

What is REAL Christianity?

**Book 2:
Lessons 5-8**

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Bible Study Center

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Book 2 – Lessons 5-8

Welcome Back!

We have graded and returned your **Book 1** Answer Sheet. Please take some time to review any mistakes and comments made by your teacher. If you have any questions please feel free to contact your teacher personally.

Now that you have completed **Book 1**, you are ready for **Book 2**. With this material, we will continue our study of the religious history. The study that you begin now will continue through **Book 3** of the course.

You will be asked to find, read, and carefully think about a large number of passages from the Bible. Remember how important it is always to place each passage into its proper **context**. Use your notebook to record your findings for each and every verse you study and if at any time you do not understand what you are supposed to do, contact our office and we will assist you. If you apply the Bible study skills you have learned you should have no trouble finding the answers to the test questions.

The procedure for **Book 2** is the same as **Book 1**. You will study through each lesson and then proceed to the test questions. Remember that you need to score **at least 70%** to continue on to **Book 3**.

We know that you will learn much from this study. If you happen to encounter some things that seem "different" from what you have grown up believing, please remember that we are not demanding that you agree with anything we present in the course. All that we ask is that you study through all of the evidence presented in the course material, establish the context, and then combine the facts together as you make your conclusions. What you do with the conclusions is for you to decide.

Remember that if at any time in the study you have questions about the content of the material or the procedures, please feel free to contact us. There is space on the back of the "Answer Sheet" for you to use. We will do our very best to help you find the answers you seek. As we said in the letter we sent with the first booklet, if you have friends that you think might like to study with us, please send us their names and mailing addresses. We will be happy to send them our **FREE** course **Jesus: Man of the Bible**, so that they can get started in their own search for the truth!

Enjoy your study!

-- The Bible Study Center Staff

LESSON FIVE

We have seen how even in the time of original Christianity there were people who began as “fellow believers in Christ” that for one reason or another decided to go away from the original teachings of Christ. Obviously, **those people did not THINK THEY were doing anything wrong** and there is plenty of evidence to show that **MANY** other Christians accepted their teachings. However, without exception the Apostles and writers of the New Testament rejected these people and their teachings as being evil and warned the Christians not to listen to or even greet them! They consistently warned the Christians not to be deceived by their false teachings! This can mean only one thing. During the time of the Apostles, changing the teachings and “starting another church” were not considered acceptable and in fact were condemned! The fact that Gnosticism became so popular did not justify its existence! **Wrong teachings are WRONG** no matter how many people might believe them to be true!

Christianity TRIUMPHS?????

It is unfortunate that Gnosticism continued to grow in its influence during the second and third centuries. In addition, there were other false teachers and teachings that came and went during this period and TRUE Christianity remained under pressure. Persecution added to this pressure as the Roman government continued its efforts to destroy Christianity. During those years the pace of **CHANGES** was slow due to the fact that since Christianity was considered “illegal” it had to operate secretly in the shadows. False teachers could not openly spread their ideas for fear of calling attention to themselves and being captured and killed by the authorities.

This changed at the start of the 4th century when the Roman Emperor Constantine¹ declared, once and for all time, an end to the persecution of Christians. This brought much joy to the Christians who no longer had to hide for fear of losing their lives. People could openly practice their faith and have their assemblies in public. Leaders emerged with their individual following of people who preferred their ideas to those of other leaders and a situation developed much like the one the Apostle Paul condemned in 1 Corinthians chapter 1, but this time there was no Apostle Paul there to condemn the leaders’ behavior and force people to stay faithful to the original teachings of Christ.

The differences in the opinions of these leaders combined with the negative effects of the persecution, plus the bits and pieces of different false teachings left over from previous centuries, made UNITY very difficult. As time passed differences among the leaders led to a number of problems and divisions among believers. To deal with this problem the leaders decided to come together and discuss and decide how best to handle the matter and so in 325 AD a **council** of leaders took place in Nicea, located in what is now Turkey. This “Council of Nicea” was the first of many councils to follow, at which men applied the principle of “majority rule” in deciding matters of truth in religion. Rather than uphold a strict policy of staying within the boundaries of the Bible teaching they decided to adopt manmade statements of faith. One main result of Nicea was the now famous “**Apostles’ Creed**”, which did not originate from the Apostles at all, but was made up by the leaders present at that council some 200 years after the time of the original Apostles! Surprisingly, the modern version being used does not contain the same wording as the original one of that came from Nicea, but has in fact been **revised** several times, and the current version is the one approved by the Council of Trent²! The fact that something is **revised**, means that it is not in the original form in which it started. On the basis of this historical fact we ask a question, “**Can a truth found in original Christianity be REVISED?**” Not if we understand the warnings of the original writers of the New Testament! If we review all the warnings we have studied we can **EASILY** see that the true teachings of original Christianity were given one time and were intended to remain the same for all times!³

The “majority rules” method of deciding truth was only the beginning of the problems. Even before Nicea, the practice of one leader being “in charge” of groups of believers in several towns was already being practiced. These men had authority over these places and their decisions had to be accepted and followed by all the believers living in those places. This practice evolved into what we now see today in the hierarchy of rulers in the Roman Catholic Church⁴. As time passed these leaders saw a need to have one supreme leader among them who would be responsible for maintaining unity and order throughout the entire church worldwide. From the time of Constantine onward the idea of leadership in the church continually evolved and in the 7th century the first official “**universal**

¹ Constantine issued the Edict of Milan in 313 AD.

² This important council of the Catholic Church lasted from 1545-1563 and approved perhaps as much as 80% of what we now know as Catholic teachings!

³ Remember **Jude 1:3**? It spoke of “to stand for the faith which was given one time for all the saints”.

⁴ They established Priests, Bishops, Archbishops, and Cardinals.

bishop” of the Catholic Church was selected.⁵ This was the beginning of what we know today as the Pope of the Roman Catholic Church.

There were no **“BISHOPS”**, **“ARCHBISHOPS”** or **“CARDINALS”** like the ones we see today in Catholicism during the time of original Christianity. The New Testament mentions **BISHOPS**, but not in the same way that we see being practiced in the Catholic Church. For example, Catholic Bishops are required to be single men. However, if we look at the Bible teaching about Bishops we find something different. Please turn to and read carefully the passages **1 Timothy 3:1-7** and **Titus 1:5-9**. These passages contain directions Paul gave to his two assistants to guide them in selecting **BISHOPS**⁶ to lead the churches where these men were sent to work. Notice how **BOTH sets of instructions** clearly state that **ANY man** who is to be considered to be a bishop;

- 1) must be a married man with only one wife,
- 2) that his wife must be a serious Christian, and
- 3) that he must have children who are serious Christians.

The key to understanding these “qualifications” can be seen in **1 Timothy 3:5**, where the statement is made that **IF a man does not know how to LEAD his own family then how can he care for God’s church!** It seems that the experience of a man leading his own family is what prepares him to be a leader in God’s family! Another difference we see when we compare the modern practice of Catholic Bishops to what we see in the verses of the Bible is that Titus was specifically **told to appoint a PLURAL NUMBER of bishops/elders in each place**. This shows us that the model in the Bible has multiple bishops in each place compared to the Catholic model that has one Bishop over several places. There is no Bible passage that ever shows bishops having any “authority” other than one of leadership by example among the people they serve.

It is also very important to note that there was no **“UNIVERSAL BISHOP”**, or Pope, in original Christianity. There is no place where any Apostle or writer ever understood Jesus to be saying that his church needed an earthly head. Many people today point to **Matthew 16:18** as the place in Scripture where Jesus appointed the Apostle Peter to be the head of the church. However, there are several things missing. First, there is no evidence from the time of the apostles that any of them believed Peter to be such a head. Second, the Apostle Peter wrote two of the letters of the New Testament and in neither does he introduce **himself** as the “head of the church”.⁷ There is no evidence that Peter ever thought of himself as anything other than one of the Apostles. In the books of the Bible that were written by the Apostle Paul, he speaks often about the topic of the “head” of the church and **he ALWAYS points to Jesus as that head!**⁸ A third consideration is the fact that the Book of Acts, which records the history of Christianity during the 1st century, does not mention Peter as having any special position or title. A fourth consideration is the fact that the writings of the Christian leaders of the first generation **AFTER** the death of the Apostles also do not mention the Apostle Peter as being called “the universal bishop”, or “Pope”, or of any successor to his position after he died. If the idea of a POPE was a true teaching of original Christianity, we would read about it **in detail** inside the teachings of the New Testament. The fact that we do not is the **greatest proof that it was added LATER!**

Even the Catholic idea of **PRIESTS**, is not found in the New Testament. There is no passage that speaks of a special group of Christians who are set apart as priests, who must remain single, and whose duty it is to offer Jesus as a continuing sacrifice for man’s sins. **In the book of 1 Peter**, the Apostle Peter, writing to ordinary Christians living in several regions of the Roman Empire, twice refers to all of his readers as priests⁹ who are to offer up spiritual sacrifices to God! The Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Romans, speaks of the “living sacrifice” of the people as being their continual quest to be transformed by changing the way they think and act!¹⁰ The Hebrew writer shows that the Catholic idea of Priests who continue to offer Christ’s sacrifice for man’s sins in a church building, which is a place that is a copy of the true “holy of holies”, is wrong! **In Hebrews 9:24-28**, he clearly shows that if the one sacrifice of Jesus on the cross was not complete then he would have to come back and die physically time and time again until he satisfied the need. However, the writer states clearly that the one single sacrifice of Christ was complete and so there is no more any sacrifice for sins! If there is no sacrifice of Jesus then that means that the Catholic teaching about their priests is wrong. The teachings of the Catholic Church regarding their priests evolved into what we see practiced today, and as we stated earlier, **TRUE teachings of Christianity DO NOT EVOLVE!**

⁵ Boniface III was declared to be the first “Universal Bishop” by Roman Emperor Phocas in 607 AD.

