

Resurrection Life of Jesus Church

DECEPTION IN THE END TIMES

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PART 7: THE ROAD TO THE PAPACY

THE ORIGINAL APOSTOLIC CHURCH

While the apostles were still alive on earth, they developed a fellowship system so that when a situation came up, they consulted and prayed together and then made a decision.

There is no support in the Book of Acts that the apostle Peter was made the head of the apostles. After the Gospel was preached in Samaria and word got back to the apostles in Jerusalem, they sent Peter and John to investigate the situation and pray for the new converts. **Acts 8:14-25**

Peter later on had to defend his actions of preaching to the Gentiles to the apostles in Jerusalem. **Acts 11:1-18**

The church in Antioch, in what is modern day Lebanon, was independent and had its own leadership. They did not seek approval from the church in Jerusalem when they ordained men into the ministry. **Acts 13:1-4**

Paul and Barnabas came back to the church in Antioch from their first missionary journey and gave a report to the church there was great joy. Trouble came when disciples from Jerusalem came and told the Antioch church that Gentiles who had become Christians must be circumcised in order to be saved. **Acts 15:1**

Paul and Barnabas had heated discussions with the men from Jerusalem, and when the issue could not be resolved in Antioch, the leadership sent a delegation to the church in Jerusalem to have the apostles settle the issue. **verse 2**

The issue was settled by the recommendation of the apostle Peter and James, the half brother of Jesus. **Galatians 1:19; Acts 15:6-22**

The apostle Paul considered James, the half brother of Jesus, Peter and John to be the pillars among the apostles. **Galatians 2:9**

When Peter later made a visit to the church in Antioch, he was rebuked by Paul for his hypocrisy. **Galatians 2:11-21**

THE SECOND GENERATION LEADERS

The second generation of leaders like Timothy, Titus, Apollos, Crescens and Mark had been converted and educated by apostles. They were alive when the Book of Revelation was written by John, the last original living apostle. It is interesting to note that when Jesus addressed the seven churches in Asia, the Church of Rome was not mentioned even though it had existed for some 40 years. Jesus addressed each overseer of these churches as "angels," which in both Hebrew and Greek means "messengers." It is obvious from the text that the



overseer of each church was not a spiritual angelic being, but a pastor that Jesus was holding responsible. **Revelation 1:20**

In 90 A.D. when the Book of Revelation was given to John, some sixty years after Jesus had ascended, we can see from the words of Jesus that there was no central leader of the different churches.

THE THIRD GENERATION LEADERS

We will now look at the second century after Christ. In order to find out what happened during this century, we have to rely upon written communications between the churches and secular history.

There are almost no written documents that survived the years 70 - 110 A.D., a period in which the second generation leaders were active, except what Jesus addressed to the seven churches in Asia in 90 A.D.

It is also interesting to note that no leaders from the second generation and on took the title "apostle" but a leader for a city church would possess the title of "bishop." Copies of letters from bishops written to other churches have survived. Clement, a presbyter of Rome wrote to the church in Ephesus around 93-97A.D and Bishop Polycarp of Ephesus wrote a letter to the church in Philippi around 110-117 A.D. in which they discussed theology with one another.

A powerful insight into the leadership in the churches is found in letters that Bishop Ignatius of Antioch wrote between 110-117 A.D. to the bishops of Magnesia, Tralles, Philadelphia and Smyrna. He also wrote a letter to the church in Rome but did not mention that the church had a bishop since it was governed by a group of presbyters.

In his four letters, Ignatius mentions each bishop by name. This indicates that there was no central leadership of the churches during the third generation of Christian leaders and they saw no need for it since Jesus and the apostles had not called for it but continued the tradition started by the apostles.

A letter from the church in Smyrna was written to a number of churches in 156 A.D. to announce the execution of Polycarp. It was in this letter that the word "Catholic" is first used to describe the universal church of Jesus Christ. Thus the bishops were referring to all the Christian churches as the "Catholic Church" or the "Universal Church of Christ." This is in harmony with the New Testament. **Ephesians 1:20-23**

By 190 A.D. the different churches in the Roman Empire all had a bishop, who was the head of the local church and these bishops were in fellowship with one another. The body of Christ had been organized to protect itself against heresies, but there still was no central leader over the bishops.

Due to the vastness of the Roman Empire, the different churches were divided into two groups; the churches in the West which looked to the church in Rome as a guide, and the churches in the East who had their own fellowship since they were more in number and older than the churches in the West.

Despite the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in 70 A.D., the Church survived and was looked upon as the cradle of Christianity, but when the Jews revolted again in the second century, Rome decided to erase Jerusalem as a city once and for all in 135 A.D. From that time the church in Jerusalem was only a historical memory.

THE RISE OF THE CHURCH IN ROME

The church in Rome was located in the capitol of the Roman Empire. The New Testament records that Paul not only wrote a powerful letter to the church in Rome but that he also visited and stayed there until he was executed. Tradition states that Peter was also brought to Rome at the end of his life and executed there too. **Acts 28:13-16**

The church in Rome was not started by Paul or Peter; there is no record of the first evangelist that came to Rome. Paul wrote to a church that was already established and Peter came after Paul had been beheaded. It is a blatant lie to claim that the apostle Peter is the founder of the church in Rome.

