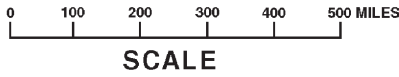




WHAT SATAN DID TO THE EKKLESIA-BODY OF CHRIST

Nero Annihilated Ekklesia in Rome, Peter & Paul Killed, Synagogues for Christians and Judaizers, Luke's Gospel and Acts of Holy Spirit (Apostles), Romans Destroy Jewish Temple and Temple Mount Area



CHAPTER XII WHAT SATAN DID TO THE EKKLESIA--BODY OF CHRIST 64 A.D. - 70 A.D.

Meanwhile the Jews had reached a fever-pitch in their rebellious tirades against the Romans. In 64 A.D. the Roman proconsul, Florus, demanded seventeen talents of gold from the Jewish Temple treasury. The Jews refused because the zealots were gaining control in Jerusalem. In fact, these Jewish zealots or "dagger men" as Josephus called them, were evidently active in several locations including Rome.

In July of 64 A.D. a great fire engulfed Rome and almost two thirds of the city burned to the ground. Nero, the despot emperor who was detested by most of the leading Romans, was blamed for the fire. There were rumors that additional fires were started by unknown arsonists. As a way to save face, Nero blamed the Jews because of all the terrorist activities of the Jewish zealots. He, in all probability, did not know the difference between the Christians and Jews. But right there in Rome were the Christians meeting in public as an ekklesia. He told his men to arrest those people. The officials already knew where Paul was located and Nero's men probably didn't take long to find Peter. So these great men along with those of the ekklesia meeting in Rome were included in one mass arrest.

Tacitus, a Roman historian, wrote about this event in about 115 A.D. By this time there was a lot more known about the Christians than was known in 64 A.D. *DCC, pp 1-2, Tacitus (Annales XV44). But all the endeavors of men, all the emperor's largesse and the propitiations of the gods, did not suffice to allay the scandal or banish the belief that the fire has been ordered. And so, to get rid of this rumor, Nero set up as the culprits and punished with the utmost refinement of cruelty a class hated for their abominations, who are commonly called Christians . . . Then, on their evidence, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much on the charge of arson as because of hatred of the human race. Besides being put to death they were made to serve as objects of amusement; they were clad in the hides of beasts and torn to death by dogs; others were crucified, other set on fire to serve to illuminate the night when daylight failed. Nero had thrown*

open his grounds for the display, . . . For it was felt that they were being destroyed not for the public good but to gratify the cruelty of an individual. This was enough to turn even the most brutal Roman's stomach. Nero had already murdered two of his wives and his own mother, so the Roman Senate finally deposed him and he committed suicide in 68 A.D.

The public ekklesia-church in Rome was practically wiped out by the tirade of Nero. Luke or any other Christian in the area of Rome was probably in hiding because Nero continued to be the emperor until 68 A.D. However, history showed he received a lot of criticism for this hasty action and terrible atrocity. Somehow Luke escaped the mass carnage and because both Peter and Paul were dead, he decided to finish what he had been working on, his version of the Gospel and his travel-log journal, called the Acts of the Apostles, more accurately described as the "Acts of the Holy Spirit". Besides being with Paul, Luke probably had spent time with Peter in Rome and learned from him about the early days of the ekklesia in Jerusalem. Mark, who wrote the first Gospel, was also in Rome at times during Paul's internment and I'm sure Luke also had a copy of Matthew's Gospel.

Luke started his Gospel like a doctor by saying, I have diligently searched out the facts (Luke 1; 1). He emphasized the workings of the Holy Spirit because he had been with Paul through most of his ministry. For instance, in relating both John the Baptist and Jesus' births, he went into great detail about the various prophecies and Words of Knowledge from the Lord to the various individuals. Zacharias, Elizabeth, and Mary were all filled with and controlled by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1). Even Simeon, in Jerusalem where they took the baby Jesus to the Temple Mount, had the Holy Spirit on him (Luke 2:29-32). Simeon prophesied this was for all peoples, a light to the Gentiles and to disclose what was before unknown. Probably, the unknown was the ekklesia-church.

Luke, a Gentile, saw to it that events in Jesus' ministry involving the Gentiles were told such as the parable of the Good Samaritan (Chapter 10). He was also the only one who told about Jesus sending out the seventy disciples to minister in His name. He had given them author-

ity and power over all the power of the enemy. They returned with joy saying, Lord even the demons are subject to us in Your name. This was, I think, a trial run for the coming ekklesia-Body of Christ. **NIV Luke 10:21. At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure".** Here you can see Jesus as He rejoiced in the Holy Spirit, almost giddy as He said to God, the little guys, the unwise; the small people are going to do this through the power of the Holy Spirit. I was constantly reminded of this verse as I studied the history of the church. We have strayed a long way from this course. If we wonder about whether we should have the power of the Holy Spirit, Luke made it real simple. In Luke 11:13 he told that Jesus said, "If you want this Gift, how much more your heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him.

In Luke's Gospel, events in chapter 11 through 17 are not included in the other Gospels. There were many teachings and parables in these chapters that Peter probably told Luke about while they were together in Rome. Jesus told the disciples to watch out for the leaven of the Pharisees (Luke 12:1). Peter probably remembered this because of all the trouble with the Judaizers.

John the Baptist told them about Jesus and the Holy Spirit. **NIV Luke 3:16. John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.** Then during His ministry, Jesus told His disciples **NIV Luke 12:49-50. "I have come to bring fire on earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is completed!"** Jesus couldn't wait for His disciples to be baptized with the Holy Spirit.