⁶ The actual word in the original language means “guardian”. These same leaders are also referred to in the Bible using the Greek words for “shepherds” and “old man”, each one of the three describing different aspects of what being a leader in the church is supposed to be.

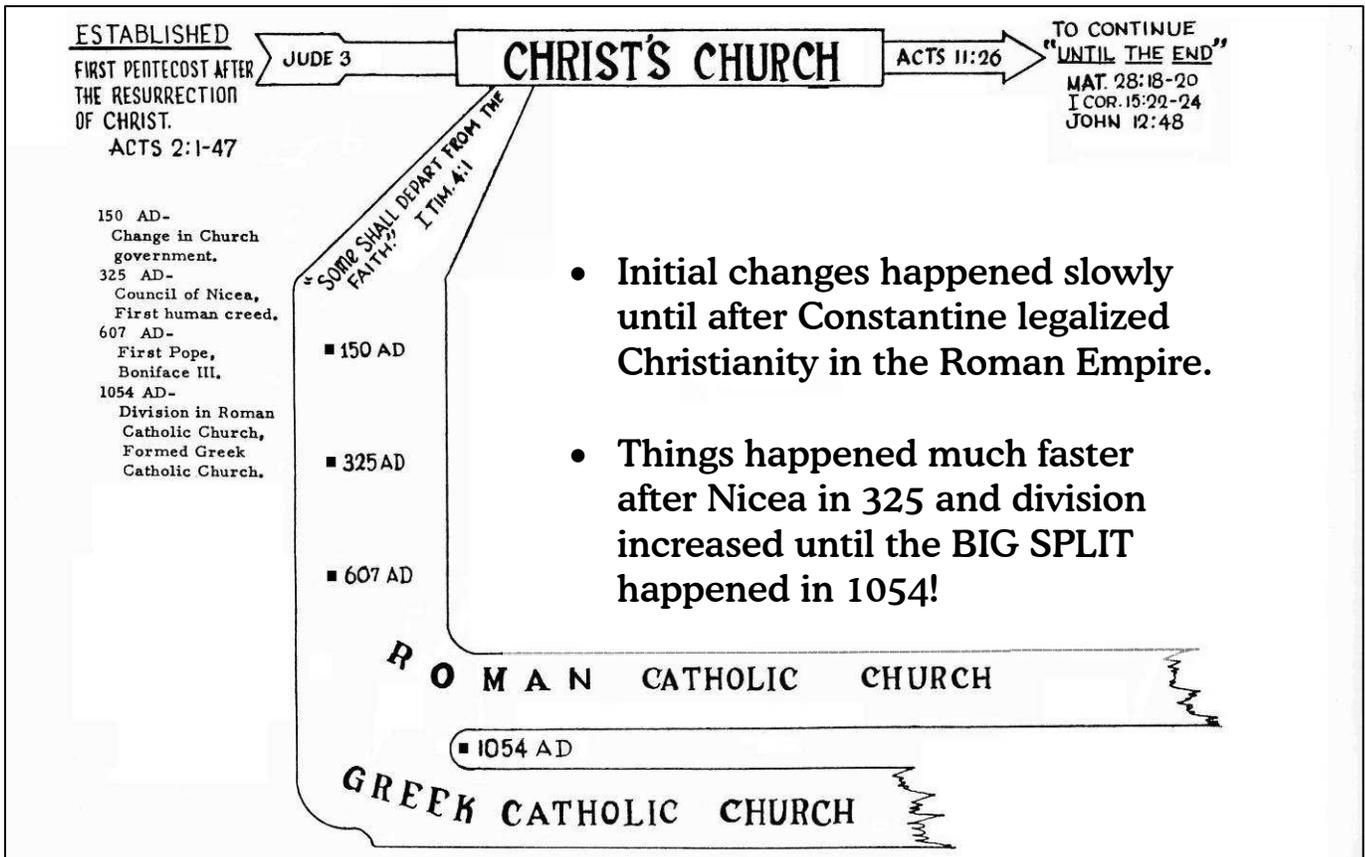
⁷ In **1 Peter 1:1** he introduces himself as “an apostle” and in **2 Peter 1:1** as “a servant and apostle”.

⁸ See **Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:14-16, Colossians 1:17-20; 2:9-10**.

⁹ **1 Peter 2:5; 9**.

¹⁰ **Romans 12:1-2**

After Constantine and the Council of Nicea, the situation became more and more complicated. Various people rose to popularity among the people and their individual ideas and teachings were added into the general pool of "knowledge" that governed "Christianity", which slowly evolved away from the original teachings to become what we now know as Catholicism! The farther away from the time of original Christianity the more influence the teachings of men had upon the process of determining **TRUTH**. Between the Councils and Popes and the various popular religious teachers the people became more and more confused because teachings could and did change from the time of one leader to another. **In the year 1054**, things became so unbearable that Catholicism split into two groups. This division, often referred to as "The Big Split"¹¹, marked the start of true **denominationalism** as we know it today because it was at this time that the roots of the different modern groups we see today were planted and men who claimed to follow Christ exalted the opinions of their preferred teachers, whose ideas conflicted with one another to a point where they could no longer agree with one another and remain together in the same church. **Because they did not seek to establish a UNITY that was based upon the teachings of God in the Bible, they each**



constructed careful arguments to justify their different views and insisted that each give up their respective positions and join the other. Since no one was willing to go back to what the Bible said, the situation ended with the different parties each going their separate way feeling justified. Each side would later explain that the reason **UNITY** could not be maintained was that "the other side was being unreasonable!" This is the exact same reasoning we hear repeated over and over today when new groups appear in our communities after breaking away from existing ones. **It is always "the other party's fault!"** Can this way of thinking be from God? Is **THIS** what Jesus prayed for in John 17?

If we compare what happened in "The Big Split" to what we have learned about **God's plan for UNITY in the Bible** we can easily see that the disagreements, division, and ultimate split could have been avoided. IF the different teachers had not left behind the original teachings of Christ and insisted upon their own ideas and teachings then **1)** there would never have been a departure from the leadership model of the New Testament; **2)** there would never have emerged Priests, Bishops, Archbishops, and Popes; **3)** the authority of the Councils would never have emerged; **4)** all the teachings that caused "believers" to become divided and split would never have come to be

¹¹ What started out as differences of religious opinion evolved into a polarization of **political** groups and two locations competed to become the dominant "center" for Christian leadership; Rome, in Italy, and Constantinople, in what is now Turkey. Rome eventually won the **political** battle for dominance but those who favored Constantinople refused to submit to Rome's authority and in the year 1054 a major division happened that created what we know today as the Roman Catholic Church (the western church) and the Greek Orthodox Church (the eastern church).

taught and believed, and **5)** there would not have been any reason for them to split into two groups! If the teachings of Christ in the New Testament had ruled Christianity during those early centuries then there would have been only one church and one set of true teachings.

What happened in those early centuries laid the foundation for the creation of the 38,000 groups we have in our world today. Before Emperor Constantine made Christianity a free religion in the Roman Empire, the Christians, were cautious about anyone exalting his or her views and they relied upon the teachings in the Bible as their guide. After Constantine's proclamation things were set in motion that resulted in people no longer staying within the boundaries of what the Bible teaches. This resulted in the introduction of teachings of men, disagreements among leaders, and the first major split among people claiming to follow Christ. Considering the way things turned out, one has to wonder if the freedom Christians achieved under Constantine was really a triumph for Christianity!

The only way we can avoid making the same mistakes they made is to remember that the only authority in religion is "God's will", and that his will is revealed to us in the pages of the Bible.

We may not be able to agree with one another about certain things, but we all can agree with God! If all people in all countries agree to follow exactly what God teaches in his will then there will only be one church, just as there was in the beginning of Christianity!

