
Bible Study Center Seminar

Topic: “Was the ‘Protestant Reformation’ from God or from Men?”

This is a 3-part seminar dealing with the topic of the Protestant Reformation. While it will focus upon the historical details of how Protestant theology developed and spread it will actually be a study of Bible authority and human tradition. The goal is to examine the Bible’s teaching on TRUTH, UNITY, and DIVISION and see how they compare with what happened in the Reformation and beyond to our time today.

Each session of the seminar is designed to span 2 hours, from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM and will break down into an initial 10-minute introduction/review, followed by a 40-minute lecture, with a 20 minute snack/visitation break, followed by another 40-50 minute lecture.

The flow of topics covered in the seminar are as follows;

Session 1A = Introduction: Laying a FOUNDATION

Session 1B = Introduction: Historical Background

Session 2A = Martin Luther and John Calvin

Session 2B = The PROBLEM: 38,000 Groups!

Session 3A = The CURE: RESTORATION

Session 3B = Summary & Questions

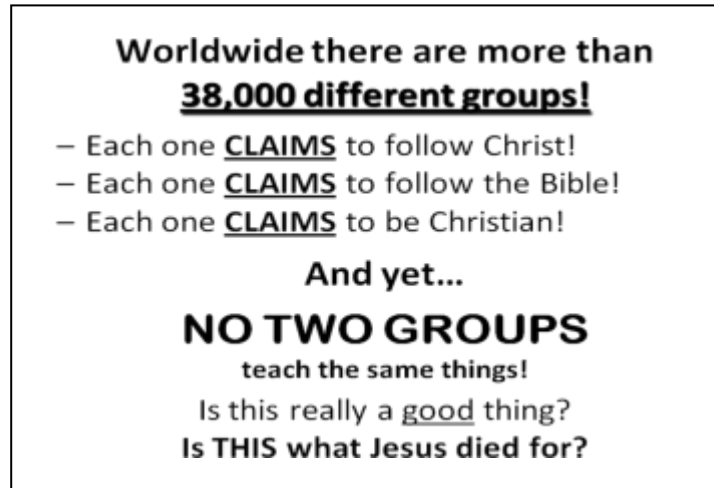
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Session 1A: Introduction

“CHRISTIANITY” today is a very confusing situation. Worldwide there are **over 38,000 groups** who **CLAIM** to believe in Christ, **CLAIM** to follow the Bible, **CLAIM** to be Christians and yet **NO TWO GROUPS TEACH THE SAME THINGS!** When Jesus came to the earth one of his goals was to start his church. The New Testament only speaks of ONE church. In **John 17:21**, shortly before he was killed on the Cross, Jesus



prayed for his followers of that time and of all times to “**be ONE**”, in the same way that he and his Father are **ONE!** After Jesus left the earth his followers were given the task of continuing his work. The Apostles taught and led the effort to spread original Christianity throughout the world. They believed that the church should be one¹ and they worked hard to keep the one church united, but as time passed they witnessed a very sad

Diagram 1

thing. They watched as people who started as Christians became false teachers who confused the faith of many people and caused division in Christ’s church. Where there **should have been unity** in faith and practice, differences and debate happened! The Apostles were not able to stop the process even though they gave many warnings and predictions of doom for anyone who did not stay with the true teachings.

There are a number of passages that warn Christians to remain faithful to the original teachings of Christianity. (See: **Galatians 1:6-9**, **2 John 1:9-11**; **Revelation 22:18-19**; and **1 John 2:3-6; 24**)

There are also several passages where the Apostle Paul spoke to Timothy about the false teachings in the future. These passages are very important to our study. The first one is **2 Timothy 3:1-7**, where Paul tells Timothy that in the future people would not hold on to **the TRUTH**. He mentioned that they would be religious, having a “form of religion”, but that they would deny the power of it. The context shows that their “religion” would be wrong and that they would try to deceive people, especially “women who are burdened with many sins”. In the next chapter, **2 Timothy 4:1-5**, he told Timothy to be hard-working in teaching people the Scriptures because people would not hold onto **TRUE TEACHINGS** but while having “itching ears” would surround themselves with teachers that would say things “**they want** to hear”.

These passages provide important insight into the situation of the 38,000 groups we see today. Over many centuries various leaders ADDED TO, TOOK AWAY FROM, and/or CHANGED the original teachings of Christianity. This is how the world went from having the ONE church Jesus started and prayed for to having the 38,000 churches that “Christianity” today is very happy about!

The WARNINGS of the Apostles are just as important for us as they were for the original readers of the New Testament books. We live in a world where we must be very

¹ In **Ephesians 1:22-23**, **Colossians 1:18**, the Apostle speaks of the church as the “body” of Christ. In **Ephesians 4:1-6** he mentions only “**ONE** body”. No writer in the New Testament speaks of more than one church!

careful to make certain that the teachings we accept and follow are the same original ones that came from to the people in the time of original Christianity!

Christianity is NOT a democracy and the teachings of Christianity WILL NOT change with time. Christianity will not EVOLVE! This is because Christianity is based upon a message from God that was revealed in its entirety and once it was completed, it was fixed and unchangeable. God is its author, Christ and the Apostles were the messengers, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the result is what WE call the Bible. (See **Diagram 2 = 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21**)

It is an undisputed fact that differences in teachings between religious groups exist today because people, whether sincere or not, use God's word outside of its **original intended context**².