Jesus had put His Spirit on the disciples after his resurrection so they would go and remain in Jerusalem (John 20:22) and Jesus told them in Luke 24:49 to remain in Jerusalem, because I will send you what my Father promised and you will be clothed with power from on high. Of

course this happened at Pentecost and was related in Acts 2. All this occurred out in public view under the stoas and colonnades of the Temple Mount. A sound of rushing wind, people speaking in tongues, tongues resembling fire and in all probability some stumbling and falling down under the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus began the ekklesia-church that God and Jesus in Luke 10:21 had discussed and that God had prepared the way for, by the prophets of the Jews. Also the instigation of the democracy in Greece whereby the ekklesia was formed and spread throughout the Roman world.

Luke related in Acts the Holy Spirit told the disciples how to use the ekklesia. ***NIV Acts 5:20-21. "Go, stand in the temple courts," he said, "and tell the people the full message of this new life." At day-break they entered the temple courts, as they had been told, and began to teach the people.*** They, like Jesus, by taking their stand, had the right to speak and teach in the stoas and colonnades. From here on Jesus' ekklesia spread throughout the known world. Luke's Acts told the story of the ekklesia, how it spread from Jerusalem to Joppa, Caesarea, Damascus, Antioch, Lystra, Philippi, Thessalonica, Corinth, Ephesus and all the way to Rome.

Then Luke ended Acts when Paul had been in jail in Rome for two years. ***AB Acts 28:30-31. After this Paul lived there for two entire years at his own expense, in his own rental lodging, and he welcomed all who came to him, Preaching to them the kingdom of God and teaching them about the Lord Jesus Christ with boldness and quite openly, and without being molested or hindered. Amen-so be it.*** This seems like a strange way to end his journal but Luke chose this way, because there was no reason to relate Paul's death as he would live on through his writings.

The persecutions of the Christians by Nero probably didn't spread that much because of Nero's reputation in the Roman world. However, the Christians could no longer be confident their meetings would be protected as an ekklesia. Most of the anxiety was because they continued to be viewed as a sect of Judaism by most people and the Jews were becoming more and more hostile toward Rome.

In 67 A.D., the Roman general Vespasian quenched a rebellion in Galilee where thirty six hundred Jews lost their lives. After Nero died, Vespasian became the new emperor. His son, Titus, continued the battle with the rebellious Jews and in 70 A.D., the Romans completely destroyed the great Jewish Temple and Temple Mount area. Jesus' prophesy in 29 A.D. had come to pass. The Jewish zealots held out against the Romans until 73 A.D. when at Masada, south of Jerusalem, some nine hundred men, women and children committed suicide by leaping from a cliff.

The Romans had put up with the Jews and their religion for over one hundred years and now they destroyed everything the Jews held as sacred. There was no more Temple or Temple priest, and no more Sanhedrin, or Jewish authority. The Romans allowed the Jews to keep their synagogues because there were synagogues throughout the empire. There was no centralized Jewish entity in Jerusalem or anywhere in the Roman world.

After the Temple was destroyed, the Jews were in a quandary. They were in the world with no direction. For the last four hundred plus years, there had been no prophets to guide the Jews and during that time they trusted only in the physical, such as the Temple, Temple rites and obeying the Law. Most had refused to accept Jesus as their Savior or the workings of the Holy Spirit in the ekklesia. Now all they had were their many small synagogues to study and discuss the Law.

Another group of Jews, the Jewish Christians of the circumcision, were also in a quandary. Everything they had refused to give up was now gone except the Law. These Judaizers had made it known they wanted to be a separate group from the other Christians. Because the Temple was no more, I'm sure some came over to the ekklesia and were filled with the Holy Spirit; however, most probably intensified their aloofness and retreated into their own synagogues. There they would discuss Jesus as the man-the Messiah-and try to keep the Law.

The Judaizers were scattered abroad and probably met under the auspices of being a Jewish synagogue. It's ironic that these Jewish Christian synagogues would be the only for sure legal Christian meet-

ing at this time. I'm sure this created a tremendous temptation for the Christians of the ekklesia. As a result, the synagogue-like meetings probably took on the whole spectrum of beliefs as regard to salvation and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

In the middle of all this, the conflict continued between good and evil over the welfare of Jesus' ekklesia-Body of Christ. There was a time for the Jewish Temple but it was no longer needed, in fact, it had become a hindrance to God's will. God was manifesting Himself in other ways. Instead of a prophet proclaiming to the people what God had to say, God provided His Son and by believing He died for their sins, each person could be redeemed back to Him. God would then manifest Himself to His children by the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. The ekklesia-Body of Christ was the conduit to the people for these manifestations.

The Christians were also in disarray, because we know the ekklesia in Rome was probably not meeting and in all probability most of the other ekklesias were curtailed and watching with care the attitude of the local Roman officials.

Up to this time the ekklesia meeting had been specifically for evangelizing people by the Gifts of the Holy Spirit in the public places. The meetings of the Judaizers since the destruction of the Temple had become even more organized with leadership coming from the Temple Priest and the teachers of the Law. Most had no reason to be involved with the Holy Spirit as they remained, like the Jews, attached to the physical and not the spiritual. They believed Jesus was the Messiah, but how much Jesus was responsible for forgiving their sins, versus the works of the Law, determined where they were located in the spectrum of beliefs. This was when, becoming a Christian became confusing and it was not suppose to be that way.