Before proceeding, answer the following test questions for Lesson 5:

The questions for this lesson work the same as the ones for the previous lessons. Read each question and review the lesson material carefully. Choose the answer that best fits the question and darken the CIRCLE for that answer choice on the answer sheet.

1. What was the reaction of the Apostles and early church leaders **to the false teachers**?
 - a) They rejected them and their teachings.
 - b) They accepted them with open arms.
 - c) They didn't care because it doesn't matter what you believe.
 - d) None of the above.
2. TRUE or FALSE: Gnosticism was OK **because many people believed them**.
 - a) True
 - b) False
3. TRUE or FALSE: After Christianity became the religion of the Empire **there was UNITY**.
 - a) True.
 - b) False.
4. During the time of the persecution, the false teachers had a **difficult time** spreading their ideas because:
 - a) They couldn't spread ideas without getting the attention to themselves.
 - b) They might get discovered or killed.
 - c) Christianity was still considered "illegal".
 - d) All of the above.
5. **During what century** did the Emperor Constantine declare Christianity the official religion of the Empire?
 - a) 3rd Century
 - b) 4th Century
 - c) 5th Century
 - d) 14th Century
6. **Where** was the "Council" in 325 A.D. held?
 - a) Milan
 - b) Nicea
 - c) Rome
 - d) Constantinople.
7. TRUE or FALSE: **The Original teachings** of Christianity can be revised.
 - a) True
 - b) False
8. The word "**BISHOP**" in Greek actually means:
 - a) Guardian.
 - b) Elder.
 - c) Shepherd.
 - d) All the above.
9. During the 7th Century, the idea of a "UNIVERSAL BISHOP" was created. This is what we currently know as the:
 - a) A Bishop
 - b) A Cardinal
 - c) The Pope
 - d) A Priest

10. TRUE or FALSE: The offices of **BISHOPS, ARCHBISHOPS and CARDINALS** as we know today were given by Jesus in the New Testament?
- True
 - False
11. According to **1 Timothy 3:1-7** and **Titus 1:5-9**, a "bishop" must:
- Be a married man with only one wife.
 - That his wife must be a serious Christian.
 - That he must have children who are serious Christians.
 - All of the above.
12. TRUE or FALSE: In the New Testament, **certain "BISHOPS"** had authority over other **"BISHOPS"**.
- True
 - False
13. TRUE or FALSE: In the New Testament times there was **no such thing** as the "UNIVERSAL BISHOP".
- True
 - False
14. According to the New Testament, who is **the head of the church**?
- Jesus
 - Paul
 - Peter
 - John
15. TRUE or FALSE: **Matthew 16:18** says that Peter was the first Pope.
- True
 - False
16. Where does the Catholic teaching about **"PRIESTS"** come from?
- The Bible
 - Tradition
 - Jesus
 - God
17. **1 Peter 2:5 and 9** refers to the Christians as:
- Believers
 - Holy
 - Priests
 - None of the above.
18. In which verse does Paul tell the Christians that they are supposed to be **"living sacrifices"**?
- Hebrews 9:24-28
 - Romans 12:1-2
 - Ephesians 1:22-23
 - None of the above.
19. TRUE or FALSE: The teachings of Christianity can **EVOLVE**.
- True
 - False
20. **After the Council of Nicea**, the problems in Christianity:
- Became worse.
 - Went away.
 - Disappeared.
 - All of the above.
21. "The Big Split" in Catholicism which marked the **beginning of modern denominationalism** happened in what year?
- 1504 AD
 - 1054 AD
 - 1540 AD
 - None of the above.
22. TRUE or FALSE: "The Big Split" in Catholicism happened because people decided not to seek to establish a UNITY that was **based upon the teachings of God in the Bible**.
- True
 - False
23. IF the different teachers had not left behind the **original teachings of Christ** and insisted upon their own ideas and teachings then:
- There would be only one Church.
 - Denominationalism as we know it today would not exist.
 - The authority of the Councils would never have emerged.
 - All of the above.
24. Before Emperor Constantine made Christianity a free religion in the Roman Empire, the Christians:
- Were cautious about anyone exalting his or her views.
 - Relied on the Bible as THE source of authority.
 - Had nothing to do with teachings of men.
 - All of the above.
25. TRUE or FALSE: **The only way** we can avoid making the same mistakes they made is to remember that **the only authority in religion is "God's will"**, and that his will is revealed to us in the pages of the Bible.
- True
 - False

LESSON SIX

In the previous lesson, we discussed some changes made by men in the years after the death of the Apostles and discovered that major problems occurred when **religious leaders stopped using the Bible teachings as the authority and basis for UNITY and began trusting in their own ideas and using a democratic or “majority rules” method of deciding truth in religion.**

As time passed and more people came up with “**new**” religious ideas it became harder and harder to keep all the religious people who claimed to believe in Christ unified together in one group. History records that there were dozens of “councils” during the first 600 years after Christ left the earth, in which human opinion rather than careful Bible study was used to solve the problems that people faced. These gatherings were often called to respond to teachings of one person or another that become “popular” to the people but were not in agreement with what the religious leaders wanted people to be taught. It is interesting to note that there were even times when a certain person and their teaching were endorsed by one council only to be condemned by a later council. Looking back to what we learned about God’s message and truth, this kind of change of judgment about people creates a problem. If the councils were doing God’s work, how could something be judged by one group of people to be “right” and then be judged by another group to be “wrong” only a few years later? Evidence of inconsistencies like this only proves that the councils were working to carry out the personal will of the majority of the leaders attending them. Is REAL Christianity a democracy? Do **LEADERS** decide what will and will not be taught in Christianity? Can they change, add, or take away from God’s original message that we have in the New Testament by simply calling a gathering of fellow leaders and voting? Is that how TRUTH in religion is found? Do not forget what we learned in past studies. God gave his message to all mankind through Jesus and the original writers of the New Testament and those writers gave warnings to the people who originally received that message. They were told not to change, add to, or take away from that message no matter WHO came to them!

In the time leading up to “The Big Split” religion had become very **politically oriented** and the hunger for worldly power and influence became great. It soon became possible for individual religious leaders to become popular, wealthy, and powerful political leaders. Because of the importance of certain cities in the political world the religious leaders assigned in these places had more influence than those coming from less important places. Religion soon became plagued by corruption as positions of leadership in religion were sought after just like political offices. History shows that many religious leaders obtained their positions by means of bribery, and some even by assassination of their rivals! In this environment false teachings and teachers came one after another and TRUTH was compromised in favor of political domination and the accumulation of wealth. Political alliances were formed and leaders were promoted and demoted based upon their stand on various political issues and their willingness to support the various major leaders who were above them. Instead of coming together to research and reason about the truth of God’s message, councils became nothing more than political conventions where power hungry leaders fought for their causes. It is ironic to note that “The Big Split” of 1054 happened more as a result of political disagreement than religious disagreement!

By the 12th and 13th centuries the situation had become very intense. The power of the religious leaders had become great and they separated themselves from the regular members and it was by doing this that the terms “**clergy**” and “**laity**”¹² came to exist. The Pope had gained such great political power that he became the one who would choose the person that would reign as king **in any Catholic country** (which included all of the major world powers of that time) and any person he appointed had to give complete allegiance to the Pope’s will! Wealthy families of Europe bought and sold religious offices – even the Papacy – and families tried to set up alliances that would guarantee a dynasty of leaders in their family!

As a result of this shift, we find that the **loyalty** of the ordinary church members was taken away from the Bible and placed solely upon the church. History shows that church leaders forced the people to accept and follow only what the leaders told them to do. Church leaders made “the Church” become the sole authority to interpret the Bible and they declared the Bible to be a “dead letter” that needs a “living interpreter” and that the church was the only official interpreter of the Bible. Once this became a main teaching of “Christianity” it was easy for the religious leaders to get the ordinary members to follow anything they were told. The situation became very similar to what Jesus faced when he came to earth and found that the Jewish leaders had made themselves sole interpreters of God’s message for the common people. Remember that he found that these leaders had changed the original teachings of God and inserted their own ideas and opinions. Remember also that Jesus told them, in **Mark 7:6-9**, that their devotion to God was useless **BECAUSE** they had changed the teachings!

¹² The term **clergy** came to represent the leaders while **laity** represented the regular members.

What happened at a place called Trent!

