



ROMAN EMPIRE

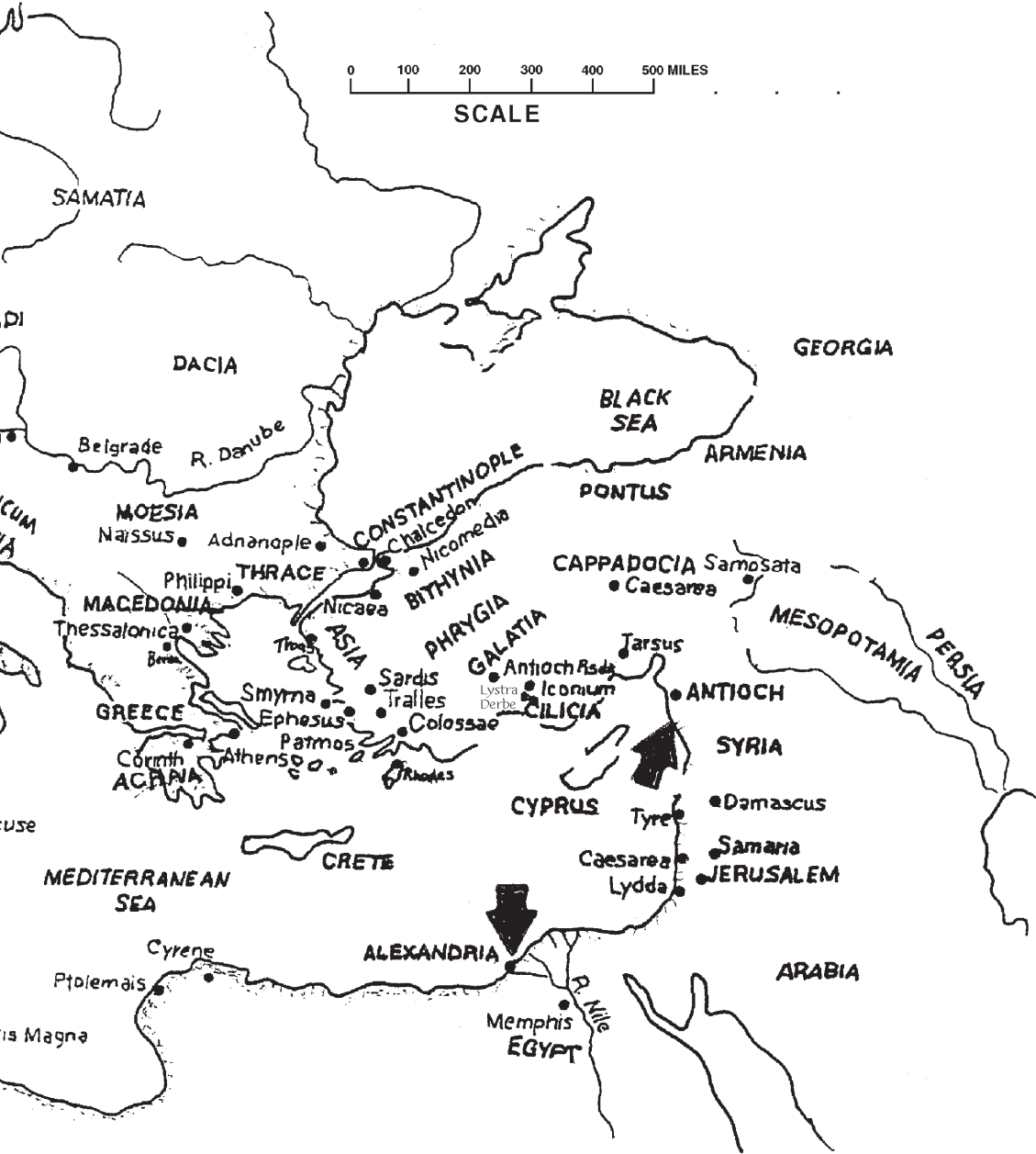
CHAPTER XIII 70 A.D. - 95 A.D. Page 198

WHAT HAPPENED IN THE CONFUSION CAUSED BY SATAN

Synagogues for Christians VS Ekklesia-Body of Christ, Epistle of Barnabas, Didache (Rules) and Clement of Rome