By 190 A.D. a controversy had arisen as to what day Easter should be celebrated and the issue became so hot that a number of synods were held in Rome, Palestine and other locations. The majority of bishops in the different synods voted that the churches should accept the date of Easter practiced by the church in Rome. Polycrates, the bishop of Ephesus, and a group of other bishops from the Eastern part of the Empire refused to comply, and in 198 A.D., Bishop Victor of Rome excommunicated the churches who refused to conform.

God did not give the church in Rome the power to excommunicate other churches from the Universal church. This was a power play from the Devil which elevated the Bishop of Rome to more power and authority than other bishops.

Synods were held in Rome in 251 A.D. and Carthage in 253 A.D. to discuss whether Christians who had recanted their faith in Christ under torture could be forgiven and restored. There was no chief bishop, but by voting, the bishops set the policy for the Universal Church of Christ.

THE TRANSITION TO A STATE CHURCH

My personal opinion is that none of the bishops who were alive at the beginning of the third century wanted the Roman government to take over the churches and make them into a state operated institution.

Historical records show us that this idea came from Constantine as he fought to become the next emperor of Rome. Constantine had a political platform just like our modern day political parties. His goal was to eliminate all other contestants in the struggle to become emperor, and then remove all regional laws to give the Roman Empire a unified law code, citizenship for everyone except the slaves and a state religion to which all citizens belonged.

Constantine was a ruthless and calculating man who knew that he had to move slowly if he wanted to achieve his goals. In February of 313 A.D. he invited Licinius, a partner who had taken control over the part of the Roman Empire in the Balkans to his summer palace in Milan. At this conference they not only plotted to kill the other men who were trying to be emperor, but also came up with an edict that Christians were going to have equal rights in the Roman Empire and were no longer to be persecuted.

In 312 A.D. Constantine and his army defeated the army of Maxentius. Licinius and his army fought against Maximinus Daia in 313 A.D. and he too was eliminated from the race to become emperor.

In 311 A.D. a division had occurred between churches in North Africa. The new bishop in Carthage, Caecilian, had been ordained by a clergyman who had committed an unpardonable sin, when he under threat surrendered all copies of the Old and New Testament under the persecution of Emperor Diocletian. A number of North African bishops refused to recognize Caecilian and instead selected Majorinus to be the new bishop. He only served two years and his successor was Donatus the Great. The bishop of Rome favored Caecilian and thus the bishops who stood behind Donatus never became part of the future imperial church and they became known as Donatist's. The Donatist churches grew rapidly in North Africa and never became part of the Roman Catholic Church and were in existence until the Islamic hordes invaded Africa around 650 A.D.

The North Africa churches that sided with Rome were rewarded by Constantine in 313 A.D. when he released large money grants to the bishops in North Africa who were not Donatists. Constantine regarded these churches as part of the Catholic Church.

Constantine was not happy with the outcome since he wanted a unified church. He called for a synod to be held in Arles, in the southern part of Gaul, what is modern day France in 314 A.D. Once again the government would pay the travel expenses for the bishops and their staff. Constantine made it clear to the bishops that the imperial government would be in charge of the synods from this point on, but he would still allow the bishops to settle disputes in the churches. Constantine stressed that he wanted unity and every bishop must line up with the policies of the church in Rome. The Donatist's were condemned as heretics at this synod; they appealed to Constantine but he ruled against them in 316 A.D. and ordered their churches closed and their bishops banished. Five years later Constantine ordered the persecution of the Donatist churches stopped and they began to grow rapidly.

The year 319 A.D. was a transforming year for the Christian churches since Constantine also issued a decree that Sunday was a day of rest and that no work could be performed on Sundays except for the people living in the countryside.

Then he issued another decree that all private heathen sacrifices were to cease. Large imperial money grants were given to churches and used to build large church buildings in Rome, Jerusalem, Bethlehem and in many other cities.

During these bloody battles within the Roman Empire, many other bishops threw their support to Constantine and the latter rewarded them well. Thousands of people from the western part of the Roman Empire which Constantine controlled joined the Christian churches and in 319 A.D. the Christian clergy were exempted from paying taxes. Constantine issued a decree in 321 A.D. that Christian churches could receive property and money from people who had died and willed their estates to the church. This new law in reality gave the different churches the status of corporations.

Constantine was finally able to eliminate Licinius, the last foe with aspirations to be emperor in 323 A.D. and the race was over.

Constantine also shifted the capitol of the Roman Empire to Byzantium, which he renamed the "New Rome." The city was later renamed Constantinople and today it is called Istanbul, one of the largest cities in Turkey.