Of all the councils that have so far been convened, none has been more destructive to the original message of the New Testament than the one that was convened in the city of Trento in what is now Italy. It began in the year 1545 and continued on through 1563 – for 18 years! Among other things, it was this council that approved the following teachings and practices that are **NOT FOUND ANYWHERE** in the New Testament;

Session (Year)	Subject	Description
3 (1545)	Apostles' Creed	The current version of what is CLAIMED to have originated from the Apostles
4 (1546)	The Bible	The church is the only interpreter, that the apocrypha should be included in the Bible, and that traditions of the church are equal in authority to the Bible.
5 (1546)	Original Sin & Infant Baptism	This was where these teachings originated. Neither was defined as doctrine before this time.
7 (1547)	Sacraments	They issued the official list and defined each one.
13 (1551)	Lord's Supper	It was here that "transubstantiation" was defined.
14 (1551)	Confession	Here is where confessing sins to priests was defined.
22 (1562)	The Sacrifice of the Mass	Together with Session 13 they defined the mass as a REAL sacrifice of Jesus!
25 (1563)	Purgatory	They defined the place and the terms of helping souls to get out.
25 (1563)	Idols	They declared that it was acceptable for people to pray before images that were "approved" by the church.
25 (1563)	Indulgences	Upheld the church teaching that people can receive forgiveness "credit" against future sins by doing certain religious acts.

Source: *The Canons And Decrees of the Council of Trent*, by H.J. Schroeder, Tan Books and Publishers, Inc., 1978

“For God! Gold! And Glory!”???

The political **influence of men** on “Christianity” became so great that the church leaders pressured kings and princes to go to war against entire nations “on behalf of God” by means of a series of **Crusades** in the 10th through 12 centuries! In the 15th and 16th centuries they enlisted loyal countries like Spain to be instruments of conquest, sending them to the “New World” with their religious representatives along as military advisors/evangelists. History shows that the motto of the Spanish conquistadors was, “God, Gold, and Glory!” We know that the emphasis was more upon “gold” and “glory” than it was for God, which can be seen by the fact that instead of finding, befriending, and evangelizing the native people they marched in and overpowered the natives “converting” them at the point of the sword! In all, thousands upon thousands of souls were slain because the religious leaders claimed to have authority from God for such brutality and the political leaders believed them!

In addition, “in the name of God” leaders often caught and had many people killed who taught things that disagreed with the official teachings of “the Church”. The church leaders would catch and judge the victims and deliver them over to the government, who in turn would kill them in much the same way that we saw Jesus handled by the Jewish religious leaders! The **Inquisition** of the 12th and 13th centuries killed many thousands of people, many who were simply objecting because they felt that the teachings of “the Church” were not in agreement with the teachings of Bible!

When Jesus walked the earth he worked to establish a Kingdom. He left the earth victorious in that he had accomplished everything necessary to bring that Kingdom into existence! That may seem difficult to believe considering that he was rejected by the people, deserted by his followers when he was arrested, and killed by the Romans. However, when Jesus stood before Pontius Pilate and was questioned about his Kingdom he told Pilate that his Kingdom “is not of this world”. After Jesus left the earth his followers faced many difficulties and much suffering and death at the hands of Roman government leaders. However, even in the face of all that injustice the Apostles did not organize the people to kill those who refused to believe. The Apostle Peter himself wrote¹³ telling Christians to consider themselves as strangers and tourists and to obey the laws of the land. What was the reason for Christ’s passive stance before Pilate and for Peter’s passive instructions to the Christians who were going to suffer hardships and persecutions? Jesus told Pilate, “My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom was of this world then my servants would fight so that I would not be handed over to the Jews, but now my kingdom is not of this world”.(John 18:36) In addition, we never see the Apostles advocating the use of torture and killing as tools for

¹³ 1 Peter 2:11-12!

evangelism! How can a religion that teaches, “love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you”,¹⁴ also teach that it is proper for Christians to kill anyone who refuses to convert?

Forgiveness FOR SALE?

One of the great false teachings to come during the Middle Ages was the doctrine of **INDULGENCES**. The Catholic Church taught that a person could actually get credit for forgiveness toward sins by doing extra good works. These credits could be applied toward the sins of their departed relatives to help them get out of Purgatory¹⁵ early.. Then someone came up with an expansion on that idea that made greedy church leaders very happy. Instead of forcing people to do good works, why not sell these sin-credits for money?¹⁶ It was this “sale of indulgences” that became too much to bear for one German Catholic Priest, named Martin Luther. He decided that the church needed to be **reformed** and so he tried to change the moral structure inside the Catholic Church. When he failed he decided to protest and so, in 1519, he left his church building placing upon its door a letter to his superiors in which he brought out 95 different things he found wrong with the way the Catholic Church was operating. His letter caused the church leaders many problems and he made many enemies. Luther was unsuccessful in bringing change to the Catholic Church. He was officially kicked out of that church but he spent the remainder of his life trying to get the church leaders to REFORM and remove those teachings he found to be wrong. It was his accusations and stand on the issues that brought about the Council of Trent.

Luther actually **ADDED to the problem of DISUNITY** that we have been studying. If you read his writings you will see that although he objected to many things the Catholic Church taught, on the grounds that those teachings were NOT found in the Bible, he still believed that many other Catholic teachings that also could not be found in the Bible were correct and good for people to follow. His efforts only resulted in the creation of “another new church” – the Lutheran Church that bears his name - and gave confidence to many other thinkers of his and later times to “protest” against the Catholic Church. His influence began what is commonly called “The Protestant Reformation Movement” and accelerated the rate of new churches starting, on the road to the 38,000 church we have today!

Before proceeding, answer the following test questions for Lesson 6:

The questions for this lesson work the same as the ones for the previous lessons. Read each question and review the lesson material carefully. Choose the answer that best fits the question and darken the CIRCLE for that answer choice on the answer sheet.

26. In the dozens of “councils” during the first 600 years after Christ left the earth, what was used to solve the problems that people faced?
- a) Careful study of the Bible.
 - b) Jesus’ teachings.
 - c) Human opinion.
 - d) The Apostle’s teachings
27. The “councils” were often called to respond to teachings of one person or another that become “popular” but were not in agreement with what?
- a) What the religious leaders wanted taught.
 - b) What the Bible taught.
 - c) The Apostle’s teachings
 - d) None of the above.
28. TRUE or FALSE: The decisions of the early councils were **always** upheld and endorsed by other councils that came later?
- a) True
 - b) False
29. Evidence of inconsistencies in the decisions of early councils only proves that
- a) Leaders have the right to decide what will and will not be taught in Christianity
 - b) It is acceptable to change, add, or take away from the original message.
 - c) The will of the majority is acceptable as long as people meet and talk about it first.
 - d) They were working to carry out the personal will of the majority of the leaders attending them.
30. Who decides what will and will not be taught in Christianity?
- a) God.
 - b) Our religious leaders
 - c) The Apostles
 - d) All of the above.

¹⁴ **Matthew 5:43-48!**

¹⁵ Purgatory is a Catholic teaching that there is a middle state between heaven and Hell where sinners who were not so bad as to be sent to Hell go to serve out a sentence of punishment for a time before being released into Heaven.

¹⁶ It is said that the sale of indulgences was started to raise money to build the big St. Peter’s church in Rome.

31. Which of the following contributed to “The Big Split” in religion.
- Religion had become politically oriented
 - Hunger for worldly power and influence.
 - Political disagreement
 - All of the above
32. Because religion had become politically oriented
- religious leaders in certain important cities had more influence than those coming from less important places.
 - It became possible for individual religious leaders to become popular, wealthy, and powerful political leaders.
 - religion soon became plagued by corruption
 - All of the above
33. TRUE or FALSE: Church leaders **have the right** to decide what will and will not be taught in Christianity?
- True
 - False
34. In what year did “The Big Split” occur?
- 1045
 - 1054
 - 1405
 - 1504
35. What is the “clergy”?
- A term used to describe the leaders in the church
 - A term used to describe the regular members in the church
 - Both A and B
 - None of the above
36. What is the “laity”?
- A term used to describe the leaders in the church
 - A term used to describe the regular members in the church
 - Both A and B
 - None of the above
37. TRUE or FALSE: The Bible **teaches** the concept of “clergy” and “laity”.
- True
 - False
38. Which of the following was true during 12th and 13th centuries
- The Pope was able to appoint anyone as king in any Catholic country
 - Wealthy families of Europe bought and sold religious offices
 - The king in any Catholic country had to give allegiance to the Pope
 - All of the above
39. Who should Christians be loyal to?
- Their religious leaders
 - Their own opinions
 - God
 - All of the above
40. The “council of Trent” continued for how many years?
- 15
 - 18
 - 25
 - 35
41. TRUE or FALSE: The “Council of Trent” was **helpful** because it approved many of the teachings and practices found in the New Testament.
- True
 - False
42. TRUE or FALSE: The doctrine of “Indulgences” **is taught** in the Bible.
- True
 - False
43. Which of the following was not mentioned in the lesson as one of the teachings the “Council of Trent” approved?
- The Sacrifice of the Mass
 - The Apostles’ Creed
 - Original Sin and Infant Baptism
 - Sale of Indulgences
44. Which of the following were things that church leaders persuaded men to do “in behalf of God”?
- The Crusades
 - The Inquisition
 - Conquering and converting the “New World”
 - All of the above
45. TRUE or FALSE: Jesus and the apostles **approved** the use of torture and killing to convert people.
- True
 - False
46. What was the motto of the Spanish Conquistadors?
- For God!
 - For Gold!
 - For Glory!
 - All of the above
47. What is the “Sale of Indulgences”?
- Paying for the mass on Sunday
 - Paying for forgiveness of sin
 - Paying for the Lord’s Supper
 - All of the above

48. TRUE or FALSE: The influence of church leaders became so strong that they **were able** to persuade kings and princes to go to war “on behalf of God”.