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SCALE



The epistle is almost melancholy in mood. Imagine, if you will, the state of Christianity at this point, especially to an old Jewish Levite like Barnabas. He was a spirit-filled Christian like Paul, but, now he knew Paul and Peter were both gone and the entire ekklesia-church had been annihilated in Rome. In Jerusalem, the Temple was razed to the ground and the Romans had destroyed all vestiges of nationalism for Israel. I'm sure Barnabas felt alone with his convictions and was wondering where do we go from here? He probably felt he should write something uplifting to the other Christians. *ANF Vol 1, pp 137-138.* ***All hail . . . Seeing that the divine fruits of righteousness abound among you, I rejoice exceedingly and above measure in your happy and honoured spirits, because ye have with such effort received the engrafted spiritual gift. Wherefore also I inwardly rejoice the more, hoping to be saved because I truly perceive in you the Spirit poured forth from the rich Lord of love...For He hath revealed to us by all the prophets that He needs neither sacrifices, nor burnt-offerings, nor oblations, saying thus, "What is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me, saith the Lord?..." He has therefore abolished these things, that the new law of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is without the yoke of necessity, might have a human oblation...To us, then, He declares, "A sacrifice (pleasing) to God is a broken spirit; a smell of sweet savour to the Lord is a heart that glorifieth Him that made it."*** He opened with a cheerful note and told of a spiritual gift probably to the ekklesia. He told them God was revealing prophecy by giving them the first fruits of knowledge. He reassured them God no longer needed the Temple or the Laws. He told them what God wants is a broken spirit that glorifies Him.

Evidently the Christians were not meeting together as much as he wanted. *ANF Vol 1, pp 139. . . . Do not, by retiring apart, live a solitary life, as if you were already (fully) justified; but coming together in one place, make common inquiry concerning what tends to your general welfare. . . .Let us be spiritually-minded: let us be a perfect temple to God.* Barnabas was aware of the Body of Christ. *ANF Vol 1, pp 139 . . . and all the more attend to this, my brethren, when ye reflect and behold, that after so great signs and wonders were wrought in Israel, they were thus (at length) abandoned. Let us beware lest we be found (fulfilling that saying) as it is written," many*

are called, but few are chosen". He said the signs and wonders stopped in Jerusalem probably because the Jewish Christians of the circumcision became so numerous. The events of 58 A.D. when Paul was arrested would never have happened if the Christian group had been a spirit-filled effective force instead of a group of Judaizers.

Barnabas showed a lot of spiritual understanding. ***ANF Vol 1, pp 140. Since, therefore, having renewed us by the remission of our sins, He hath made us after another pattern, (it is His purpose) that we should possess the soul of children, inasmuch as He has created us anew by His Spirit.*** Here we see Barnabas knew about Luke 10:21 where Jesus said, I thank you Father you have revealed this to the babes and unlearned. Barnabas knew the revelations were to come to the common people.

For an old Levite, Barnabas recognized the mistakes the Jews made concerning the Temple. ***ANF Vol 1, pp 147. Moreover, I will also tell you concerning the temple, how the wretched (Jews), wandering in error, trusted not in God Himself, but in the temple, as being the house of God. For almost after the manner of the Gentiles they worshipped Him in the Temple.*** He knew the Jews were not doing what God intended for them. They were like the pagans only worshiping in the physical and not with their hearts. Then he asked where is the Temple? ***ANF Vol 1, pp 147. Let us inquire, then, if there still is a temple of God. There is-where. He himself declared He would make and finish it.*** He answered his own question. ***ANF Vol 1, pp 147. But it shall be built, observe ye, in the name of the Lord, in order that the temple of the Lord may be built in glory. How? Learn (as follows). Having received the forgiveness of sins, and placed our trust in the name of the Lord, we have become new creatures, formed again from the beginning. Wherefore in our habitation God truly dwells in us. How? His word of faith; His calling of promise; the wisdom of the statutes; the commands of the doctrine; He himself prophesying in us; He himself dwelling in us; opening to us who were enslaved by death the doors of the temple . . .*** He sounds a lot like Paul talking about the Body of Christ with the Gifts of the Holy Spirit in this passage. Barnabas goes on and showed his Levitical upbringing as he related almost everything you should and should not do as a Christian.

He said the Holy Spirit was available to help us through this life (pp 148)

From reading Barnabas' epistle, I'm impressed that he saw the Jewish Christians of the circumcision problem coming, but like Peter and the rest was slow to recognize the magnitude of the problem. Now after all these events have happened, he had to admit Paul was right all along.

During the 70's - 80's A.D., with Vespasian and Titus as emperors, a period of relative calm ensued compared to the despot Nero. A survey of Christianity around Mediterranean Sea in the 80's would have shown many groups continued to meet in public places, as Christian ekklesias. They would have used Paul's instructions from the fourteenth chapter of 1st Corinthians.