Around 320 A.D. another controversy erupted within the churches. A presbyter named Arius, who was a teacher in the church in Alexandria in Egypt, presented a new doctrine that stated that Jesus was not God; He was not eternal but a created being and a lesser "god." This heresy spread like wildfire in the churches and Constantine realized that there was no hope of unity among the bishops. As a result he called for a council of bishops from all the churches in the Roman Empire to be convened in Nicaea in May of 325 A.D. This was also called the First General Council of the Church.

Once again the imperial government paid all the travel expenses for the bishops and their staff. A total of 300 bishops were present, but only six were from the western part of the Empire.

Constantine was present at the meeting, but since he had not been baptized, he was technically not a member of the church. However, since he was the emperor, he was welcomed to partake in the discussion. The Arian view of Christ was soundly rejected and a creed (official doctrine) was hammered out under the influence of Constantine.

For the first time in the history of the Christian church, an official creed was drafted and signed by all the bishops, except for two. Once the council was closed, Constantine used his power as emperor and head of the Catholic Church to banish Arius and the two bishops that refused to sign the creed.

The new capitol was completely rebuilt in 330 A.D. and Constantine had his seat in the heartland of Christianity, effectively abandoning the city of Rome as the power center of the empire.

Only the bishops that supported Constantine were showered with money and this group of bishops and their churches were officially called the "Catholic Church."

THE POWER OF THE CHURCH OF ROME INCREASING

When Constantine died in 337 A.D., his three sons divided up the Roman Empire and the unity was gone. His son, Constantine II, only lived three years after his father's death and died in 340 A.D and his portion was divided among Constans

and Constantius. Constans, decided to go after the Donatists and did heavy damage to this group of Christians.

The two brothers were not happy that the quarrel continued between the different bishops and called for a General Council Meeting in Sardica (now known as Sofia, the capitol of Bulgaria) in the fall of 343 A.D. When the eastern bishops saw that they were outnumbered by bishops from the west, including two they considered heretics; they withdrew and refused to be part of the council.

The two brother emperors continued with the council and a number of important decisions were made. One of the new rules was that if a bishop would be excommunicated, he would be able to appeal to the bishop of Rome, who at this time was Julius. The bishop of Rome would have the judicial power to call for a retrial before a different set of judges and that no one could be appointed to the bishop seat in question until a final verdict was reached. ***This was a huge elevation for the bishop seat in Rome and gave the residing bishop powers over all other bishops.***

A rival emperor arose in the west and Constans was murdered in 350 A.D. A violent struggle broke out for the next three years until Constantius eliminated the usurper in 353 A.D.

Constantius determined once and for all to end all quarrels among the bishops and used his power as emperor to insert the bishops he liked. Synods were held in Arles in 353 A.D. and in Milan in 355 A.D.

Bishops that resisted the emperor were defrocked and banished.

The biggest issue which the bishops struggled over was over the deity of Christ as the Arians in the east pushed hard to have the church accept their doctrine that Jesus was a created being and less than God. The other issue was over who would have the authority in the church. Since Constantine, there had been councils and synods and the bishops ruled through their consensus, but there were no supreme bishop. The supreme power was held by the emperor.

THE PARTY IS OVER

Constantius died in 361 A.D. as he was raising an army to fight his cousin, Julian, who had been declared emperor by the Roman garrison in Paris. Julian immediately consolidated his power on the Roman Empire, and as a confirmed heathen, he set off at once to bring heathenism back to Rome and the destruction of the Christian faith. He removed Christians from government offices and ordered banned bishops to be brought back. Julian's goal was to organize upheaval in the Christian community but he was killed in 361 A.D. in a battle against Persia. The last persecution from the Roman government was over.

THE FINAL ROAD TO THE PAPACY

Jovian was the next emperor; he reigned from 361-364 A.D. He was a Christian in name as Christianity had become the state religion. Jovian pretty much let the bishops run the churches the way they wanted it.

Valentinian I ruled from 364-375 A.D.; he too let the bishops run the churches as they pleased. He decided the Roman Empire was too vast for him to rule, so he split it into the Western and Eastern parts, giving his brother Valens the Eastern part, who reigned from 364-378 A.D. Valens came under the influence of the Arian bishops of Constantinople and used his power to strengthen the bishops that held this doctrine.

Under Theodosius' I reign as emperor from 394-395 A.D., stringent laws were passed against heathen worship. He also decreed that it was a crime for anyone to depart from the official doctrine of the Church as adopted by the bishops.

In 402 Innocent I became the bishop of Rome. He asserted his power as bishop and declared that the church in Rome was not only the custodian of the apostolic traditions and the foundation of all western Christianity, but ascribed the decisions of the council at Sardica regarding the authority given to the Roman bishop and later by the council in Nicaea to give the Roman bishop universal jurisdiction over all other Christian churches. Thus he elevated himself above all other bishops as the supreme leader of the bishops. Instead of calling himself a bishop, he took the title "father," which in Latin is "Pope."

At this time most of the bishops had started calling themselves popes, but from the 6th century and on, the title of "pope" was only used by the bishop of Rome. In the 11th century Gregory VII declared that the title of pope was only for the supreme bishop of Rome.

The whore was born. Revelation 17:1-6

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

Do you have an ear to hear with?