- a) True
- b) False

49. Who was the German Catholic Priest who tried to reform the Catholic Church and left in 1519?

- a) John Calvin
- b) Benedict XV
- c) Martin Luther
- d) John Wesley

50. TRUE or FALSE: Martin Luther was **unsuccessful** in bringing change to the Catholic Church but helped bring believers back to UNITY.

- a) True
- b) False

LESSON SEVEN

Our journey so far has taken us from the time of original Christianity down through the centuries of the Middle Ages. The initial departure from the truth we found during the time of the Apostles grew and grew into a religion that held on to the form of religion but truly denied the power of it! The details of history that happened are very interesting to study but it is very important to remain focused upon the major point we are trying to bring out in this material.

Original Christianity had one church and one set of teachings, and the ones who delivered that message warned everyone that NO PERSON was authorized to change the message or start any other churches! This UNITY was what Jesus wanted and prayed for in **John 17:21**.

Our study has clearly shown that starting from the beginning times of Christianity division and problems only happened when people who CLAIMED to be Christians made changes in the original teachings and then taught those changes to others **AS IF** they were teachings from God. Of course this is not a new problem because we found in previous courses that Jesus faced the same problem with the Jewish leaders when he came to the earth.

Throughout our study we have seen a **consistent** pattern of behavior...

1. People **CLAIMED** to be Christians.
2. They **CLAIMED** to have the authority to decide matters for themselves.
3. On the basis of that **CLAIM** they made changes, additions, and/or deletions to the original teachings.
4. They **FELT OK** about their teachings and relationship with God.
5. They shared their teachings with others who liked and accepted them and joined with them in their groups.
6. Additional changes were made as needed to keep the group going.

The main problem with this is brought out in **point #4**. The way these people judged whether they are correct in what they are doing is by their FEELINGS, which according to what we have seen is a VERY DANGEROUS thing to do. Do not forget what Jesus said in **Matthew 7:21-23**. The point we want to emphasize here is that the people Jesus spoke of **FELT** that they were correct and right with God but **according to Jesus** they were not! This gives us a real good illustration of the principle we found in **Proverbs 14:12!**¹⁷

Our last lesson took us through the development of the largest denomination to every be established – the Roman Catholic Church – and we easily saw how they had created a whole religious system based upon teachings of men, using councils and a “majority rules” method of deciding what is true in religion. The situation became worse and worse until finally one of their own leaders – a German Catholic priest named Martin Luther – **protested!**

The PROTESTANT Reformation!

As we stated in our previous lesson, Luther protested because of the extreme level of corruption he saw in the Catholic Church. He sought to REFORM the Catholic Church and when his efforts failed he decided to keep going alone. For almost 40 years after he was excommunicated from the Catholic Church he continued to push for reform

¹⁷ “There is a way that seems right to a man, but it ends is the way of death!”

and for changes in the corruption in religion. As a result of his efforts a group of supporters, with Luther’s approval, forged a document containing a list of beliefs they felt represented the true teachings of Christianity and this document, called the Augsburg Confession¹⁸, became the foundation on which the Lutheran Church would come to exist. It is interesting to note that the details of the document show that while Luther and his supporters objected to the injustice and corruption in the Catholic Church they did not question the basic doctrines of that day. Luther did not go back and check the validity of the Catholic doctrines with the teachings of the New Testament. As a result the entire exercise he and his followers did was no different from the Catholic councils. They met together and decided what TRUTH was based upon **what THEY wanted** and upon **the common beliefs THEY shared** with one another. Careful Bible study was nowhere to be found!

At about the same time Luther was struggling in Germany, others in other countries in the Roman Catholic Empire were also were protesting. There were so many “reformers” during this period that historians call the entire time period “The Reformation”. Today it is more commonly called the “PROTESTANT Reformation” because the “reformers” of this period were **protesting** various problems inside of the Catholic Church. The Frenchman, John Calvin, was perhaps the most famous of these other reformers. He wrote *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, explaining his religious beliefs, as well as a set of commentaries on many books of the Bible. Calvin’s works were very popular and became a major influence on the doctrines and practices of a number of later religious groups. In our time “Calvinism” is a dominant philosophy that shapes many Protestant churches.¹⁹

If you survey the history of the time period you will note certain observations that are consistent with what we have seen in our course so far.

1) Protestant leaders were just as guilty of **placing more value upon the writings of men** than on the Bible itself.

This is evidenced by the fact that the writings of men like Luther and Calvin became the foundation for religious doctrines in churches that came to exist and remain to this day – some 500 years after the men themselves died!

None of these men were guided by the Holy Spirit as the first century writers and Apostles were. None of these men were guided by the Holy Spirit in their interpreting the Bible! You might ask how we can say this? It is actually quite easy. As we compare the writings of all these different “reformers” did they all believe and teach the same things? **NO!** Our point is simple. **IF** the Holy Spirit **WERE** guiding them would they not be **guided to the SAME truth**, just as the different writers of the Bible message were guided to the same truth? Yes they **WOULD!** The fact that there are differences in their beliefs **PROVES** that they were not being guided yet many people then and now have placed their complete trust and commitment behind what these men said and wrote. They read and study the Bible with the open notes of these men as commentary and with no surprise come to conclude exactly the same things these men concluded!

How is this any different from what we saw in the early centuries and in Catholicism? There IS no difference!

2) The Protestant leaders were just as guilty of **using councils²⁰ to decide matters of faith**.

This is evidenced by the fact that, just like the early false teachers and Catholic Church, these so called “reformers” used councils and “majority rules” voting to decide matters of faith. Many “statements of faith” were created by groups of like-minded people and these became the doctrines of different churches.

Examples of major “statements of faith” and the churches they started

<i>Document</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Church that was started</i>
Augsburg Confession	1530	Lutheran Church
Westminster Confession	1643	Presbyterian
Confession of Faith	1646 & 1677	Baptist
Deeds of Declaration	1784	Methodists

Source: *Documents of the Christian Church*, by Henry Bettenson, Oxford University Press, 1967

Even today many Protestant groups have their unique statements of faith that members must accept in addition to the Bible. These statements of faith are often updated by additional councils and so the list of official beliefs is just as changing for the Protestants as it is for the Catholics.

¹⁸ Finalized and presented on June 25, 1530.

¹⁹ Calvin’s acronym TULIP is a standard explanation of basic salvation theology among most Protestants today.

²⁰ Since the Catholics use the word **council** the Protestants often prefer to call their meetings **conventions** or **synods**.

How is this any different from what we saw in the early centuries and in Catholicism? Again, there IS no difference!

3) Protestant leaders were NOT unified in their beliefs and some were just as violent as the Catholics.

If you survey the differences in belief between the reformers you will find many disagreements and they opposed one another just as much as the Catholics did. Although there may not have been as great an organized militant effort to deal with those the Protestant leaders branded as heretics, we find examples of leaders resorting to violence to stop rival reformers from becoming more popular and causing problems in their territories. One case worth mentioning involves John Calvin who once had a rival reformer arrested and killed because this man had disagreed with many of his ideas.²¹ Calvin did not have to do it but he turned the man in to authorities and helped provide evidence that condemned the man to death. Unfortunately this man had earlier made himself an adversary of Calvin.

How is this any different from what we saw in the early centuries and in Catholicism? Once again, there IS no difference! It is the same thing!

4) Protestants leaders were just as motivated by selfishness, worldly political power, and money as the Catholics.

This is evidenced by the fact that they used political leaders as protectors of their territories and just as many Protestant leaders sought wealth and power as the Catholics leaders did! Some nations became “Protestant” and discriminated against Catholics and people of other religions! Perhaps the greatest example of this was the Church of England, which was started by England’s **King Henry VIII**, who broke away from the Catholic Church and started his own church because he wanted to divorce a wife and the Catholic Church would not allow it! He set up a state church that was his own private religion! Like Catholicism, the Church of England monitored and controlled those who disagreed, force-gathered money from the common people, and at times was filled with the same kind of corruption we found in Catholicism!

Once again we ask how this is any different from what we saw in the early centuries and in Catholicism. There IS no difference!

5) Protestants leaders were just as guilty of developing hierarchies of leadership as the Catholics.

This is evidenced by the fact that even though they rarely used the names Bishop, Archbishop, Cardinal, and Pope, many of the Protestant groups organized themselves around a leadership model like the Catholic Church, which were not found mentioned in the Bible.

