the rich land owners.

There has always been a remnant of true believers, but during this time, only small groups of them. Most followed what people were told blindly and believing that what the clergy said was right from GOD. Salvation was worked out by outward things and not by believing in YESHUA's death on the cross and resurrection as the Perfect Sacrifice, setting them free from any consequence of sin. During the Dark Ages/Middle Ages, the Roman Catholic Church was the "only" religious practiced. There was no Salvation in YESHUA, but through works only.

Review Question

1. Please comment on at least 3 of the issues raised in this lesson concerning errors of Roman Catholicism during the period.

Reflection: The Bible says: Let those who think the stand, take heed lest they fall! It took one step (love of the world) for Rome to start the great journey away from Yeshua! What is it we are allowing in our lives today which will ultimately lead many away from Him? Just reflect on this and prayerfully ask the Father to uphold His remnant from the little leaven of even one error!

Chapter 48

The Holy Roman Empire

Consequences of the Union with the World

As stated in a previous lesson, Emperor Constantine the Great was the instrument through who the Christian Church was recognized, tolerated and blessed by the Roman Empire (via the Edict of Milan he co-authored with Emperor Licinius in 311 AD). His patronage was a major factor in transmutation of the larger wing of the Catholic (meaning Universal) Church into what increasingly became the Roman Catholic Church. The season between 306-337 AD when he reigned can be assumed as the period when the faithful remnant Church parted ways with what had increasingly become a tainted, worldly Religious Organization. In 380 AD Emperor Theodosius, I completed the process started by Constantine the Great. He established the Church as the Official Religion of the Roman Empire! The Church and the State were now one in a formal marriage of affections, aspirations and ideologies. The Church was the Religious face of Rome and the Empire was the bedrock of the Church.

This journey to embrace political power by all means had far reaching implications as stated in a previous lesson. Let us remind ourselves of specific scriptures which were flouted in the process of Rome becoming one with the Church. Whenever the Church abandons the Word for the world, the descent into a spiritual caricature is swift and often irreversible!

John 17:9-18 (KJV) *9 I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. 10 And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. 11 And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. 12 While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled. 13 And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. 14 I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. 18 As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.*

2 Corinthians 6:14-18 (KJV) *14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? 15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? 16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. 18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.*

1 John 2:15-17 (KJV) *15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. 17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.*

James 4:4-5 (KJV) *4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. 5 Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?*

Once the poisoned chalice of political power was tasted, it became intoxicating. Partly because their insecurity and partly out of desire for pre-eminence, many Popes long after the era of Emperor Theodosius I desired the continuity of the union of Church and State. To this extent, the collapse of the Western Roman Empire in AD 476 created a void they needed to fill. They did not wait for God to do something as history revealed. The account of how Pope Leo crowned Frankish King Charlemagne as Holy Roman Emperor is a study in chicanery. Encyclopedia Britannica offers us a detailed glimpse into how and why the Holy Roman Empire emerged in Europe to recapture the lost glory:

Holy Roman Empire

Holy Roman Empire, German Heiliges Römisches Reich, Latin Sacrum Romanum Imperium, the varying complex of lands in western and central Europe ruled over first by Frankish and then by German kings for 10 centuries (800–1806). (For histories of the territories governed at various times by the empire, see France; Germany; Italy.)”

Origins of the Empire and sources of Imperial Ideas

There was no inherent reason why, after the fall of the Roman Empire in the West in 476 and the establishment there of Germanic kingdoms, there should ever again have been an empire, still less a Roman empire, in western Europe. The reason this took place is to be sought (1) in certain local events in Rome in the years and months immediately preceding Charlemagne’s coronation in 800, and (2) in certain long-standing tendencies that made this particular solution of a difficult situation thinkable. These long-standing tendencies are to be regarded as preconditions rather than causes of the coronation; they do not account for it, but without them it is difficult to imagine how it could have taken place. The first is the persistence, despite the fact that it was no longer a political reality west of Italy, of the idea of the universal and eternal Roman Empire. The importance of this tradition may easily be exaggerated. After the establishment of the Germanic kingdoms, kings such as Clovis in Gaul and Theodoric the Great in Italy were glad to accept Roman titles from the Byzantine emperor, who sought to maintain the formal unity of the Roman Empire by treating them as his vicars and lieutenants; but this was a short-lived expedient. By the 8th century any sense of belonging to the empire, by then confined to eastern Europe, had disappeared in the West.

Religious origins

Far more effective in the minds of the barbarian peoples of the West was the idea of the Imperium Christianum, or “Christian Empire,” which took shape after the conversion of Constantine the Great and the reconciliation between Christianity and the Roman Empire. Not only did the Christian church become a state church, including in its liturgy prayers for the empire and the emperor, but it also brought the Roman Empire into the framework of Christian eschatology (doctrine of last things), as the last of the world monarchies whose end would mark the inception of the kingdom of God. Through Christian iconography and through the liturgy the church’s view of the empire as a vehicle of God’s will,

for the Christianization of the world, became prevalent. It was expressed with peculiar force in the letters of Charlemagne's adviser Alcuin.

Apart from the persistence of the idea of a Christian Roman Empire, a third precondition for the establishment of an empire in the West was the existence of a candidate of sufficient power and standing in the person of the Frankish king. The Frankish kingdom expanded until it comprised most of western Europe, and it acquired the Lombard kingdom in northern Italy in 774. The importance of the ties forged by Charlemagne's immediate predecessors with the papacy are obvious. Though it is scarcely true that Charlemagne's accession to the empire was simply a consequence of this expansion, his outstanding position was evidently a precondition of his elevation to the imperial throne.

Coronation of Charlemagne as Emperor

By comparison with Adrian, Pope Leo III (795–816) was a man of inferior caliber. Where Adrian had tried to maintain independence by balancing the Byzantine emperor against the Frankish king, Leo from the first showed subservience to the latter. Both in Constantinople and in Rome the situation was unstable. In Constantinople, after troubles reaching back to 790, the empress Irene had her son Constantine VI blinded and deposed in 797 and took his place, the first woman to rule the empire in her own right. Her constitutional position was thus doubtful; Alcuin in the West, in 799, regarded the imperial throne as empty.