While this is sad and creates much arguing and confusion, the situation is not hopeless. All we have to do to repair things is to get everyone to stop and apply to religion and the Bible **one of the most basic guiding principles that ALL people in ALL nations hold dear**, which is the belief that what a person says (a message) belongs to that person and that, out of respect for that person, no one should ever misrepresent that person's message in any way.

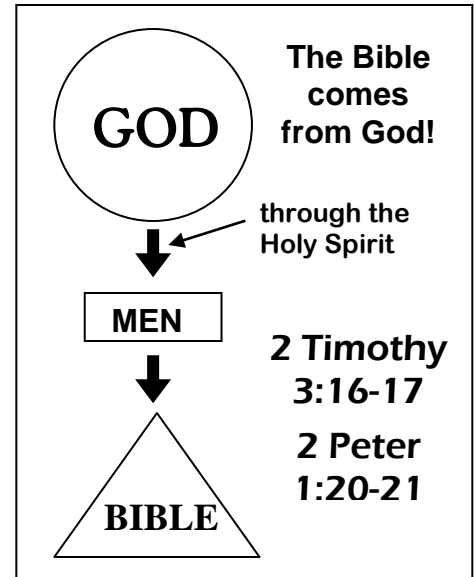


Diagram 2

What a person says belongs to that person and it would be disrespectful to misrepresent that person's message in any way!

Our obligation is not necessarily to agree with what a person says, but to UNDERSTAND that message, as it was intended. If we decide to tell that message to other people then we must do so in a way that preserves the INTENDED meaning of the one who originated that message. Anything less would be disrespectful and unethical! To prove the necessity of this point simply consider the following. "How do YOU feel when you are the victim of misrepresentation?" It is no different with God and HIS message! In **2 Timothy 2:14-15**, Paul spoke to Timothy about ethics **when handling the Word of TRUTH!** We must study to **UNDERSTAND God's message BECAUSE IT BELONGS TO HIM!**

People today **interpret**³ the Bible message any way necessary to support their CLAIMS about their faith! They all FEEL confident about their relationship with God. In addition,

² **Context** means looking at how Bible passages fit together with the ones that come before and after. It has to do with finding out what the writer was actually saying by tracing the points he makes from paragraph to paragraph. It is not proper to take a single sentence (or verse) out of its paragraph and make it say whatever we want it to say. If our explanation of a verse does not fit back into what the original writer was saying then our understanding of the verse must be wrong and thus "out of context". Bible passages cannot mean something today that the original readers would not have understood them to mean during their time.

³ In **2 Peter 1:20-21** the Apostle Peter made a comparison between the idea of **understanding** something and **interpreting** something. Understanding something means accepting the authority and explanation of another other than ourselves.

they ALL DO THINGS to help God and to show how grateful they are for all HE does for them. Even though everyone today KNOWS that different groups teach and practice different things everyone seems to think that by only looking at the fact that everyone believes in God and gives Jesus the glory and credit for everything that this will somehow cover up the differences and division that exists just below the surface.

If it was not for the story Jesus HIMSELF told in **Matthew 7:21-23**, we could join in the joy and praise God as more and more groups are added to the list of churches! In the story he speaks about some people who, at first, seemed to be very good, **humble**, religious people who were **proud** to call Jesus "Lord!" As the story continues, we are amazed to hear Jesus condemn these "good" and "active" people! His words "I never knew you" stand in contrast to their own beliefs and personal convictions! **They BELIEVED in Jesus! They WORKED for Jesus! They ALL GAVE CREDIT to Jesus! How could Jesus disown them?** The key to understanding the whole story is simple. It is **NOT** enough for us to do religious things for God and then **trust in our feelings** to judge what is "true" and what is "false"!⁴

Jesus' point is simple. Each one of us must do "**the will of my Father** who is in the heavens" in order to have him as our "Lord"⁵ and be pleasing to the Father! According to what Jesus said in another place, **THAT WILL** is to be found in the teachings that he brought and delivered to mankind. In **John 12:44-50**, Jesus showed all of us that the teachings he gave will be the basis for the Judgment, because those teachings were not his, but originated with the Father. He was just another of the many spokespersons that God used throughout time to deliver a message to the people of the world. Because of this, **we ALL MUST STUDY AND UNDERSTAND those teachings and then FOLLOW THEM CAREFULLY AND COMPLETELY!**

If the "words I have spoken will be the judge on the last day", then does this not mean that **all TRUE TEACHINGS of Christianity must be found in the teachings of Christ?** Was this NOT the point of John in **2 John 1:9-11**? The answer must be "YES!" to **BOTH questions!** This is the reason why each person must learn to study the Bible! How can we place our trust in any other person to study for us? Can we simply trust religious leaders today who tell us that the Protestant Reformation was from God? What if they are wrong? You alone must study and decide these matters for yourself, because YOU will stand alone before the Lord and give an account for your beliefs! (**2 Corinthians 5:10**)

The focus of this study will be on two areas of concern. Beginning from the time of original Christianity we will examine history and trace the origin the things that caused the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century. Then we will study history and see what actually happened in the Reformation. After that, we will follow history from the 16th up to our own century and see what effects the Reformation had on "modern Christianity" in an attempt to see what benefit the Reformation has given the Lord in his desire to maintain the UNITY of HIS church! We will end our study with a look at a similar situation, recorded in history, and see if what we might learn from it and use as a solution for returning Christ's church from the ever growing myriad of churches back to the one he started so many centuries ago!

With this in mind, let us begin!