Many groups enforced celibacy and other special rules not found in the Bible for their leaders to follow that made them separate from the ordinary members.

Just like the Catholics, the Protestants carried the idea of “clergy” and “laity” and made rules stating that only “ordained” men could serve in official leadership positions.

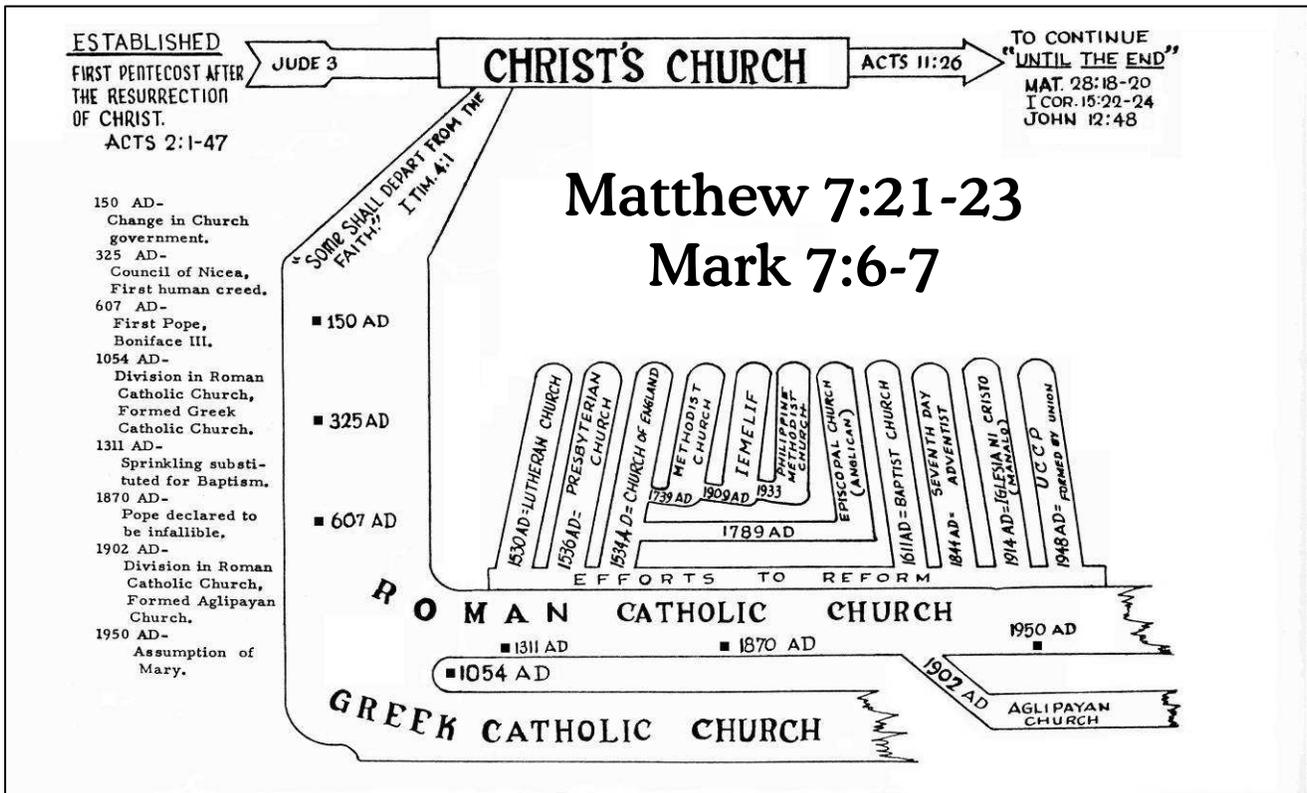
One final time we ask how this is any different from what we saw in the early centuries and in Catholicism. There simply IS no difference! It is all exactly the same problem!

The important thing to remember in all this is that just like the early leaders of the centuries after the Apostles died, and just like the Catholics, these Protestant “reformers” did not go to the Bible as a guide for fixing errors²² and establishing UNITY. Instead they allowed their individual opinions and private interpretations to guide them. Instead of a return to the Bible we see a contest between different men to gain followers! The people who followed their teachings were just as much to blame for the situation because instead of being like the Bereans of the **Acts 17:11**, who searched the Bible to make certain that what the Apostles said was really true, they simply joined whichever “reformer” they liked best and made the commitment to follow the “statement of faith” that had been drawn up by the leaders of the group. The Bible was reduced to nothing more than a symbol.

²¹ Spaniard reformer Michael Servetus was arrested while attending a sermon of Calvin in Vienna. Calvin turned him in and gave authorities letters from Servetus as evidence against the Spaniard. As a result of Calvin’s actions, he was convicted of heresy and burned at the stake in Vienna on October 27, 1553.

²² Please do not forget **2 Timothy 3:16-17** that showed us that God gave the Bible to scold people who were doing wrong and for fixing errors!

As it turns out, the Protestant Reformation was a very sad development. Just as the UNITY problem in Corinth left the people saying "I am of Paul, or I am of Apollos, or I am of Cephas, or I am of Christ"²³ the Reformation left **THE WHOLE WORLD** saying, "I am of Luther, or I am of Calvin, or I am of Wesley, or I am of the Pope, etc.."



This is an updated chart showing some of the major Protestant groups that broke away from the Catholic Church.

As a result of the actions of all these so called "reformers" a movement started that **accelerated** the creation of more groups on the way to the 38,000 groups we see in the "Christian" religion today. History shows that these early Protestant groups developed problems of their own and later "reformers" split away from them to form even more groups with new statements of faith as their foundations for teaching! The list of names of modern "reformers" and groups they have started and alliances between various groups continues to grow almost daily in our world today and in the very confusing picture we are faced with we still see those same basic problems we have witnessed causing the problem again and again since we began our journey! People still see problems in religion but still do not go back to the Bible alone for determining TRUTH and for guidance in fixing the problems and establishing unity!

This **IS NOT** what Jesus prayed for in **John 17:21** and until the pattern of man's behavior changes and he goes back to the Bible alone as the guide for teaching and unity the number will continue to grow!

Before proceeding, answer the following test questions for Lesson 7:

The questions for this lesson work the same as the ones for the previous lessons. Read each question and review the lesson material carefully. Choose the answer that best fits the question and darken the CIRCLE for that answer choice on the answer sheet.

51. Original Christianity had one church and one set of teachings.
a) True
b) False

52. Division and problems only happened when people who CLAIMED to be Christians ...
a) Made changes in the original teachings
b) Taught changes to others as if they were teachings from God
c) Followed their feelings
d) All of the above

²³ 1 Corinthians 1:12!

53. Luther's main complaint against the Catholic Church was because
- They placed too much emphasis on the teachings found in the Bible
 - The extreme level of corruption he saw in the Catholic Church
 - He didn't like the pope
 - All of the above
54. Luther and his supporters studied and verified the teachings of the Catholic Church.
- True
 - False
55. What is the Augsburg confession?
- A document containing the teachings of Christianity according to the Catholic Church
 - A document containing the teachings of Christianity according to the Lutheran Church
 - A document containing the teachings of Christianity according to the Presbyterian Church
 - A document containing the teachings of Christianity according to the Methodist Church
56. Luther was the only man who tried to reform the Catholic Church
- True
 - False
57. Why was the time period of Luther referred to as "The Reformation"?
- Because it was a time when people demanded change in the Catholic Church
 - Because society and government were changing
 - Because people didn't like the pope
 - Because there were so many reformers or protestors trying to reform the Catholic Church
58. What was the name of the book written by John Calvin explaining his religious beliefs?
- The Augsburg Confession
 - TULIP
 - Institutes of the Christian Religion
 - Documents of the Christian Church
59. Protestant reformers placed more value on their writings than they did the Bible itself.
- True
 - False
60. Luther, Calvin and other reformers were:
- Inspired by the Holy Spirit
 - United in their teachings
 - Taught what they believed was right
 - All of the above
61. Protestants did **not** follow the Catholic example of using councils to decide matters of faith.
- True
 - False
62. How do Protestant councils decide matters?
- Careful Bible study
 - "Majority rules" voting
 - Praying for guidance from the Holy Spirit
 - Prayer and fasting
63. The teachings of Protestant groups never change.
- True
 - False
64. Which is true about Protestant reformers?
- They were not unified in their beliefs
 - They sometimes resorted to violence when dealing with rival reformers
 - They did not look to the Bible as their guide
 - All of the above
65. The Church of England was very different from the Catholic Church.
- True
 - False
66. What was the name of the Spanish reformer who John Calvin betrayed and handed over?
- Michael Servetus
 - Martin Luther
 - John Wesley
 - William Tyndale
67. Protestant leaders did not have hierarchies of leadership like the Catholic Church.
- True
 - False
68. Why did Henry VIII leave the Catholic Church and start the Church of England?
- Because he didn't agree with the teachings of the Catholic Church
 - He wanted to divorce his wife and the Pope would not let him
 - He didn't want to participate in the Crusades
 - None of the above
69. Leaders in Protestant groups were often called:
- Bishop
 - Cardinal
 - Pope
 - None of the above