Meanwhile, in Rome the hostile nobility exploited the opportunity to attack Leo, who in 799 fled across the Alps to his protector, Charlemagne, at Paderborn. Though unfavorably impressed by the Pope, Charlemagne was persuaded by Alcuin to send him back to Rome with a commission, which adjudged the complaints against him false and arrested and deported his accusers. The situation, however, was still uncertain. In view of the plight of both pope and Byzantine emperor, "the whole salvation of the church of Christ" rested (so Alcuin wrote) in Charlemagne's hands, and in the autumn of 800 he set out for Rome "to restore the state of the church which was greatly disturbed."

On December 23 Leo solemnly purged himself of the charges against him. Two days later, on December 25, a large gathering assembled in St. Peter's, where the Pope was to consecrate Charlemagne's son as king. Suddenly, as Charlemagne rose from prayer, Leo placed a crown on his head and, while the assembled Romans acclaimed him as "Augustus and emperor," the Pope abased himself before Charlemagne, "adoring" him "after the manner of the emperors of old." It seems clear that this coronation was the work of the papacy, not of the Frankish king, who is said to have been surprised and angry at it. The immediate beneficiary of the coronation was the pope, whose position henceforth was secure. Charlemagne was left to face its momentous consequences and, particularly, to secure that recognition from Constantinople without which his title was legally invalid. This, according to the chronicler Theophanes, he sought to do by offering marriage to the empress Irene, hoping thus "to reunite east and west."

If so, a revolution in Constantinople and the deposition of Irene in 802 brought the plan to nothing. In any case, the coronation of Charlemagne was an extralegal, indeed an illegal and revolutionary, proceeding. The pope had no right to make him emperor. Nor did the coronation create a new western

by the side of the existing eastern empire. A usurper in the eyes of the Byzantines, Charlemagne had not the least prospect of succeeding to the throne of the Caesars. The only imperial territories on which he laid hands were the duchy of Rome and the former exarchate. Otherwise he remained, as before, king of the Franks and of the Lombard.

In view of the fact that in 806 he made arrangements to divide his territories among his three sons, one may doubt whether Charlemagne's empire would have survived had not the two elder sons died before him, leaving the undivided inheritance in 814 to the third son, Louis I the Pious. Although the immediate context of the imperial coronation of 800 was limited, it had wider connotations. In the first place, the separation between East and West had become an accomplished fact in the political sphere; for, though the intention in 800 was not to divide the empire, this was the practical outcome. In 812, after unsuccessful war and wearisome negotiation, the Byzantine emperor Michael I recognized Charlemagne's imperial title. It was still a personal title, and Charlemagne was recognized merely as emperor, not as emperor of the Romans; in other words, the emperor in Constantinople maintained his claim to be the only true successor to the Roman Caesars.

Furthermore, the recognition was grudgingly given, and later, when Byzantium was stronger and the Carolingians weaker, Michael's successors refused to extend it automatically to Charlemagne's successors. Thus, the second consequence of the act of 800 was a rivalry with Constantinople, which remained an important factor in imperial history at least until 1204. In the third place, Charlemagne's coronation involved him and his successors ever more deeply in the ecumenical pretensions of the papacy. The relationship between the papacy and the Frankish rulers, close for nearly 50 years before 800, was intensified when the Roman see became the first metropolitan church of Charlemagne's dominions. Religious emperors and their ecclesiastical advisers would henceforward see as the main function attaching to their imperial dignity the promotion of Christian unity. Furthermore, the fact that the pope had crowned Charlemagne emperor—rightfully or not—could not but impress. It was the pope who had taken the initiative. Had he not, in fact, constituted Charlemagne emperor?

In Innocent III's time it was to be argued that Pope Leo III had transferred the empire from the Greeks to the Germans and that his successors could transfer it elsewhere if they so wished. This was a later doctrine; but already to Charlemagne the dangers were evident. Hence when, in 813 after his agreement with Michael I, Charlemagne decided to associate his surviving son, Louis, in the exercise of imperial power, he framed his actions accordingly. The ceremony took place not in Rome but in the imperial chapel at Aachen; the pope was not present; the constitutive act was the acclamation of the gathered Frankish nobility; and Louis either received the diadem from his father or took it with his own hands from the altar. The contrast with the Roman ceremony of 800 was deliberate. Henceforward the conflict between the two contrary views or theories of the empire—the papal and the Frankish—was to be a dominant theme.

Empire and Papacy

From the middle of the 11th century the situation began to change. One cause was the rapid progress of European economic recovery, which brought shifts of power detrimental to Germany. More immediately important was the revival of the papacy, which the emperors had done so much to further.

After Henry III's death in 1056 the initiative passed into papal hands. It was favored by the long minority—until 1065—of Henry IV (crowned 1084; died 1106), which enabled the papacy to act without fear of intervention from north of the Alps, and by the appearance of allies—particularly the Normans of the Kingdom of Sicily, who for their own purposes supported the papacy against the empire.

As they reached maturity the peoples of Europe turned to the pope as leader of Christendom. Even within the imperial frontiers the emperor's power meant more to the Germans than to the inhabitants of Burgundy or of Italy, for whom it betokened subjection to German rule. Furthermore, only Otto III—and he for less than four years—made Rome the seat of empire; all the rest, from Charlemagne onward, concentrated their efforts north of the Alps. In practice, therefore, the empire was a very imperfect realization of the ideal of an imperium Christianum; and as soon as it was in a position to vindicate its independence, the papacy found many adherents.

Please Note: To dine with the Devil, it is said, one needs a long spoon! While the Roman Catholic Church enjoyed the security of the Empire and its beneficence in several ways, it also opened itself to marital abuse. As we saw in a previous paragraph, it was reported that pope Leo III groveled before Charlemagne after crowning him Holy Roman Emperor and regarded him as 'protector'. Worse was to come on the Church. One of them was the 'Investiture controversy'. Let us see how Encyclopaedia Britannica describes that unfortunate saga:

The Investiture Controversy

Under Pope Gregory VII (1073–85) the papal theory of the empire, as formulated in the 9th century, was revived, but on broader and firmer foundations. The result was the conflict, from 1076 until 1122, known as the Investiture Controversy, ostensibly centering on the question of whether lay overlords had the authority to "invest" bishops and abbots within their domains—that is, to appoint them and formally give them the symbols of their office. The real issue, however, was not the investiture of bishoprics and abbeys but the place of the emperor in Christian society and his relations with the papacy. Only the pope, Gregory VII asserted, might use the imperial insignia; he might lawfully depose emperors but should himself be judged by none (these lapidary statements are among the 27 included in the *Dictatus papae* of 1075 and were set down in Gregory's register). Thus, the claim to independence turned rapidly into a claim to superiority. In particular, the sacred character of the emperor was challenged, as was his claim to be responsible directly to God.