Interpreting something means explaining something based upon our own authority and opinion. The writers of the Bible did not receive a message from God and then write their interpretations of what they thought God was telling them. They wrote what God told them to write. **We are told to understand the Bible not interpret it!**

⁴ **Proverbs 14:12** and **16:25!** A most amazing passage on this subject of trusting one's feelings is **2 Thessalonians 2:11-12**, where we discover that if people **do not want to believe and accept the truth** then God himself might cause those people to believe that what they want to hear is true even though it is really a lie!

⁵ **Luke 6:46-49, John 14:15.**

Session 1B: Historical Background for the Reformation

(Note: Please consider studying through the WORKSHEET located at the back of this lesson booklet before continuing)

The New Testament letters contain references to show that **PEOPLE TEACHING WRONG THINGS** was a common problem and the leading cause for it that was mentioned in the passages was **SELFISHNESS!** Each time it happened in a certain place there seemed to have been a person or group of people at the heart of the problem, teaching things that were **different** from what the people had received in the beginning. The passage in **2 Timothy 3 & 4** we looked at earlier showed clearly that selfishness was a motivator for false teaching. We can easily see from the context of what Paul said in these passages that there should be no changes to the original teachings in Christ's church. His warnings were very clear and easy to understand.

Near the close of the 1st Century, a way of teaching arose that caused great damage to the New Testament church in the 2nd Century. Because it became so widespread it is commonly referred to as a "movement" by religious historians. **Gnosticism** – from the Greek word **GNOSIS**, which means "knowledge", was a system of belief that combined basic Christian teachings with cultural, philosophical, and mystical beliefs of the people resulting in a set of beliefs that appeared to be Christian on the surface but contained several main teachings that were very far away from the truth. It came about when people who became Christians brought in teachings from their past beliefs and **ADDED** them into the teachings of Christianity. They justified these teachings by claiming to have "**special knowledge**" that ordinary Christians did not have. As time passed their influence grew to the point that they caused many to lose their way. The Gnostics had their leaders, prophets, and writers. Perhaps the two most destructive errors of Gnosticism were;

- 1) their teaching that Jesus was not a real person, that he did not live as a human and die a literal death on the cross, and
- 2) their teaching that a Christian is a spiritual being living in the spiritual realm of God, and therefore is no longer accountable for the actions of their body, which is still in the fleshly world.

The New Testament writers who spoke on the matter taught that anyone who changes, adds, or takes away from the original teachings was wrong and anyone who follows the changed teachings of a false teacher for any reason was wrong!

There were false teachers and false teachings during the time of original Christianity and many sincere Christians were deceived and lead astray by them. These teachers denied the Christ who bought them and even challenged the authority of the Apostles! This situation caused John to write that famous warning, **2 John 1:9-11**.

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 Constantine⁶ 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**"⁷, 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!

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 Church⁸. 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 bishop**" of the Catholic Church was selected.⁹ This was the beginning of what we know today as "**the Pope**" of the Roman Catholic Church.

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 time of one leader to another.

⁶ Constantine issued the Edict of Milan in 313 AD.

⁷ 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 Trent**, which lasted from 1545-1563 and approved perhaps as much as 80% of what we now know as Catholic teachings!

⁸ They established Priests, Bishops, Archbishops, Cardinals, etc..

⁹ **Boniface III** was declared to be the first "Universal Bishop" by Roman Emperor Phocas in 607 AD. Before this there was no one bishop who ruled over all others.

In the year 1054, things became so unbearable that Catholicism split into two groups. This division, often referred to as “The Big Split”¹⁰, 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?

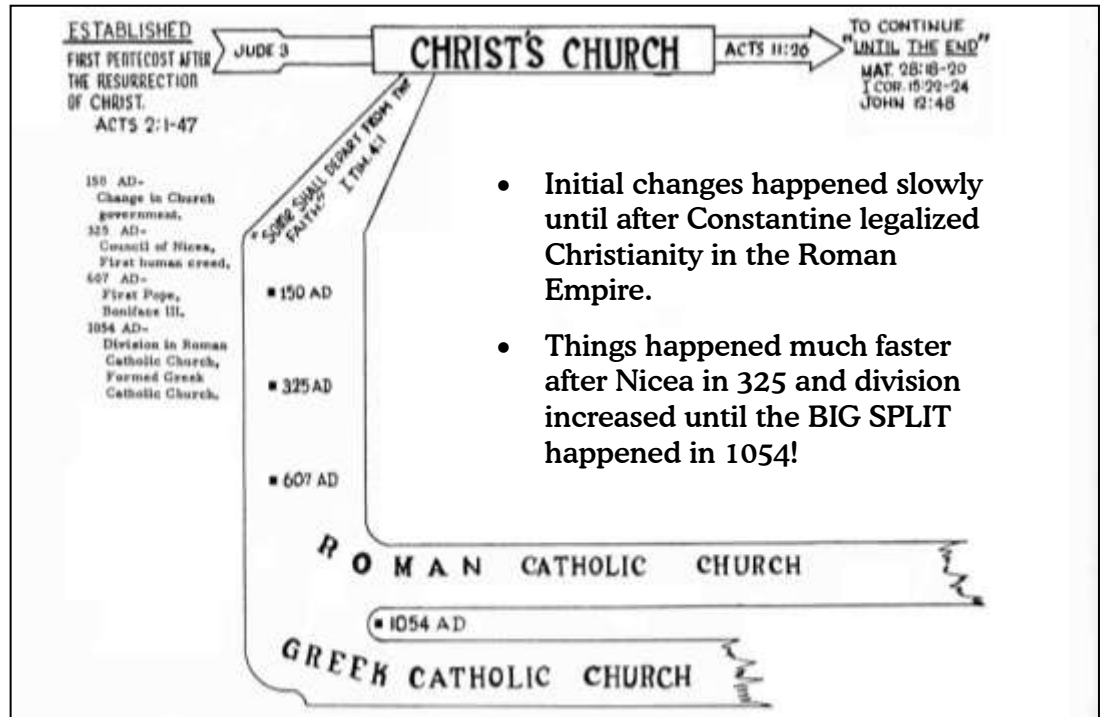


Diagram 3

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

¹⁰ 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).