70. Protestant reformers used what as the basis for the things they taught?
- Their personal feelings
 - Whichever teachings got them the most money
 - Whichever teaching gave them more political power
 - All of the above
71. Followers of the reformers were like the Bereans in the book of Acts and checked to make sure things they were taught were correct.
- True
 - False
72. The Protestant reformation:
- Accelerated the creation of different religious groups
 - Did not bring unity to the religious world
 - Was a sad development
 - All of the above
73. Instead of bringing people back to the Bible, the Protestant Reformation was a contest between different men to gain followers.
- True
 - False
74. Who of the following was not a Protestant reformer?
- John Calvin
 - Martin Luther
 - Michael Servetus
 - None of the above
75. The motives of Protestant reformers were no different than those of Catholics.
- True
 - False

LESSON EIGHT

Modern “Christianity”

The **Protestant Reformation** marked the beginning of the acceleration of new churches and from the 1600's it did not take long for the number of existing groups to double again and again. One curious thing you will notice is that even from those early times people seemed to rejoice at the news of new groups. If you stop and think for a moment several reasons come to mind. If one group breaks away from another and people initially become upset at the development but then another group, and perhaps another one or two break away later, then the first groups, who might be feeling guilty at first, often felt justified in the end. In addition, if a leader wanted to hide worldly motives for breaking away then there would be no better way than to praise all the other groups who broke away and encourage others to “go out on their own”. The main thing to note is that the ordinary members’ lack of commitment to follow only what the Bible says made **REAL** Christianity a target of growing division and false teaching.

If we come forward to the present we find that very little has changed. The same five observations mentioned in the previous lesson continued uncontrolled and resulted in the confusing religious picture we see today.

The Protestant world has changed considerably since the days of Luther and Calvin but sad to say **NOT** for the better! The centuries have seen thousands of new groups with their teachers, their councils, their agreements, and their statements of faith. Most of the new groups came to exist because members of an existing group became discouraged about something happening in their group and so that they left that group and started another in order to correct the things they believed was wrong. Protestantism is without a doubt responsible for the majority of the 38,000 groups we see today and finding TRUTH in the Protestant world has become extremely difficult. While there may be a few matters where ALL Protestant groups agree, the amount of disagreement in practice and teaching leaves people confused.

“UNION” – but not UNITY!

Back in **Lesson 1** of this course we briefly discussed the difference between **UNION** and **UNITY**. In short, people can have union without having unity! Many in the Protestant world while rejoicing in the birth of new churches admit that it is **NOT exactly what Jesus originally wanted**. However, instead of working to achieve UNITY on the basis of the teachings of original Christianity Protestant leaders have sought to establish UNIONS of groups based upon lists of teachings and practices that the different groups can agree on. Some of these unions are made up of two or

three groups while others may be hundreds of groups!²⁴ These groups organize themselves based upon statements of faith that are updated by means of conventions attended by representatives of member churches in which things are decided by a majority rules vote among the members in attendance. These conventions are no different than the Catholic councils of the early centuries!

One thing you will notice if you look at denominational unions carefully is that all the UNIONS are very unclear in defining TRUTH in religion. Each member church is asked to join together “as one” in the union – by agreeing to accept the union’s “statement of faith” - but is allowed to keep its individual name and identity. Another interesting observation you will make is that very often a certain religious group might join more than one union!

The existence of UNIONS only complicates the already confusing religious picture in our world today and contributes to the creation of more disunity. “How can ALL of these groups be correct and yet teach so many different things?” is still a common question that enters into the heart of anyone seeking truth while seeing all the conflicting CLAIMS from Protestantism. The answer is not one people want to hear but it is true nonetheless! “They **CANNOT ALL** be correct!” **The fact that they are different means that some MUST be wrong!** We are not trying to be judgmental but this has to be true! It is even possible that **ALL** might be incorrect! We can only know for certain which, if any, are correct by comparing them to something we know is true. In this case, we must compare what people claim to be true with the original Christianity found in the Bible. ANYTHING that is not the same as what we find there has to be judged “incorrect” by the teachings Jesus gave and will judge the world by when he comes!²⁵

Modern Catholicism

The Catholic Church is just as large as it was in the Middle Ages, although not perhaps as powerful in the political sense as it once was. The Catholics still follow those same man-made teachings that came into existence through all their councils. They still insist that the Bible is NOT the only guide for religion because they CLAIM that it is not a complete guide. They still hold to the idea that God intended for there to be a leadership hierarchy and that the Pope is at the top position as the successor of Peter and visible head of the church! However, the UNITY that they claim to have - and they insist MUST be present in the TRUE church of Christ – is not present in the Catholic Church. In reality, there are more than 200 sub-groups, referred to as “Societies” and “Religious Orders”, existing in the Catholic Church and these groups **DO NOT** believe and teach **exactly the same things!** Most came to exist as a result of the variations in teachings of individual Catholic leaders or small groups of like-minded leaders who broke away from the main church to create unique identities. Catholicism has tolerated these differences in an attempt to hold the church together. If you research the different Orders you will find extreme differences in belief and yet they all hold together on the surface based on their tolerance and their commitment to the rule of the Pope.

One thing that has helped keep the Catholic Church together in the face of such division in its ranks is the fact that the power of the Pope is a lot less²⁶ than it was in those early years when Popes could force Catholic members to comply with his teachings or die! The Pope rallies the people to unity but allows disagreement to the point that no individual sub-group within the Catholic Church feels the need to leave the main church and go out on their own. The power in the Catholic Church today is still in the councils. The Second Vatican Council of 1962 set down a much more tolerant foundation for keeping unity. The Pope’s power today is more symbolic than anything and since there is no pressure for ALL to comply with a certain list of accepted beliefs and practices Catholics are basically free to do and say just about anything they wish as long as they do not outwardly say negative things about the church or its leaders. Aside from the perhaps ten or so core teachings of the Catholic faith members of that organization are as divided as the Protestant world! Bible study is allowed but not required and the laity has been allowed to organize and lead home Bible studies, a development which has helped the Catholic Church retain many members who otherwise might have left the church.

In many ways Catholicism has become like Judaism of the Old Testament. It has existed for many generations and many are Catholics for no other reason than **family tradition**. It is not uncommon to find Catholics that will explain, “My Grandfather was Catholic, my father was Catholic, I am Catholic and my children are Catholic.”, but if you ask if they know what their church teaches they will simply respond that the Priest handles all of that!

²⁴ In 2009, the World Council of Churches claimed 349 different member churches worldwide, the US National Council of Churches claimed over 50 churches nationwide, and the Southern Baptist Convention claimed some 42,000 churches of various Baptist belief!

²⁵ Do not forget **John 12:44-50!**

²⁶ Since the 1970’s studies continue to show that the majority of Catholics in developed countries do not feel it necessary to follow everything the Pope says.

ENLIGHTENMENT!

Perhaps the single greatest contributor to the confusion in religion today is the mistaken ideas being circulated regarding the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers. It is a common belief that God, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, **enlightens** people to know what truth is! Is this a correct idea?

In previous lessons we brought out the idea that many religious groups today **CLAIM**, on the basis of what Jesus says in **John 16:12-15**, to receive special guidance, enlightenment, or illumination from God through the Holy Spirit and that some even go so far as to say that a person cannot truly understand the Bible unless they are guided by the Holy Spirit. Please do not forget that for a person to **CLAIM** to have guidance from the Holy Spirit and to receive such guidance are two different matters. As an example we mentioned the common practice of praying for guidance at the start of a group Bible study and how sincere people do this every day **believing sincerely** that the results and conclusions made during the study are true because the Holy Spirit guided their minds. Yet, as we pointed out then and emphasize now, when we examine the conclusions of one such study group, and then compare them to the conclusions of another study group that asked God for this same guidance we see differences!

We made two simple points that need to be considered carefully.

- 1) If all the groups who pray for and claim to be guided by the Holy Spirit are in fact being guided by the same Holy Spirit that guided the original Christians, then **should not ALL of the groups today receive exactly the SAME message**, no matter what country they are in or what language they speak?
- 2) If all the groups who pray for and claim to be guided by the Holy Spirit are in fact being guided by the same Holy Spirit that guided the original Christians, then **should not the message they receive today ALWAYS be the SAME message that the Spirit gave during the time of the original disciples?**

The answer to **BOTH** questions is “**YES!**” **IF** this guidance is actually happening today and **IF** it is from the **SAME Spirit**, and **IF** he is revealing the **SAME message**, **THEN** all groups today should receive the same consistent message, **AND**, all groups today should receive the same message that was given to the original Christians.