Instead, based on the Donation of Constantine (Note: later found to be a forgery) and a papal interpretation of the coronation of 800, it was argued that it was for the pope to convey the imperial dignity and, if he thought fit, to withhold or withdraw it. The Investiture Controversy was ended by compromise in the Concordat of Worms of 1122 between Pope Calixtus II and the emperor Henry V; but Gregory VII's claims were taken up again by popes Alexander III, Innocent III, Innocent IV, and Boniface VIII, in a series of conflicts that shook the empire to its foundations." The situation whereby Emperors, Kings and Nobles played major roles in affairs of the Church continued in various forms. It was a factor the Roman Catholic Church relied on in the attempts to shut down the Reformation championed by Martin Luther in the 16th century as we shall see in a subsequent lesson. The Father wants to arm us

with understanding of how His Word intersects with History so that we can be better Ambassadors of His Kingdom with His Holy Spirit that dwells in us!

Review Question

1. What is your main take away from this chapter?

Chapter 49

Mystery Babylon - Part 1

Root Issues

It is fitting we end this section with an understanding of the scriptural description of the Roman Catholic Church. This is based on the revelation granted John the beloved about AD 95. In effect, nearly 300 years before the Roman Catholic church system emerged in 380/381 AD as a dominant entity in the earth realm, it pleased Elohim to reveal to the true remnant Church, an accurate description of an alternate church system which would confuse people about the way to Him. This alternate church system would offer them a false sense of security based on religion and external works rather than a relationship with Him based on the finished work of Yeshua on the Cross. Elohim was doing what He does best concerning unveiling the future for His Own to be empowered to escape snares of the enemy.

Amos 3:7 (KJV) *7 Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.*

John 8:32 (KJV) *32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*

Because of the strategic nature of this topic, we will not rush through but rather do a systematic examination of the mass of truth presented in the Bible concerning the subject matter. Let us acknowledge here there are many authoritative preachers and teachers who have other views of the subject matter. Let us also share the truth that most teachings on eschatology tend to be subjective, rather than objective. What we will do in this teaching is to release what Holy Spirit revealed through the Holy Scriptures rightly divided by His leading.

The Holy Scriptures Tells us of Three Babylons

#.1. Physical Babylon inspired by Nimrod.

It was the city inspired by Nimrod who is described as a mighty hunter before the Lord. Proper examination of that phrase reveals he was a man who hunted after souls of humans to control them away from the Divine purpose so they serve him rather than Elohim. This probably accounts for why he was the first to break loose from the portion of territory assigned to him to conquer other peoples and cities. In other words, Nimrod was the first empire builder in the bible!

Genesis 10:8-10 (KJV) *8 And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth. 9 He was a mighty hunter before the Lord: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord. 10 And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.*

In Genesis 11, we see the account of the Tower of Babel.

Genesis 11:1-9 (KJV) *1 And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. 2 And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. 3 And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. 4 And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us*

make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. 5 And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. 6 And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. 7 Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. 8 So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. 9 Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

It is important to note, Religion played a vital role in that project. In its purest form, Religion is any way of life or system of doing things which takes people away from the divine purpose and His Kingdom pattern. Building the Tower of Babel was clearly based on a rebellion against the command of Elohim given in Genesis 1:28 to increase, multiply, and fill the earth in that they reversed it to build upwards to heaven.

Genesis 1:26-28 (KJV) *26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. 28 And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.*

The same thing is happening in the end times, when the Church abandons mission and the global outlook of the gospel in Matthew 28:28-30 and Acts 1:8 and people rather build personal religious empires of exalted human preachers who gather crowds around themselves and their 'anointing'. The second thing we note is builders of the Tower of Babel wanted to challenge Elohim and, so to say, poke Him in the eye. He created humans to take care of the earth realm on His behalf as regents. They decided instead of being on the earth realm, they would rather create a pathway to heaven – the Tower – and challenge His authority with their united purpose.

Genesis 2:15 (KJV) *15 And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.*

Psalms 115:16 (KJV) *16 The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's: but the earth hath he given to the children of men.*

In the same way, Yeshua prayed to the Father not to take His Own out of the earth realm but to preserve them for their assignments within it.

John 17:15-16 (KJV) *15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.*

It is in that regard, Yeshua released Holy Spirit to empower saints to occupy the earth realm on His behalf as Ambassadors of the Kingdom until His return.

Luke 19:11-13 (KJV) *11 And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. 12 He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. 13 And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.*

Acts 1:8 (KJV) *8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*

The spirit which inspires humans to reverse the order of Elohim and challenge His Omnipotence, Omniscience, and Omnipresence which was unleashed in that incident at Babel; has continued to plague the world till this day. We also see the response of Elohim was to confuse them! Till today, Elohim is in the business of confusing those who come to Him with pre-determined, rebellious agendas.

Psalms 18:25-26 (KJV) *25 With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright; 26 With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward.*

Romans 1:21-22, 28 (KJV) *21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools*

28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;

The point is this: When speaking of Mystery Babylon, it is self-deceptive to think Elohim was warning about just a religious organization! We need to understand Elohim was warning about organized falsehood and tendency to build and present for His approval, anything tainted with the leaven of Babylon. 'Protestants', from the days of Martin Luther till today who do not have this broad understanding of Babylon as a system based on principles of rebellion will fall into trap of the enemy! To denounce Rome as many 'Protestants' do and yet do some of the things it does including its priesthood pattern and exaltation of clergy as 'owners' of the people is to walk in deception.

Romans 2:21-23 (KJV) *21 Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? 22 Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? 23 Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?*

#.2. Physical Babylon Nebuchadnezzar Built

The grandeur and splendor of the city provided an occasion for sin of pride in Nebuchadnezzar against Elohim. Pride entered his heart at the beauty and greatness of works of his hands and he boasted openly. Judgement followed and Nebuchadnezzar became as it were a companion of animals for a season of time

Daniel 4:29-33 (KJV) *29 At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. 30 The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty? 31 While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee. 32 And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. 33 The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws.*

#.3. Spiritual Babylon: Principle of Assimilation

Mixing Kingdom principles and worldly ones to produce a syncretism themed outcome. Babylon was the symbol of two significant atrocities. One was the reality that it was from it the armies of Nebuchadnezzar marched on Jerusalem, took the Covenant people captive, and carried them to itself, just as Prophet Jeremiah had declared. But, Babylon did not treat them as second-class citizens who deserved to be housed in Ghettos from where they would come into the city to work as slaves (the Egyptian model). Rather, Babylon introduced a brand-new form of captivity called Assimilation! In this form, the children of Israel were given Chaldean names, offered their food, allowed to participate in their educational system and rise through the ranks of society to any level possible, including the Presidency!