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**"¹¹ came to exist. The Pope had gained such great political power that he became the authority that would choose the person that would reign as king **in any Catholic country** (which included all of the major European 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!

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

¹¹ The term **clergy** came to represent the leaders while **laity** represented the regular members.

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 wrote¹² 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 evangelism! How can a religion that teaches, "love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you",¹³ also teach that it is proper for Christians to kill anyone who refuses to convert?

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 Purgatory¹⁴ 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, they thought, "Why not sell indulgences for money?"¹⁵ There was an interesting saying attributed to a certain Johann Tetzel. "As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs."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. Martin Luther was unsuccessful in his quest and was officially kicked out¹⁷ 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. His influence began what is commonly called "**The Protestant Reformation Movement**".

Although many credit Luther with starting the Reformation, it must be noted that the printing press had a great influence upon the Reformation. Invented about 100 years earlier, it gave common people the chance to become more educated and one book that was popular to print was the Bible. As more people had the opportunity to read the Bible they began to see differences between what it taught and what their religious leaders were teaching and practicing! This led many people to become frustrated and angry with the Catholic Church and was the reason why many people in many countries were quick to join in the Reformation effort to change the Catholic Church! Luther – because he was a priest and because he was able to escape being killed – is given most of the credit!

¹² **1 Peter 2:11-12!**

¹³ **Matthew 5:43-48!**

¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ It is said that the sale of indulgences was started to raise money to build the big St. Peter's church in Rome.

¹⁶ Bainton, Roland. *Here I Stand: a Life of Martin Luther*. New York: Penguin, 1995, 60; Brecht, Martin. *Martin Luther*. tr. James L. Schaaf, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985–93, 1:182; Kittelson, James. *Luther The Reformer*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishing House, 1986),104.

¹⁷ He was excommunicated in 1521 but continued trying to reform Catholicism until his death.

Session 2A: Martin Luther and John Calvin

As we stated in our previous lesson, **Martin 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 and for changes in the corruption in religion. As a result of his efforts a group of supporters, **with Luther's approval**, created a document containing a list of beliefs they felt represented the true teachings of Christianity and this document, called the **Augsburg Confession**¹⁸, 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 and "doing only what the book said" 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 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!

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. His writings should NOT be elevated to such a high position that people explain the Bible based upon his writings. Calvin was not guided by the Holy Spirit. If his teachings are correct then the Bible will teach them and so we do not need his writings.

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

Diagram 4

Even today many Protestant groups have their unique statements of faith **that members must accept in addition to the Bible.**²¹ 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.

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 many 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.²² 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.

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

²¹ Some may be as simple as a couple of “special teachings” not specifically found in the Bible while others, like the Mormons, force members to accept the “Book of Mormon” along with the Bible.

²² Spaniard reformer Michael Servetus was arrested while attending a sermon of Calvin in Vienna. Calvin turned him in and gave authorities letters from him 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. Before his death Calvin visited him to tell him it was “nothing personal”!

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!

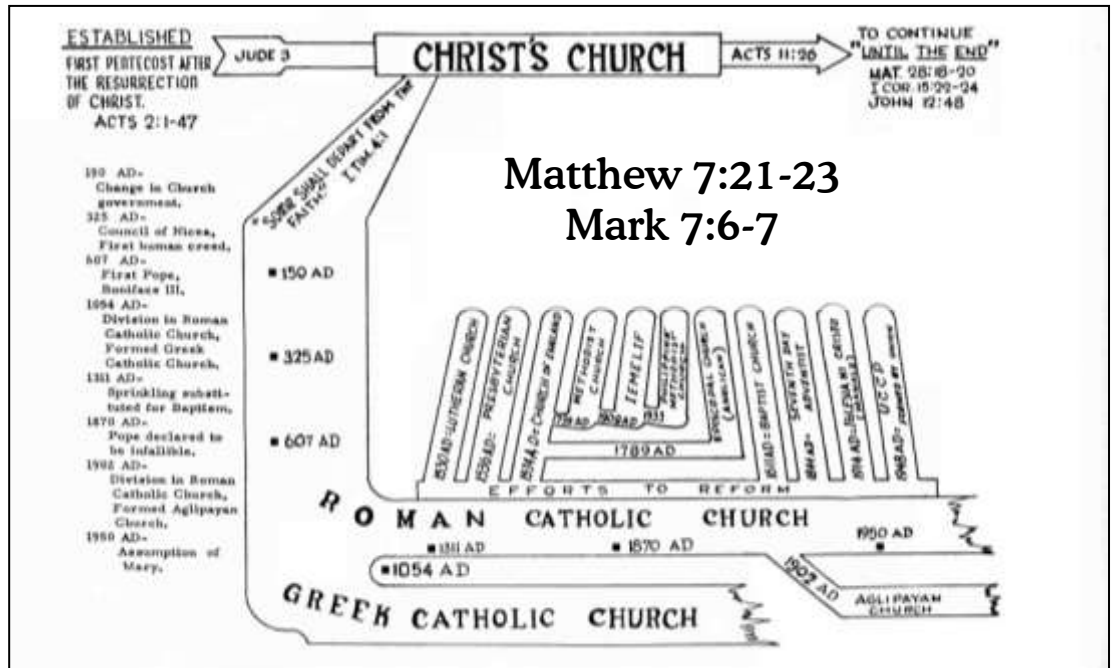
5) Protestants leaders were just as guilty of developing **hierarchies of leadership** as the Catholics.