This is the reason why regardless of what time we live in the message of original Christianity will always apply. This is the reason why we cannot simply accept the **CLAIMS** of modern Catholicism and Protestantism when they say that God is leading them in their efforts to unify Christians. This is the reason why we must study the Bible and check to make certain that everything we are being told by religious leaders is in agreement with the original message, and refuse to accept anything that is different, even if an angel from heaven might come to us!

Bible Translators and Translations!

Another area that affects UNITY in religion today is **the Bibles we use**. It is not difficult to see that there are differences in the Bibles that are sold in the stores. Back in the early lessons of our studies²⁷ we brought out the basic differences in Bible translations. What we need to remember here is the fact that most Bibles are translated from their original languages by committees of representatives from different denominations and these representatives can and do sometimes allow their loyalty to the teachings of their churches influence their work as translators.²⁸ The result is Bible translations that contain portions that are actually human commentary and not translation! Some religious groups take advantage of these changes that have been made by men and require their members to use a certain Bible translation when they study.²⁹

As an example, do you remember what we learned about the English word “**baptism**” that is found in our Bibles today? As we pointed out in previous studies the word “baptism” is **NOT a translation** of the Greek word **BAPTISMA** that is found in the verses of the original New Testament message. It **should be** translated “immersion” or “dipping” or “submergence”, but it is **NOT because of the different teachings found in certain churches today regarding the TOPIC of baptism**. Some churches **practice** “baptism” by sprinkling and others by pouring. Here is the problem for those groups. If ALL the Bibles printed today had the word “immerse” in them then those religious groups practicing “sprinkling” or “pouring” would be shown to be teaching incorrectly. Therefore, instead of accurately translating God’s message, **the translators allow pressure from religious groups to influence them**

²⁷ For more general details about Bible translations see **Jesus: Man of the Bible, Lesson 1**.

²⁸ Words are added, words that are translated with one word in some places are translated using other words that do not even fit with the original meanings used during the days of the original Christians!

²⁹ It is no secret that many Protestant groups require members to use the King James Version that was translated in 1611 AD.

to intentionally translate the word BAPTISMA incorrectly! As a result, most people who live today sincerely believe that baptism **CAN BE DONE** by EITHER immersion, by sprinkling, or by pouring, when in fact the first Christians believed that it could only be done by immersion! This is very unfair to God! Let us not forget that REAL Christianity IS NOT a democracy. Something is not determined to be right just because we want it to be, or because we use a majority vote to choose one particular way. In this case the details are simple. The statements GOD made on the topic ALL have the Greek word that can only mean “to immerse, dip, or submerge”. The word God used NEVER meant otherwise during the days of the people who spoke that language. **It is MEN – NOT God - that have said and taught that the Greek word BAPTISMA CAN mean “to sprinkle” or “to pour”.**³⁰ These men are wrong!

To avoid being misled we must be careful and sometimes we will need to go back to the original languages of the Bible to do research to find out what the truth of a matter really is.

The original TRUTH was delivered once back in the 1st century and remains true for the rest of time! Therefore, **when people claim to be Christians their teachings should agree with the original teachings of Christianity in the Bible!** If so then they are teaching true Christianity and they are TRUE CHRISTIANS otherwise they are not! (1 John 2:3-6)

The problem we see in “religion” today, and the 38,000 groups, remains. Any way you want to look at it, it is wrong! Modern “Christianity” is made up of sincere people being misled into choosing to follow teachers who say what they want to hear. Almost everyone seems to think that they are in some way being directed by the Holy Spirit and so there is no need to be so concerned about careful Bible study! NO ONE seems interested in going back to the Bible and living that simple Christianity that Jesus delivered and establishing that simple **UNITY** that Jesus prayed for because everyone **FEELS** like they are right in the eyes of God! Considering the fact that from 1980 up to 2009 the number of churches has grown from 20,000 to 38,000 is there any hope for a solution? There is **ALWAYS** hope!

Before proceeding, answer the following test questions for Lesson 8:

The questions for this lesson work the same as the ones for the previous lessons. Read each question and review the lesson material carefully. Choose the answer that best fits the question and darken the CIRCLE for that answer choice on the answer sheet.

76. How did people respond to the emergence of new religious groups during the time of the Protestant Reformation?
- a) They rejoiced and praised those groups.
 - b) They scorned the members and had nothing to do with them.
 - c) They laughed and made fun of them.
 - d) None of the above.
77. Real Christianity was based on division and false teachings.
- a) True
 - b) False
78. Many religious teachings have changed since the Protestant Reformation of the 1600's.
- a) True
 - b) False
79. Protestantism is responsible for the majority of the 38,000 religious groups existing today.
- a) True
 - b) False
80. Why does the number of religious groups today keep growing?
- a) Members existing groups are discouraged with the way things are and want to change things.
 - b) People lacked the commitment to follow only the Bible.
 - c) Leaders could not agree with one another.
 - d) All of the above.
81. What causes the greatest amount of division and false teachings?
- a) Disagreements between leaders.
 - b) Ignorant members.
 - c) Ordinary members lack of commitment to follow the Bible.
 - d) None of the above.
82. UNION and UNITY are the same thing.
- a) True
 - b) False

³⁰ As we pointed out in our study of BAPTISM back in **Jesus: Lord of Our Lives, Lesson 7**, the words “pour” and “sprinkle” have their own Greek words and neither of them are found in the verses that mention baptism!

83. Instead of trying to establish UNITY, what have some Protestant groups tried to do?
- Create a committee of leaders from different groups.
 - Find the truth and help others to learn it.
 - Form Unions.
 - All of the above.
84. Unions organize themselves based on what?
- Statements of faith.
 - Amount of money.
 - Number of members.
 - Popular vote.
85. Unions require that member churches accept the “statement of faith”, but allow them to keep their own names and identities.
- True
 - False
86. The existence of unions complicates the already confusing religious picture in our world today.
- True
 - False
87. The Catholic Church is:
- Bigger than it was in the Middle Ages
 - Just as large as it was in the Middle Ages
 - Smaller than it was in the Middle Ages
 - None of the Above
88. All Catholic groups and sub-groups believe the same things.
- True
 - False
89. The Catholics still believe what?
- They must follow the man-made teachings which their councils formed.
 - The Bible is not the only guide for man.
 - God intended for leadership in the form of a hierarchy and the Pope is at the top position.
 - All of the above.
90. In what way has Catholicism become like Judaism?
- People offer sacrifices
 - Members are divided into tribes
 - Religion has become a family tradition
 - All of the above
91. The single greatest contributor to confusion in religion today concerns the work of:
- Jesus Christ
 - Mama Mary
 - The Holy Spirit
 - God the Father
92. Which verses do religious groups today use to prove their claim to guidance is real?
- John 16:12-15
 - 1 Corinthians 10:13
 - Matthew 7:21-23
 - John 1:1-3; 14
93. Claiming to receive guidance from the Holy Spirit and ACTUALLY receiving guidance are the same thing.
- True
 - False
94. The proof that people today are not being guided by the Holy Spirit is that when two groups pray for guidance and study the same passage, they:
- Come to the same conclusion
 - Come to different conclusions
 - Receive the explanation from the Holy Spirit
 - Come to similar conclusions
95. If groups CLAIMING to be guided by the Holy Spirit today are being guided by the SAME spirit which guided the Christians in the First Century:
- All groups should receive the SAME message
 - All groups should receive different messages
 - All groups should not receive any message
 - None of the above.
96. If the religious groups today CLAIMING to be guided by the Holy Spirit are actually being guided by the SAME spirit which guided the Christians in the First Century, it is OK for there to be differences in the message.
- True
 - False
97. Regardless of what time we belong in or what language we speak, the Christian message:
- Will never be different from the original
 - Will apply to all
 - Will remain true for all time
 - All of the above
98. Because of the CLAIMS of Protestants and Catholics of being lead by God in their attempts to UNIFY Christianity, we must:
- Study the Bible
 - Make certain religious leaders teach the same things mentioned in the Bible
 - Never accept anything different from the original teachings
 - All of the above

99. When people claim to be Christians their teachings should agree with the original teachings of Christianity in the Bible.

- a) True
- b) False

100. The situation in Christianity is HOPELESS!

- a) True
- b) False

Good Work!

You have now completed the last set of test questions for Book 2. Please return the answer sheet back to our office for grading. Once we have completed the grading process we will return the answer sheet to you along with Book 3 of the course, containing Lessons 5-8.

If you have any questions you would like to ask please use space on the back side of the answer sheet for this purpose. Thank you for your interest in God's word!

As we said before, if you have friends or relatives, 16 years old or older, who would like to study with us, send us their names and complete mailing addresses and we will be happy to get them started. Remember that they will need to begin with the course **Jesus: Man of the Bible. We will be very happy to send them that course material.**

Thank you for your interest and for your time in studying God's word!