Daniel 1:1-7 (KJV) *1 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it. 2 And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god. 3 And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes; 4 Children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans. 5 And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king. 6 Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: 7 Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel the name of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abednego.*

Please take note in this passage the Babylonian empire required faithful cup and Armour bearers of the kings and emperors to be Eunuchs (made celibate) to function effectively! Though seemingly great in terms of 'success'/'progress', assimilation was dangerous in that by making the people to be fully integrated into Babylonian society and culture, the intention was to pollute them and make a mixture out of them! In other words, the spirit of re-configuring the order of Elohim and compromising their identity with a worldly culture was a very Babylonian thing! This principle, now widely accepted as normal and desirable by the 'Mountains movement' of the present dispensation essentially repudiates 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; 1 John 2:12-15 and James 4:4-5.

Babylon spoke of corruption and idolatry! Let us not forget it was the smuggling of a Babylonian material by Achan and his cohorts which caused Israel to lose the divine presence and thus were defeated by the tiny City State of Ai.

Joshua 7:21 (KJV) *21 When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it.*

The judgement Elohim pronounced on Babylon matched their sin of trying to corrupt His holy people:

Isaiah 13:19-20 (KJV) *19 And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. 20 It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from*

generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there.

In the contemporary era, it is noteworthy that despite an in-exhaustive treasury filled with oil money, the various attempts of Saddam Hussein of Iraq to rebuild Babylon came to nought. In relation to the Kingdom, Babylon represents all the things wrong with Religion: Disobedience, rebellion, mixture and self-will packaged as a way of living and serving Elohim! When He desired Moses to build Him a sanctuary, Elohim pointedly directed the structure should be constructed to the exact specifications unveiled on the Mount:

Exodus 25:8-9 (KJV) *8 And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. 9 According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.*

To Elohim, obedience is better than sacrifice! To therefore live or do ministry any way one 'thinks', 'feels' or 'wants' is to be part of Mystery Babylon! It is not enough to rail at the Great whore herself when whoredom (worldliness) is the defining feature of a 'Protestant' ministry. Let us learn from the failed mandate of king Saul the son of Cish:

1 Samuel 15:1-3 (KJV) 1 Samuel also said unto Saul, The Lord sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the Lord. 2 Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. 3 Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass

1 Samuel 15:7-11 (KJV) 7 And Saul smote the Amalekites from Havilah until thou comest to Shur, that is over against Egypt. 8 And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. 9 But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but every thing that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly. 10 Then came the word of the Lord unto Samuel, saying, 11 It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the Lord all night

1 Samuel 15:18-23 (KJV) 18 And the Lord sent thee on a journey, and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed. 19 Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the Lord, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the Lord? 20 And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord, and have gone the way which the Lord sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. 21 But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in Gilgal. 22 And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. 23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king.

May the Father touch our hearts to be radically inclined in the heart to obey Him and keep the simple, uncomplicated pattern of the Gospel of Yeshua and the Kingdom! May we be diligent to receive His

Grace and revelation of any leaven which needs to be identified, rejected, renounced, and rooted out so we can stand pure in heart, mind, attitudes, and service in His Kingdom! He demands no less!

Review Questions

1. Please mention the various types of Babylon in this lesson
2. Please describe the one you consider very significant.

Chapter 50

Mystery Babylon - Part 2

#.3. Mystery Babylon – A specific Religion and the Religious system which leads people away from Elohim

About the year 95 AD, John the beloved was given the Revelation. Part of it dealt with the state of the Church in that era, the warnings and commendations of Yeshua (Revelations 1-3). Part dealt with events which would occur in the earth realm leading to end of the age. Part also revealed how the end would come and components thereof (Return of the Lord; Millennial Reign and Endless eternity).

Revelation 1:19 (KJV) *19 Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;*

Of the various types and symbols in the 22- chapter Book, substantial space was devoted in various passages and chapters to what is described as Mystery Babylon. This entity/system is portrayed as a woman, mother, prostitute/whore who would seduce Kings and Princes of the world and basically control them away from the Divine Purpose. A careful consideration of the various passages reveals an overarching reality: this entity would take hearts of people away from true worship of Elohim and replace it with a substitute unacceptable to Him

Code name for a city of significant prophetic importance

We will examine all the passages and trust Holy Spirit to give us comprehensive understanding of what is clearly labelled a 'Mystery' system or entity. Let us bear in mind that the Roman Empire was ruling the world at this time and had actually banished John to the Isle of Patmos. In the face of a very terrible foe, the disciples of that generation could not have forgotten the words of Yeshua:

Matthew 10:16 (KJV) *16 Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.*

One way they applied wisdom was to use code names for describing the capital of the empire, the City of Rome and its imperial government. No wonder Peter, when writing to saints, referred to Rome - where he was on missionary assignment - as 'Babylon':

1 Peter 5:13 (KJV) *13 The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son.*

What was showed John was also what was showed to Daniel about 700 years before!

The Lord was showing John how the Roman Empire was going to affect the world, not with force of arms which had already happened but in a new way. Of that way, we find the clue in Daniel Chapter 2 where the Roman Empire was described as the Legs (not Leg) of Iron! Daniel was also showed how the Roman dispensation would mark beginning of the end times and symbolically infuse the next empire or last

generation before Yeshua returns (an inferior one that is weak as Clay) with some of its strong properties (Iron):

Daniel 2:33-36 (KJV) *33 His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. 34 Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. 35 Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth. 36 This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king*

Daniel 2:40-43 (KJV) *40 And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. 41 And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. 42 And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. 43 And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay.*

In other words, the Revelation given to John was to enable the saints to understand that a system was going to be in the earth realm in which Rome – leading power of the day - would play a dominant part in bringing onto existence. That system would seduce nobles and peoples of nations world-wide away from the pure worship of Elohim. It would remain dominant until Elohim determined that the fullness of time was up to take it out! Rome was to mark the beginning of the end for those who had ears to hear! As 2 Peter 3:8 states, Elohim does not count time the way we do.