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!



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

Diagram 5

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 errors²³ 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.

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”²⁴ 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..”

Session 2B: Later Reformers & the 38,000

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!

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!²⁵ 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 they ALL are very unclear when it comes to 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*

²³ 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!

²⁴ **1 Corinthians 1:12!**

²⁵ 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!

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!²⁶

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 UNIONS just like in Protestantism. 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.

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 the Catholic Church teaches most will simply say that the Priest handles all of that!

Perhaps the single greatest contributor to the confusion in Protestantism 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! In fact many groups teach that a person cannot understand the Bible correctly unless he or she is guided by the Spirit, but is this idea correct? Does a person's **CLAIM** to have guidance from the Holy Spirit really mean that they **ARE** receiving that guidance? Consider the common practice of praying for guidance at the start of a group Bible study. Many sincere people from practically ALL of the 38,000 groups do this every day **believing sincerely** that the results and conclusions made during their studies are true because the Holy Spirit guided their minds. Yet, as we have pointed out over and over again, 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!

In response, we would like to make two simple points that we ask you to consider very 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?

²⁶ Do not forget **John 12:44-50!**

- 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!

One final area where Protestant ideas affect **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. Almost ALL non-Catholic Bibles are translated from their original languages by committees of representatives from different Protestant denominations and these representatives can and do sometimes allow their loyalty to the teachings of their churches influence their work as translators.²⁷ The result is Bible translations that contain portions that are actually nothing more than human commentary! 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.²⁸

An example of this influence can be seen in the English word “**baptism**” that is found in our Bibles today. 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 to intentionally place the word BAPTISMA in our Bibles!** 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”.**²⁹ These men are wrong!

²⁷ 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!

²⁸ It is no secret that many Protestant groups require members to use the King James Version that was translated in 1611 AD and contains several changes. One example of this is found in **1 John 5:7** where the King James reads, “the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost”, but these words are not found in the original Greek text. They were **added by men** to give support for the manmade teaching called TRINITY. This is wrong!

²⁹ The words “pour” and “sprinkle” have their own corresponding Greek words and neither of them are found in the verses that mention “baptism”!

To avoid being misled we must be careful. Sometimes we will need to go back to the original languages of the Bible to do research to find the truth.

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 composed of sincere people being misled. Some are being deceived while others search for teachers who say what they want to hear! Almost everyone seems to believe 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! It seems that NO ONE is interested in going back to the Bible and living the simple Christianity Jesus delivered and establishing that simple **UNITY** Jesus prayed for because everyone **FEELS** like they are right in the eyes of God!

In response to all this we have just one thing to say... Matthew 7:21-23!

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 that Jesus prayer for UNITY in his ONE church can still be accomplished? Until Jesus returns, there will **ALWAYS** be hope!

Session 3A: The CURE = "RESTORATION" not REFORMATION!

The problem facing the religious world is a great one and a solution will not be easy to implement, but **can we say that the problem is too great and cannot be solved?** Of course not! The problem we face is not new. If we go back to the time of Israel we find a similar history among the kings of that nation. We know that God originally gave the Israelites a system of government that relied upon Judges without a king. However, after many years the people decided that they wanted a king just like the other nations. God gave in to their request and Saul was chosen as the first king. If we continue we find that after some time **the nation of Israel became divided into TWO kingdoms**, each with its own king. After their own "Big Split" the two kingdoms of Israel developed along different timelines, each one experiencing good times and difficult times. As time passed the people drifted further and further away from God **because of the influence of their political leaders**, most of whom were selfish and ambitious for power and wealth, and also **because of the influence of the native people** and their idolatrous religious beliefs. There are many similarities between what we have seen happen to Christianity and what happened to Israel.

In about the year 460 BCE a man named **Josiah** became the king of the nation of Judah.³⁰ From the start it seems that he was a good king in the sense that he did things to reform the religion of the people. He did not agree with his predecessor who allowed people of different religious beliefs to construct altars on mountains from which to offer sacrifices to their false gods. For six years³¹ he traveled around the kingdom having those places torn down and the statues smashed into power dust! After completing his work in the countryside he turned his attention to repairing the Lord's Temple in Jerusalem. He arranged for different workers to rebuild it and the priests of the Temple brought out money from the treasury to pay for the work. As they were bringing out the money one of the priests found a copy of the "Book of the Law" that God had given the people through Moses. The book was brought to the king and when it was opened and read to the king he "tore his clothes" and commanded that someone go to a prophet and inquire from God what was to happen.

