

Resurrection Life of Jesus Church

DECEPTION IN THE END TIMES

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PART 5: SATAN JOINS THE CHURCH

A SATANIC CONFERENCE

The apostle Paul stated that we are in a spiritual battle with an enemy that is well organized. **Ephesians 6:12**

Jesus told us that Satan has a kingdom on this earth. **Matthew 12:25-26**

I believe the Devil had a staff meeting around 150 A.D. with his top leadership from the departments of religion and persecution. This isn't farfetched because the Bible records how the Devil met with God in the heavenly courthouse, discussed Job, and complained that God had blessed Job and protected him so that Satan could not attack him. **Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7**

The Devil was not happy with the results from his two departments that had created Gnosticism and Montanism. The demonic forces had been able to capture men and women to do their bidding, and a few hundred thousands people had believed their lies and ended up in hell, but the majority of the Church was still vibrant and spreading across the globe.

Satan demanded a final solution for the Church and told the department of persecution that even though tens of thousands of Christians had been crucified, beheaded, stoned, strangled and thrown to lions to be devoured, it still had not stopped the Christians from multiplying.

Demons had been able to convince the Jewish leadership to kill as many Christian Jews as they could find and to destroy their writings but more and more Jews were still coming to Christ.

Satan then turned to the department of religion and scolded its leaders for having put in such a weak effort into derailing the Church. He demanded a greater deception which no Christian could resist.

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE CHURCH

1. There was no central leadership of the Church; instead, each city in the different regions operated independently and had a bishop who resided over them.
2. Churches were not set up like the synagogue system. Christians met in home groups led by elders and deacons because of the persecution, who in turn were trained by the local bishop.
3. Christians relied upon the guidance of the Holy Spirit, whom Satan could not manipulate or control. They also studied the Old Testament and read what the apostles had written to guide and teach them how to live a holy life.



4. These Christians were not trying to build a political movement; instead, they told unbelievers about Christ and how they could be forgiven and have eternal life with God after death. They did this free of charge because they were motivated by the love of God to share the Gospel, even if it meant death. **Revelation 12:11**
5. The baptism of the Holy Spirit made it extremely difficult for demons to deceive Christians. Even worse, believers in Christ had the power to pray and cast out demons, heal the sick and raise the dead. **Mark 16:15-20**

RECAPPING THE DESTRUCTION OF ISRAEL

Someone in the staff meeting must have spoken about the success they had achieved in destroying the nation of Israel. The plan was to lead the people into idolatry to the degree that God would turn against them, throw them out of the land and have the temple destroyed. **Deuteronomy 28:15-68**

THE DEVIL'S NEW PLAN

Satan knows that Christians must be separated from the Holy Spirit and the Bible. They must be led into idolatry, so that instead of being blessed, they will invoke the wrath of God. Knowledge of the salvation plan must be destroyed so that people would become church members, but not be born again as Jesus stipulated. Instead of winning people for Christ, they must be encouraged to subdue other nations under Satan's religious institution (Roman Catholicism). This diabolical plan was agreed upon by all of Satan's leadership. They had a plan and great effort would be put in place to implement it.

The persecution department would launch the first attack by creating so much pain and destruction for the Christians that they would be willing to compromise to stop the persecution.

As the persecution increased, the religious department would make its move as demons moved out to split the Church over the celebration of Jesus' resurrection. Churches in the eastern part of the Roman Empire celebrated the resurrection on the eve of the Passover and followed the Jewish calendar while the churches in the West observed it on Sunday after the Passover.

Because of the difficulty with Gnosticism, Irenaeus of Lyons wrote in 185 A.D. that the church in Rome was the only church in the western part of the Roman Empire established by the apostles Paul and Peter, therefore all the other churches in the empire should agree with its doctrine, to preserve the apostolic faith.

Ephesus and Antioch were founded by apostles but they had been weakened by Montanism. Polycarp of Smyrna made a visit to Rome around 155 A.D. and met with the Roman bishop Anicetus. They did not come to an agreement on what day the church should celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus.

By 190 A.D. the problem had become acute and synods were held in Rome, Palestine and in a number of other locations. The majority decision was that all

Christian churches should follow the resurrection practice of Rome. This did not sit well with Polycrates, bishop of Ephesus, and as the leader of the churches in Asia Minor, he refused conformity. Bishop Victor of Rome (189-198) responded by making a proclamation that the churches in Asia Minor had been excommunicated. Satan's religious department had scored a major victory in splitting the churches and pitting them against one another. The church of Rome had started its rise to power.

By 260 A.D. the bishops in the different areas had solidified their control over the house churches and dictated uniformity of worship. The charismatic gifts from the Holy Spirit were now just a memory. The demons were jubilant as their plan was proceeding along with little resistance.

The bishops of various churches were in agreement that the Holy Spirit would only move through them. Bishops were divinely appointed and had the right to determine if an individual Christian was a heretic and needed to be excommunicated. The priesthood of all believers had ceased to exist. **1 Peter 2:1-10; Revelation 1:4-6**

The bishops in Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, Carthage and Ephesus became more powerful than the rest, and of these, the bishop of Rome carried the biggest clout. They were leaders of the Church but completely ignored what Jesus had said. **Matthew 20:25-28**

THE CHURCH OF ROME PRIOR TO 325 A.D.

The salaried clergy in Rome consisted of the bishop, who had at his disposal presbyters (elders) and deacons. In 251 A.D. Bishop Cornelius had 46 presbyters and seven deacons.

Next in rank were the minor orders of seven sub-deacons, 42 acolytes and 52 exorcists, readers and janitors.

In addition, there were some 1,500 dependents supported by the congregation that consisted of around 30,000 members.

Readers and exorcists were considered to have charismatic gifts. Acolytes were general helpers wherever there was a need.

If a Christian felt that God was calling him into the ministry, he had to put in an application to the office of the Bishop, and if the clergy organization deemed him as a "team player," he could start his career in the church.

The Holy Spirit was no longer welcome in the Church and there were no more displays of Holy Ghost power as there had been in the Acts of the Apostles. **Acts 13:1-3**

Water baptism by immersion was phased out and sprinkling became the order of the day and the baptism of infants slowly became more commonplace. Satan's department of religion had worked hard to bring the churches into apostasy.

The teaching that the bread became the actual flesh of Jesus and the wine really became his blood was already accepted around 250 A.D.

PERSECUTION DECREASES

By 260 A.D. the persecution of Christians began to decline and the Church had peace over the next 40 years. By 300 A.D. Christianity had moved into every people group in the Roman Empire and many government officials and military officers had embraced Christianity but the quality of the church declined too since many of these new converts were not born again, they were just Christians in name. The churches became worldly as more and more pagan traditions were incorporated into the church.

PERSECUTION COMES BACK

Diocletian became the Roman Emperor in 284 A.D. He wanted the Roman Empire back to the worship of the old gods but he had to move slowly. In 303 he started to purge the army and the imperial palace service of Christians. *(Barack Obama is using the same playbook as he purges Christians from the armed forces of the United States in 2013.)*

Once he felt that he had control over the military, the persecution began with Christian homes being destroyed, Christian literature was confiscated and clergy were arrested and forced to sacrifice to pagan idols or face torture. In 304 A.D. the Roman government required all Christians to sacrifice to pagan idols or be killed. Satan's department of persecution was jubilant as tens of thousands of Christians were sent to their death and many more recanted their Christian faith in order to save their lives.

Remember, it's not so important how you begin your life after salvation, but how you finish it!

Do you have an ear to hear with?