To gain deeper understanding of identity of this entity, a Profile of Mystery Babylon is provided in Revelation 17. Elohim does not leave His remnant in suspense when it comes to critical revelation of issues of life and death. However, as Yeshua explained in Matthew 13 when speaking of Parables, there are some revelations which are deliberately shrouded in mystery so that religious minded people and scoffers cannot understanding their import while the elect are given deeper insight because their hearts are ready and open to receive truth. Let us engage in a systematic construction of the profile of Mystery Babylon as Holy Spirit will give us insight:

Revelation 17:1-2 (KJV) *1 And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: 2 With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.*

Commentary:

1. This entity is referred to as the 'Great Whore'. Whore means Prostitute. A prostitute is a woman who uses her body to make money through sexual activities with people she is not in a personal relationship with.

In the Old Testament, Israel was portrayed as a whore/prostitute and unfaithful wife who abandoned Yahweh to committed adultery with Gentile nations. In the New Covenant, the Church is pictured as a Woman, the Bride of Yeshua. (Ephesians 5:22- 33 and 2 Corinthians 11:2). In other words, John was

being shown a vision where a major part of the Church of Yeshua would be seduced out of fidelity to Him to embrace kings of the world and become its recognized religion! In this regard, the apostate church system would be the 'in-thing' of the powers that be in the earth realm. The backslidden Church would make the earth drunk with religiosity that has no solid relationship with Him!

2 Timothy 3:5 (KJV) *5 Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.*

2. It would sit upon many waters' means it would impact and affect multitudes of peoples of many nationalities world-wide. Today, Christendom with almost 2.5 billion adherents is prevalent religion of most of the peoples of the earth. There is no nation without a 'Christian' population. Of these, Roman Catholicism alone has over 1.2 billion adherents. Unfortunately, a great deal of those who 'go to church' are simply members of an organized Religious system which is exclusive to itself and may not necessarily have a living, on-going relationship with Elohim in Yeshua.

Through types and symbols, John was receiving a Prophecy of the rise of a religious system which would look like it is of Yeshua but intrinsically opposed to Him and His redemptive mission to re-instate the Kingdom Adam and Eve lost. This interpretation is confirmed by James 4:4-5 and 1 John 2:15-17. Several times, the Lord has impressed on our hearts that though Roman Catholicism fits the bill of the types and symbols in the Book of Revelation, it would be a self-inflicted deception to think that it is all about Rome! Accordingly, our understanding needs to be broadened to include ALL religious systems – including various shades of Protestantism – which manifest the DNA of Rome in any form! This is a safe thing to do.

Revelation 17:3 (KJV) *3 So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.*

Commentary: Let us take note of these specific details in verse 3:

3. The woman sat upon a Scarlet Colored Beast. In the immediate, this spoke of how the Church and the Roman Empire of the day would become partners. In the long term towards end of the age, it would cover all systems of Religion (including Protestant and other non-Christian Religions) that combine with governments to offer people a mixture which deceives them to believe they are in favor with Elohim whereas they are not.

Two potential interpretations need to be considered in determining whether it was the woman or the beast that was described as 'full of the names of blasphemy'; having 7 heads and 10 horns.

3.1 The scarlet colored beast: The Roman Empire through their Emperors took on names that were blasphemous. Some Caesars regarded themselves to be gods and sought adoration from their subjects. In trying to stamp out the true gospel of Yeshua and the Kingdom, a popular bait was to ask people to engage in Emperor deification and renunciation of Yeshua, Jesus. Many Christians, including Bishops and Priests, succumbed to the torture and did so, committing blasphemy.

In his epistle to the Romans, Paul also decried situations where people worshipped the creation more than the Creator, Elohim:

Romans 1:18-25 (KJV) *18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; 19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. 20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: 21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, 23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. 24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: 25 Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.*

The City of Rome itself had 7 heads or hills which surrounded her. 10 horns could refer to the various Kingdoms which would arise as its offshoots to dominate world consciousness until Yeshua returns. On the other hand, the names full of Blasphemy with 7 heads and 10 horns could refer to the Church which was in bed with Rome. This interpretation is supported by these realities: Some of the titles of Roman Catholic Popes are out rightly blasphemous. Here is how Yeshua addressed Yahweh while in His Incarnate state:

John 17:11 (KJV) *11 And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.*

It smacks of blasphemy for Popes to be addressed as ‘Holy Father’

In the Book of Matthew, Yeshua discouraged saints from looking at and calling fellow humans ‘Father’ for the simple reason that He came to reveal the Ultimate Father to them and did not want any saint to see him or herself as unworthy of a personal relationship:

Matthew 23:9 (KJV) *9 And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven.*

Of all titles, the Roman Church would give its priests at Parish level none was as blasphemous as that of Reverend Father! This does not mean there would be no father figures in the Body. From the time of the Alpha Church until Yeshua returns, there will always be people whose assignment is to be father figures of younger saints. However, their biblical role would be to nurture the younger to grow by pointing them consistently and persistently to the Father, just as Paul demonstrated towards Timothy!

4 And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:

Commentary: Let us take note of these specific details:

Purple and Scarlet are the preferred colors of the woman. To understand significance of these two colors, let us quote from a work by Irving Baxter: “There are two ruling bodies in the Roman Catholic Church: The College of Cardinals and the College of Bishops and Archbishops. These two bodies are somewhat like the Senate and the House of Representatives here in the US. An article appeared in The Criterion, a Roman Catholic publication, July 1, 1988. The article was entitled, “More than You Want to

Know About Cardinals.” It stated, “Cardinals wear red, while non-Cardinal Bishops and Archbishops wear purple.”

Decked with gold and precious stones and pearls. This speaks of the great wealth accumulated by organized religion. Roman Catholic Church itself, as the chief of all religions is rated as one of the richest entities on earth. The golden cup in the hands of the woman was full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication. This may refer to celebration of errors, heresies and apostasies which are done with pomp and pageantry, beguiling unstable minds.

5 And upon her forehead was a name written, Mystery, Babylon The Great, The Mother Of Harlots And Abominations Of The Earth.