³⁰ His story is found in the **2 Chronicles chapters 34 and 35.**

³¹ **2 Chronicles 34:3-8**

God's response through the prophetess Huldah is recorded in **2 Chronicles 34:23-28** and was as follows;

*"Thus says the Lord God of Israel, you say to the one who sent you to me, 'Thus says the Lord, Behold, I am bringing evil things upon this place, all the words that have been written in this book that was read in the presence of the king of Judah. **Because they left me behind and burned incense to foreign gods in order that they might make me angry in all the works of their hands and my anger was started against this place and it will not be put out!**' And to the king of Judah who sent you to seek the Lord thus you will say to him, 'Thus says the Lord God of Israel the words that you heard and your heart paid attention to and you were humbled from my face when you heard my words upon this place and upon the ones living in it and you were humbled in my presence and you ripped your clothes and you wept in my presence and I heard you, says the Lord. Behold, I will give you over to your fathers and you will be given over to your graves in peace and your eyes will not see all the bad things I myself am bringing upon this place and the upon the ones living in it.' And they brought back word to the king."*

God was very angry with the people and promised revenge upon them. Why was he angry? Because the people **left him behind** and **went after other gods!** Did the people think they were doing wrong before Josiah came along? No. They believed they were doing alright because they were simply doing what their leaders told them was alright for them to do. The only reason anyone – including Josiah – knew differently in the end was because of the Book of the Law that was found and read. Once Josiah read that book he immediately saw that what the people had been doing, what they were made to understand was alright to do, was in fact very wrong and that God was very angry.

So what did King Josiah do?

First, before he actually did anything it must be remembered that he **READ the Book of the Law**. The knowledge he gained from doing that is what made him see that there was a problem. When he read it and realized things were bad he was convicted in his heart! Later, he had the entire book read to all his people so they could also see what was wrong in their society.

Next, because of his conviction **he immediately changed his attitude** about himself. He **WAS** the king but he realized after reading that book that there was an authority much higher than him – God - and that as the leader of the people HE was not doing what he was supposed to do. He immediately humbled himself to God and got all his own subjects to do the same!

Next **he decided to do only those things written in the Book of the Law**.³² Josiah made a commitment to do only those things found in the Book of the Law and he got the people to do the same.

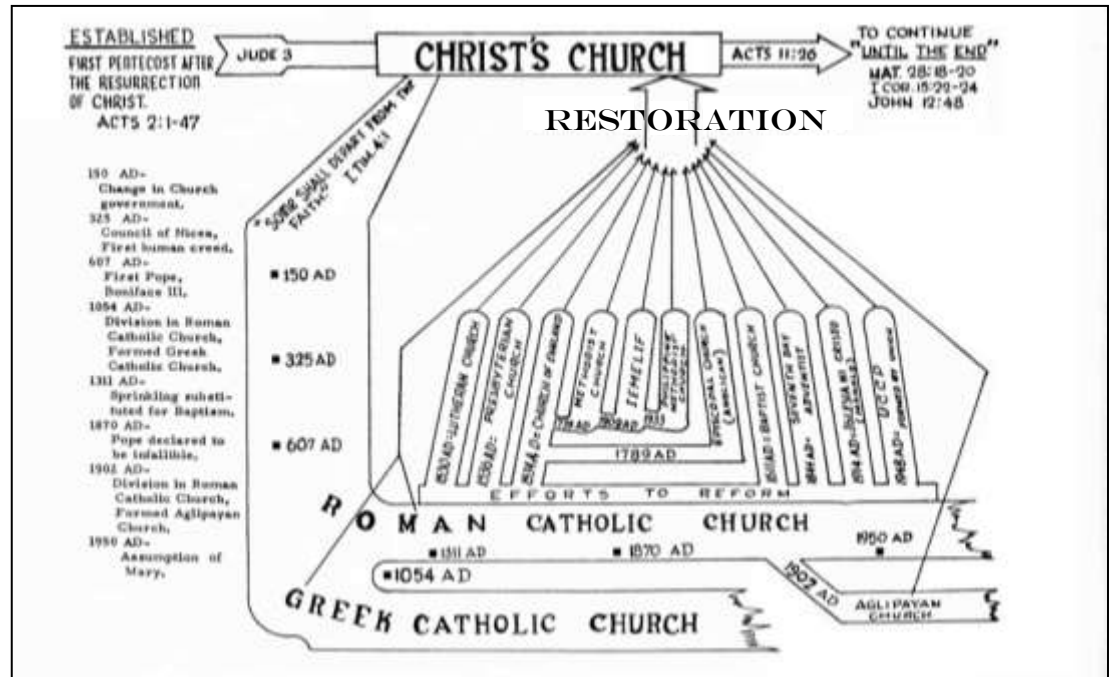
Finally, **he implemented those things written in the Book of the Law** throughout the entire kingdom and did so all through the days of his reign as king of Judah. He did not change, add to, or take away from what the Book said and he got all the people to do the same.

In summary, King Josiah and his people **RESTORED** "original Judaism" in the kingdom of Judah!

RESTORATION was the solution to the problem Josiah faced in his kingdom!

³² From our past studies we know was the message contained in this "Book of the Law" was the First Agreement from God and was for ALL Israel. The message for us today is not that message. Our "Book of the Law" is in fact the "teaching of Christ" John mentioned in **2 John 1:9** – the New Agreement or "New Testament"!

We believe **RESTORATION** this is the CURE for the problem facing “Christianity” today! We need to **RESTORE** original Christianity all over the world! We do not need a **NEW** church and we cannot solve the problem by creating a worldwide **UNION** of existing churches. We surely cannot continue adding more and more groups! What we need is a return to the original!



ALL denominations must give up their man-made teachings and **GO BACK to the Bible** as a guide for teaching and practice!

Diagram 6

So HOW can WE do this?

First, **we ALL must study OUR “Book of the Law”, which is the New Testament³³**, and discover what the “will of my Father who is in the heavens” actually says about all the things we need to do to please God. It is very important to pay careful attention to all the discussions we had early in our studies about “**context**” and go carefully through all the teachings of Christ and the original Apostles. If we all will do this then it will become clear that we have a problem and we will see all the things we are **NOT** doing correctly. The Bible itself will **correct** us!

Second, **we must admit that there is a problem and be humble about it!** It is useless to try and justify what is happening today with the 38,000 churches and say that it fulfills Jesus’ prayer for **UNITY** in **John 17:21!** It is useless to say that the 38,000 churches are all the **ONE TRUE church** that belongs to Jesus. **DIVISION** is undeniable and there is no unity of belief and practice. It is simply horrible!

Third, **we must commit ourselves to doing only those things that are actually written in God’s will found in the New Testament.** If we limit ourselves to only those things that are written then God will unify us all in those things and no one will overstate the importance of one person over another and cause any one teacher to become exalted to the point where the people follow him or her instead of what is written in the Bible!

Finally, **we must implement those things written in the New Testament!** Whatever it takes and whatever the consequences might be we **ALL MUST DO what GOD tells us to do!**

³³ Remember that this is the reason God gave us the Bible in the first place; to instruct, **correct**, and train us!

If all people who claim the name of Christian will go to the Bible and do these four things then we believe that the entire system of the 38,000 can be eliminated and original Christianity be restored in our time! **It CAN happen, but WILL it happen?** That depends upon you and the rest of the “Christian” world!

Study the Bible and record what you see taught in the “will of the Father”. Compare what you find to what your religion has taught you and **ELIMINATE ALL THAT DOES NOT AGREE EXACTLY with the Word of the Lord**. Find other people who are also doing this and become the group of believers that originally existed in the time of original Christianity. Do this and you will restore original Christianity. If everyone does this then **in our time** there will once again be only **ONE** body (church), **ONE** Spirit, **ONE** hope, **ONE** Lord, **ONE** faith, **ONE** baptism, and **ONE** God and Father of everything just as Paul described in **Ephesians 4:1-4** and the 38,000 “churches” will be gone!

Session 3B: SUMMARY

A. The Bible is the only source of religious authority and teaching in Christianity.

- *The message came from and belongs to God!*
- *We must be careful how we study and teach it.*
- *It is complete and ALL that is taught and practiced in Christianity MUST be found in the Bible.*
- *The message of God **does NOT EVOLVE**, but the teachings to be followed today or at any time in the future must be the same as the ones found recorded in the time of the Apostles!*
- *No person or group of people (like priests, preachers, or church leaders) has the authority to add or take away from God’s message!*
- *Every person must understand and follow exactly what it says!*
- *We must do “the will of my Father who is in the heavens”, which are the teachings Jesus and his Apostles gave to us in the New Testament!*
- *Jesus told us that he will judge on the Last Day by the teachings he gave!*
- *We cannot trust our feeling!*

B. Christ established only ONE CHURCH when he was on the earth!

- *That church had only one set of teachings.*
- *Those teachings were given by Christ and his Apostles.*
- *Those teachings were completed during the lifetime of the Apostles.*

C. The original Christians were told NOT to change the teachings, or to listen to anyone who changes the teachings!

- *They were warned that people would let go of the original teachings and bring in changes.*
- *They were told NOT to listen to people who would bring changes.*
- *They were taught to compare what people claim to the original teachings.*

D. Some people did not remain faithful to the original teachings.

- *It began with a few false teachers during the time of original Christianity.*
- *In the 2nd century it resulted in changes in the way leaders function.*
- *It became a major problem in the 4th century onward - after Christianity became legal.*
- *Councils, where men decided what TRUTH was through “majority rules” voting, replaced the Bible as the guide for religion.*
- *From the 10th century onward POLITICS became a major problem.*

E. “Christianity” became so corrupt that the people could no longer stand it!

- The religious leaders used their positions to get rich and gain power.
- Religious leaders became more concerned with politics than Christianity.
- Access to the Bible helped people understand what Christianity was supposed to be like.
- Men like Martin Luther and John Calvin led the people in a REVOLT against the Catholic Church.

F. “REFORMATION” did NOT solve the problem!

- Instead of going back to original Christianity the reformers only eliminated catholic teachings that were being abusive.
- The reformers did not agree with one another on all matters.
- Attempts to unite failed because they did not unite on the Bible message.
- Leaders went their own way and the race to the 38,000 began!
- **TODAY, with 38,000 groups CLAIMING to be the church but teachings different things we are the farthest away from UNITY than the world has ever been!**

G. Only “RESTORATION” will solve the problem!

- We saw how the Kingdom of Judah faced a similar problem.
- King Josiah RESTORED original Judaism within a few years!
- He got everyone to go back to the book and do what it said, and it worked!
- If everyone will do this today then we can RESTORE original Christianity **in our lifetime!**
- To accomplish this every person must give up their religious views and adopt the points found back in point “A” of this SUMMARY!

CONCLUSION: The Protestant Reformation cannot be from God for the simple reason that **IF** God decided to correct the errors in 16th century Catholicism by using the so called “Reformers” **THEN HIS Spirit** would have guided them to RESTORE original Christianity! HE would have given ALL of them the **same message**, and HE would have given ALL of them that **same message HE originally delivered** through Jesus! The fact that the “reformers” taught **different things** and became **corrupt** proves that they did “what was right in their own eyes”.