The Names given to the woman are very significant. Let us break them down: ‘Mystery’: it refers to the true identity of the church which is shrouded. In other words, many would connect and be part of it without realizing what they were involved with. Whereas knowledge of Truth sets people free, the darkness of organized ignorance in the Roman Catholic religion makes people perpetually bound in chasing after an elusive pathway to peace with Elohim found in endless rituals and works that weary the flesh. ‘Babylon the great’: The Roman Catholic system would achieve what Babylon of Old was a mere shadow was of. This has been proved true with over 1.2 billion adherents spread across the world. ‘Mother of Harlots’: This phrase has two potential applications. The first is that it is engaged in an extensive level of prostitution with the world system on a scale never witnessed before. Speaking of this, the headquarters of the Roman Church, the Holy See is situated in the Vatican which was granted Sovereign status by the Lateran Treaty of 1929. From that day, the tiny piece of real estate – estimated to besquare kilometers became a State within the Italian State. It has diplomatic relations with nations with the Pope as a Head of State with full diplomatic immunity. Paying a courtesy call on the Pope is the dream of multitudes of Heads of State world-wide. A visit by the Pope is also regarded as a privilege by nations of the earth.

‘Mother of Harlots’ also has another potentially powerful meaning: the DNA of Rome which is false religious concepts which give people a false sense of security would be replicated in several of its children in the Protestant movement! Today, a look at the way Pentecostalism, Evangelicalism, Word of Faith movement, the Mega Church movement and several branches of Protestantism glory in non-issues and make people to feel contented with sin bears this interpretation out. Mother of ‘Abominations of the earth’. This speaks of Roman Catholicism as the root of Christendom which makes people members of religious organizations and satisfied with their identification with human leaders even when they do not have vibrant personal relationship with Elohim. Religious activities which do not transform hearts of people from sinner to saint; which do not lead to renewal of minds and enthronement of Yeshua as Sovereign King and where Holy Spirit is not given right of way to lead is regarded as Abomination in the sight of Elohim.

6 And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.

Commentary:

Drunken with the Blood of Saints and with the Blood of Martyrs: Starting with Yeshua and his 12 disciples, stretching on to the Alpha church period, Rome as an empire was drunk with the blood of the righteous. Emperors Nero to Diocletian were all remarkable for the great persecutions they launched to stamp out the gospel. Unfortunately, the schemes backfired and the Church grew bigger and stronger.

When Rome 'married' the Church, the peace of the graveyard followed. Those who accepted the compromise had no problems. But the remnant who were faithful to Yeshua and lived in holiness became the object of intense persecution and cruel deaths ordered by various Popes, Bishops and Priests. Some did this directly while others simply used the Civic authorities to carry out the torture and execution of true saints. In order not to offend sensibilities of the Church of Rome, Christian leaders are silent on the reality that the past 500 years since the Protestant Reformation has also been one in which many true saints were killed for no other reason than that they believed the Truth and chose not to compromise with Sin and the world.

5.2 'Wondered with great admiration': This does not mean that John admired the ways of the woman. It simply means that John marvelled or wondered at what he saw.

7 And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.⁸ The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is. 9 And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.¹⁰ And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.¹¹ And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.¹² And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast.

Commentary: Let us break this passage down:

6.1. The woman is a mystery. She is shrouded to the degree that only those to whom the Father grants revelation shall know and understand what she really is. Till today, multitudes – both Roman Catholics, other Christians and followers of various religions have no clue that it represents a system designed to take away from people the need for a personal relationship with Elohim! The reality that it is a church system set up to reject the finished work of the Cross represented by the first fruit of saving grace received freely by Faith is not known by many.

6.2. The Beast that carried her is her husband, the Roman Empire. Rome was at this point described as having 7 heads and 10 horns. There is further description in verse 10 that 5 of the 7 kings had fallen; one remained on the throne and another was yet to come (to rise at a future date). Heads speak of leadership – various sub rulers who would arise from the same Roman root. Evidently, there were world rulers who were to trace their roots back to the Roman Empire yet to come onto the world scene at the time this prophecy was given.

6.3. The Beast ascended out of the Bottomless pit and goes into perdition! The entire religious system with its rituals and dogma were unleashed from hell to draw many away from the Salvation freely offered by Elohim in Yeshua! Alberto Rivera, an ex-Jesuit priest claimed that a Cardinal Beau told them in the Vatican during their induction into the Order of a great secret: The Roman Catholic Church played a strategic role in creation of Islam. The plan was to use the Arabs and their religion to capture Jerusalem for the Pope and deal with bible believing Christians

6.4. Those who will be trapped in this kind of religious deception and remain there until end of the age are those whose names are not written in the Lamb's Book of Life! In other words, such people will accept deception because they embrace perdition.

6.5. Note that in verse 9 it gives us a clue about the Beast on which the woman sits: A City with 7 hills. That is true of Rome, known world-wide as the City of 7 hills!

6.6. The 10 horns in verse 12 speak of future kings who had not yet risen in the days of John but who would all reign for a short tenure (figuratively described as one hour) with the Beast (spirit of Rome).

13 These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.

14 These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.

Commentary

7.1. Verse 13 makes it clear that all the future kings rising out of the Roman Empire would give their power and strength to the Beast. It means those offshoots of Rome will dedicate their thrones to the purposes of Satan and the evil system he spawned in the earth realm.

7.2. Verse 14 speaks of what will happen at end of the age with the Battle of Armageddon described more fully in Revelation chapter 19: world governments and religious systems whose roots are in the old Roman Empire will conspire to fight Yeshua and his saints triumphant when they will return from heaven to fulfil Psalms 2 by vanquishing all rebellion in the earth realm. Yeshua and his remnant who were Called, Chosen and Faithful will be victorious, establish and rule the earth realm for a thousand years. This is the restored manifest Kingdom when the earth realm will witness how life would have been like if Adam and Eve had not lost it to the Devil!

15 And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.16 And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.17 For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.18 And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.

Commentary:

8.1. Verse 15 reminds us that the apostate Church will rule over multitude of people of various races, ethnicities and language groups. That is how 1.2 billion people are involved in Roman Catholicism alone.

Protestants probably account for perhaps as much as 800 million others who are engaged in diverse forms of Religiosity without personal relationship with Elohim. When you add to this the billions of others in various religions whose common denominator is rejection of the Salvation offered in Yeshua, Jesus, the scope of the tragedy becomes more pronounced.

8.2. Verse 16 and 17 reveals at end of the day, the world system represented by the 10 horns will team up to destroy the apostate church system

8.3. Verse 18 re-emphasizes the reality that the Roman Catholic Church rules the world system indirectly.

Let us stand in intercession for souls of people who are trapped unawares or intentionally in religious systems which do not lead to relationship with Elohim! Let us also be diligent to reject all the leaven of Babylon which may want to latch onto our lives or patterns of ministry.

Review Questions

1. Please share at least 3 significant things you learnt from this lesson

Chapter 51

Mystery Babylon – Part 3

The system of religion which is inherently opposed to the divine plan of redemption is evidently a danger to souls of humans as the previous two chapters reveal. When you add to it the reality that Mystery Babylon offers humanity an alternate 'kingdom' (via the security, wealth, and high standing offered by union with governments), the implication is clear: An anti-Christ spirit is at work! A recap of the profile of Mystery Babylon which proves that it is the outcome of union of the Roman Empire and the larger wing of the compromising Church which tired of persecution and martyrdom: The Roman Catholic Church. In Lesson 51, these specific aspects of the profile of Mystery Babylon were outlined:

1. It is a Mystery: Something shrouded. It can only be understood by those appointed to salvation. The second half of its name is Babylon which speaks of a religious system that is inherently opposed to the purpose of Elohim and therefore in rebellion.
2. It is called a woman and a whore/prostitute. The implications are clear: Just as Israel went into whoredom/prostitution when it abandoned the Torah and sought to be like the Gentile nations around her, so is the Church system which strays outside His Word to make herself attractive to and married to the world system.
3. Mystery Babylon sits on a scarlet colored beast. This means it is headquartered in a great City with 7 Hills. This is true of the City of Rome, one of the oldest continuous cities in the world which was, according to legend founded by Romulus in 753 BC. (See Revelation 17:3, 9,18)
4. It is global in reach, incorporating a sea of humanity of all races, tribes, tongues and socio-economic status (Revelation 17:1, 15). As at the time the book of Revelation was written, the Roman Empire presided over affairs of kings and kingdoms throughout the then known world. It was also here that its successor, the Holy Roman Empire was based after crowing of Charlemagne as Holy Roman Emperor by pope Leo. It was also here that its current successor, the European Union was conceived. Rome has been headquarters of the Roman Catholic Church with over 1.2 billion adherents.
5. It has preferred colors: Purple and Red (Scarlet) (Revelation 17:4).
6. It is also called the Mother of Harlots in Revelation 17:5. We saw in Lesson 50 that the DNA of Rome infused the Protestant Movement to the degree that Evangelicals, Pentecostals, Charismatic, Independents, Full Gospel, and Mega Church movement manifest varying strands of Roman Catholic principles and patterns of ministry. It is the presence of this kind of leaven which will make Pastors to screen movies of questionable spirituality inside their sanctuaries or invite congregants to tune into TV stations owned by New Age personalities, just to promote their egos. The long-term effects of potentially exposing them to satanic concepts do not bother such 'owners of the sheep'!
7. A careful consideration of Revelation chapter 18 shows that Mystery Babylon could not have been a physical Kingdom nor a pure Commercial enterprise. Its identity as a Religious entity which embraced

and worked with the world system is as clear as crystal. In essence, this entity has been an integral part of Western Civilization!

If what Alberto Rivera, an ex-Jesuit priest said he was told at the Vatican when being inducted into the Order is true, Roman Catholic Church played a significant part in the rise of Islam as an instrument it hoped would recapture Jerusalem from the Jews for the Pope and annihilate Bible believing Christians who refused to fellowship with Rome. Only the Roman Catholic Church fits the profile constructed of Mystery Babylon in the Book of Revelations. Those who propound the concept that it is Islam and Mecca are largely out of sync with the whole counsel of the Holy Scriptures. Apart from a brief period of the Ottoman Empire when Islam ruled parts of Europe and Jerusalem, Islam has been largely an Arab/Oriental Religion which has been seen as opposite to western values.

Like everything created outside the divine purpose of Elohim, Mystery Babylon is dated: Just as it had a start time, it will also have an expiration date. This will be discussed in lesson 51. For this reason, Elohim wants His faithful remnant to 'come out of her'. This speaks not only of not been physical members thereof. It also speaks of intense examination of what we do and teach/preach to ensure that even the tiniest strand of error or falsehood of Babylonian leaven is identified, repented of and rooted out. In lesson 51 we will examine closely, other prophetic scriptures concerning this strange religious organization which looks like it is of Yeshua, Jesus but inherently opposed to Him.

#.1. Mystery Babylon will produce the False Prophet who will validate the Anti-Christ!

Many biblical scholars tend to mix up issues concerning the anti-Christ. The simple truth of the Word is however clear: Two distinct personalities will arise in the earth realm in the last days. One will be a Political leader while the other will be a religious leader. Let us examine both personalities to see how the union of Church and State is relevant to understanding of the mystery of iniquity which will prevail in the last days. Revelation 13:1-13 speaks of the Anti-Christ who would be a Political leader to rise at end of the age. He will be a son of perdition with a lying tongue and cunning spirit. He will orchestrate a false peace in the earth realm which possibly includes solving the Mother of all conflicts: The Israel-Palestinian/Arab crises. When that 'Peace' is negotiated, the remnant must understand it to be a sign that both the rapture of saints (when the Faithful Remnant will be taken out of the way according to 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 and 1 Corinthians 15:50-58) as well as Great Tribulation (when careless saints who lived like the Foolish Virgins; Unbelievers and Israel/Hebrews will suffer untold hardship) are at hand!

1 Thessalonians 5:1-3 (KJV) *1 But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. 2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. 3 For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.*

2 Thessalonians 2:3-12 (KJV) *3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; 4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. 5 Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? 6 And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. 7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only*

he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. 8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: 9 Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, 10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: 12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

It is this personality who will commit the abomination which makes desolate (2 Thessalonians 2: 4) This is the day he will appear in the Third Temple that is about to be rebuilt in Jerusalem and proclaim himself to be the Elohim of Israel. That is the day the Hebrews and all Israel will come to terms with the reality that the person who had been packaged as their great friend and protector is the person Daniel prophesied about in Daniel 9:27 and who Yeshua warned about in Matthew 24:15. Their rebellion is what will stir the fury of the now unveiled anti-Christ to unleash his fury at them. That is how the Great Tribulation will start.

The union of Church and State will come to its zenith at this time. For the anti-Christ who is a political leader to execute his nefarious assignment, he would have to first be accepted as a 'God-sent' by human beings on earth. This reality necessitates an endorsement from the world acclaimed Religious leader who presides over Mystery Babylon. That leader is referred to as the 'False Prophet'. In other words, while he would be generally perceived as a representative of Yeshua, in reality he would not be. It is the False Prophet who would, for instance, recommend use of mark of the Beast as a way of ensuring all humans are subject to and controlled by the anti-Christ! He would do all these things described in Revelation 13 because the Church (he leads) and the world (led by the anti-Christ) are one and have always been since the time of Emperor Constantine the great and Theodosius 1! This will be the conclusion of the two intertwined destinies!