It is more likely that God indirectly influenced those events because HIS WORD was available to many people, due to the invention of the printing press, and many became educated regarding TRUE Christianity. That knowledge caused them to become frustrated by what their leaders were doing. When things “exploded” the reformers did not seek to RESTORE original Christianity and so what men like Luther and Calvin did actually made the problem worse and set in motion events that resulted in the 38,000 groups we have today!

We **MUST RESTORE** original Christianity so that Jesus’ prayer will be fulfilled, so that all Christians will be **ONE**, and so that the world will believe that God sent him!

We hope this seminar has been of value to you and that you will consider taking classes with us so that you might learn **HOW** to study the Bible for yourself. As we have said from the beginning. Never trust **any** teacher – **that includes us!** You must study for yourself and make your own conclusions! – Thank You!

Appendix A:

Chart Showing Origin of 50 of the 38,000 Churches!

DENOMINATIONS	PLACE OF ORIGIN	YEAR	FOUNDER
Adventism	Massachusetts	1831	William Miller
American Baptist	Providence, Rhode island	1639	Roger Williams
Apostolic Faith Mission	United States	1900	Group
Assembly of God	Hot Springs, Arkansas	1914	Group
Baptist Church	London, England	1607	John Smyth
Brethren (Drunkards)	Sewarzenau, Germany	1708	Hochmann & Mack
Brethren in Christ	United States	1820	Group
Catholic Apostolic Church	England	1830	Group
Christadelphians	United States	1844	John Thomas, MD
Christian Church	Midway, Kentucky	1859	Group
Christian Science	Boston, Massachusetts	1879	Mary Baker Eddy
Church of England	England	1535	King Henry VIII
Church of God	Monroe County, Tennessee	1886	Group
Church of God	United States	1880	D. S. Warner
Church of God Holiness	Atlanta, Georgia	1914	K. H. Burrus
Church of Living God	Wrightsville, Arkansas	1889	William Christian
Congregational Church	Massachusetts	1684	Group
Cumberland Presbyterian	Dickson County, Tennessee	1810	Group
Dutch Reformed Church	Holland	1560	Group
Evangelical Church	Pennsylvania	1803	Jacob Albright
Evangelical and Reformed	Cleveland, Ohio	1834	Group
Foursquare Gospel	Los Angeles, California	1917	Aimee S. McPherson
Freewill Baptist	New Durham, North Carolina	1780	Benjamin Randall
Full Gospel Church	Goldsboro, North Carolina	1935	R. H. Askew
Greek Orthodox Church	Greece	1053	Group
Holiness Church	Chicago, Illinois	1907	Howard Hoopie
House of David	Michigan	1903	Group
Independent Witness	Van Alstyne, Texas	1900	C. B. Jernigan
Jehovah's Witnesses	Pennsylvania	1874	Charles T. Russell
Lutheran Church	Augsburg, Germany	1530	Martin Luther
Mennonite Church	Zurich, Switzerland	1525	Group
Methodist Church	London, England	1729	John Wesley
Methodist Episcopal	Baltimore, Maryland	1874	Group
Mormon Church	Seneca, New York	1830	Joseph Smith
Mormons Reorganized	Wisconsin	1852	Joseph Smith II
Moravian Church	Kunwald Bohemia	1457	Group
Nazarene Church	Los Angeles, California	1895	P. E. Bresee
New Apostolic Church	Hamburg, Germany	1862	Pruess
Pentecostal Holiness	Anderson, South Carolina	1898	Group
Pilgrim Holiness Church	Cincinnati, Ohio	1897	Group
Plymouth Brethren	Dublin, Ireland	1829	Group
Presbyterian Church	Switzerland	1535	John Calvin
Prmitive Baptist	North Carolina	1765	Group
Quakers	England	1650	George Fox
Roman Catholic	Rome, Italy	696	Bontiface III (1st Pope)
Salvation Army	London, England	1865	William Booth
Seventh-Day Adventism	Massachusetts	1846	Ellen G. White
Spiritualist Church	United States	1848	Andrew J. Davis
Unitarians	Poland	1500s	Faustus Socinus, et. al.
Universalist Church	New Jersey	1770	John Murray

Was the PROTESTANT REFORMATION from God or Men?

Worksheet

This handout provides you with a list of verses that speak about the **EXISTENCE OF “UNITY” PROBLEMS AND FALSE TEACHING** in the time of the early New Testament church. Please put the verse into context and use the space on the worksheet to record a summary of your findings. After you finish your own research then return to page 15 of the lesson material and continue.

Reference	Does it mention <u>WHO</u> were causing the problem?	Does it mention <u>WHAT</u> they were doing/teaching?	<u>MOTIVE:</u> Does it mention <u>WHY</u> they were doing this?
1 Corinthians 1:10-17			
2 Corinthians 11:1-6			
Galatians 1:6-9			
Philippians 3:17-21			
Colossians 2:16-23			
2 Thessalonians 2:9-15			
1 Timothy 1:3-11			

1 Timothy 4:1-5			
2 Timothy 2:14-19			
2 Timothy 3:1-8			
2 Timothy 4:1-4			
Titus 1:10-16			
2 Peter 2:1-22			
2 John 1:7-11			
3 John 1:9-10			
Jude 1:3-23			