Revelation 13:11 (KJV) *11 And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.*

Commentary: The False Prophet had two horns like a Lamb but spoke as a Dragon! Lamb speaks of the meekness and sacrifice associated with Yeshua. Dragon is the imagery associated with Satan in the book of Revelation chapters 12; 13; 16 and 20. That the leader of Mystery Babylon would wear these two opposite hats speaks of the spirit of deception which had covered the identity of his office throughout the ages.

Revelation 13:12-15 (KJV) *12 And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. 13 And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, 14 And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. 15 And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.*

Commentary: The miracle working power of the leader of Mystery Babylon at end of the age would be spectacular. He would be able to make fire to come out of heaven and make an image (photograph, painting or drawing) of the anti-Christ to have life and speak in plain sight of all humans watching on TV,

Cable, Satellite and Social Media. Careless Protestants and non-Christian people of other religions will be attracted by the 'mighty miracles' to the do his bidding: worship image of the Beast! As Yeshua prophesied in Matthew 24: 24 only the very elect will be preserved from his deception.

This is one of the reasons why the Scriptures warned about the Utilitarian gospel whose chief tools are use of pseudo 'miracles, signs and wonders' and ostensibly accurate words of 'prophecy' to deceive many into religious exertions devoid of holy living and lasting relationship with the Father.

Revelation 13:16-18 (KJV) *16 And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: 17 And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. 18 Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.*

This great human religious leader the world would look upon and accept as a personal representative of Yeshua, Jesus and the Kingdom would be the very person who would leverage his assumed 'great moral stature' to lead Christians and humanity to embrace the anti-Christ and submit to his false system of global governance: take Mark of the Beast or his name or number. Talk of a wolf in sheep skin! Those who are deceived into accepting Mark of the Beast, His Name or Number would have secured eternal damnation to themselves!

Revelation 14:6-11 (KJV) *6 And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, 7 Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. 8 And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. 9 And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, 10 The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: 11 And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.*

Those who have ears need to hear and proactively reject all things which are Babylonian – including the tiniest of issues! The time to do so is now, not tomorrow!

#.2. A Day is coming in which Mystery Babylon would be finally judged

The point is this: Everything which has a beginning has an ending! The Lord has been warning His saints to get out of religious systems which are polluted with the leaven of Babylon. The Lord knows that because of the way Babylonian churchianity controls the mind and heart of seekers/worshippers away from His will and kingdom pattern, the only place of safety at end of the age is to get out of her. When the Seventh Angel sounded, physical destruction of this same Babylon, described as a great City happened:

Revelation 16:17-20 (KJV) *17 And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. 18 And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an*

earthquake, and so great. 19 And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. 20 And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.

Let us now zoom in to the next chapter which reveals the ultimate end of Mystery Babylon and destruction of its physical headquarters.

Revelation 18:1-3 (KJV) *1 And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. 2 And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. 3 For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.*

Commentary: This is the ‘Criminal Indictment’ of the Babylonian Religious system as unsealed by the angel on assignment. 4 And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. 5 For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. 6 Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double.

Commentary: The Lord will cause the tables to turn against Babylon in due course of time! At the appointed time, it will be the turn of the remnant who suffered greatly at the hands of Mystery Babylon to see her judgement! In other not to be partakers of her judgement, the Lord is asking His True Church to ‘come out of her’! As variously noted in this and preceding lessons, it is not just about not been a Roman Catholic! The aspects of DNA of Rome which has been manifesting in various strands of the Protestant Movement since 1517 are not acceptable to Elohim Who wants the True Church of Yeshua to be Pure and uncorrupted. The Priesthood pattern of Babylon (Nimrodic and modified Levitical first epitomized by the Nicolaitanes) must be rejected in all its forms! The tendency to build religious organizations/corporations with stiff hierarchies and set up to promote human founders or make money for them cannot pass the fire of Elohim. The tendency to use marketing gimmicks developed by the world to package and sell the anointing for consumers for a fee are all part of the leaven of Babylon we will discuss in detail in another lesson.

1 Corinthians 5:6-8 (KJV) *6 Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? 7 Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: 8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*

Revelation 18:7 (KJV) *7 How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.*

Commentary: The spirit which drove Babylonian churchianity will be made evident in due season. Nothing is new under the sun. Here is what Yeshua said of the spirit driving the Church at Laodicea almost 1,900 years ago to leave the narrow way:

Revelation 3:15-17 (KJV) *15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. 16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. 17 Because thou*

sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

Revelation 18:8-10 (KJV) *8 Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her. 9 And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, 10 Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come.*

Commentary: The kings of the earth who were in bed with this evil religious system will bemoan her demise. Death, mourning and famine will precede utter destruction of Mystery Babylon with fire after Elohim judges her.

11 And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more: 12 The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, 13 And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men. 14 And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all. 15 The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, 16 And saying, Alas, alas that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls! 17 For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off, 18 And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city! 19 And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate.

Commentary: The merchants of the earth realm also bemoaned the demise of their trading partner, Mystery Babylon represented by the City of 7 hills from which it exercised religious power over the nations. It was a religious power seeped in Commerce, just like the money changers who defiled the Temple in the days of Yeshua.

20 Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.

Commentary: The true remnant will be invited to celebrate the demise of Mystery Babylon who tormented and has been responsible for gruesome martyrdom of many for more than 1700 years since Constantine.

21 And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all. 22 And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee; 23 And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived.

Commentary: The destruction of Mystery Babylon will be conclusive! It will include its physical headquarters where abominations are committed daily in the name of worship and prayers.

24 And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.

Commentary: Elohim holds Mystery Babylon responsible for the blood of saints spilled on planet earth since the days of union of Church and State!

Review Questions

1. Please share your 3-main take away from this lesson.
2. What new thing did you learn from the lesson?

Postscript

This download from the Throne Room is made available, free of charge as the King instructed us for training those He will use to reform His Church and make her ready for His soon return. There is no Babylonian copyright restriction to limit your ability to use the material to study, pray it in and apply it in your life and ministry. This will enable you to build according to the Master Plan of the King, so you may be bold at His appearing! 1 Corinthians 3:10-15.

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