We saw by Barnabas' epistle an ekklesia was meeting in Alexandria; however, in Rome since the Neroian persecution, the synagogue-like meetings had probably replaced the public ekklesia-church. In Jerusalem there was nothing but synagogue-like meetings because the war between the Jews and Romans had left no place for the public ekklesia. In the rest of the areas like Corinth, Antioch, Ephesus and Philippi there were probably both kinds going on at the same time.

There in Rome, probably both Jews and Gentiles of the old ekklesia-meetings met with the Jews of the circumcision and formed their own synagogue-like meetings because I'm sure they were afraid to meet as a public ekklesia. These meetings would have been entirely different from the public ekklesia with the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. These synagogue-like meetings were not in public places but rather in small enclosed buildings involving small groups so as not to excite the Roman officials.

So at this time, the Christian faith was taking on a dual personality. One was the ekklesia where the Gifts of the Holy Spirit were active in the public places and the elders were overseers who facilitated the exhibition of these Gifts by various members. The second, which had to be a copy of the Jewish synagogue, would have designated leaders

who were in authority over the group. They were the learned ones of the group and probably taught about Jesus in these meetings involving the Christians.

During this time of confusion, a publication appeared which was a set of rules for the synagogue-like Christian meeting. The theologians don't agree where they came from but according to *McKechnie TFCC pp 68 . . . but on balance the second Christian generation, in the last third of the first century, seems the most probable for its (Didache) composition.* The Didache or Teachings of the Twelve Disciples as it was called filled a perceived need to have rules and established some order for the Christian meetings.

In my opinion, this need would be coming from the synagogue-like meetings rather than the ekklesia-Body of Christ as taught by Paul. For the first time there were rules to protect the local leaders' position relative to traveling ministers. We can see this was moving away from what Jesus proclaimed in Luke 10:21 when he excitedly thanked God for using the babes and unlearned. The Didache consisted of sixteen chapters of rules, the first part told the members about personal responsibility with a rewording of the Sermon on the Mount from Matthew's Gospel. Then it told them to baptize in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. Baptize in running water if possible. Don't eat food sacrificed to idols which probably came from James' influence or the Judaizers.

The Eucharist was discussed as the Thanksgiving meal in chapter nine. *Didache translated by Ivan Lewis pp 5, Chapter 9 #5. But let no one eat or drink of your Thanksgiving, unless they have been baptized in the Name of the Lord; for concerning this the Lord said, "Do not give what is holy to dogs".* The dogs comment showed they had read the Gospel of Matthew (Matt 7:6). However, the ekklesia-Body of Christ always used the "supper" for evangelistic purposes. Paul taught in I Cor 11:20-22 for them to save some food for those that are poor and have no homes. This rule of the Didache showed it was for a synagogue-like group rather than the ekklesia-Body of Christ.

In chapter eleven, the traveling prophets, teachers, and apostles were faced with a long list of rules. The Didache said to receive those who come to teach but they must not stay for any length of time. ***Didache translated by Ivan Lewis, pp 6, Chap 11 #1, #4, #5. #1 Whoever comes to teach you concerning all these things we've written here, receive him. #4 Let every apostle that comes to you be received as the Lord. #5 But he must not remain longer than one day, unless is absolutely necessary, in which case he may stay another. But if he stays three days, recognize him as a false prophet.*** If you were a traveling missionary, you would have to think twice about worshipping with these people. This appears to be an overt attempt to protect the position of the leader of the local group. I can't see this happening in the ekklesia-church.

It seems speaking in tongues gained some respect for the prophet. ***Lewis, pp 6 Chap 11 #7, #8. #7 Do not test or judge any prophet who speaks in the Spirit, for every other sin will be forgiven, but not this sin. #8 But be warned; not everyone who speaks in the Spirit is a prophet, but only those who walk in the ways of the Lord. Therefore, from their consistent behaviors can you discern the false prophet.*** The Didache also warned that anyone who says in the Spirit, "Give me money", do not listen to him. I'm sure there were those who took advantage of the people.

Those of the local group seemed to have advantage because in chapter thirteen, the true prophet who settled among you was worthy of his food. ***Lewis, pp 7 Chap 13 #3. #3 For this reason, Store all the first-fruits of your wine, grain, cattle, and sheep. Give these to the prophets, for they are your high priests.*** By calling the prophets your High Priest certainly separated this group from an ekklesia-meeting. This showed a combination of Gifts along with a synagogue-like group. Referring to the prophet as your High Priest came directly from the Jewish influence. Chapter fourteen pertained to not having their sacrifices defiled because they had a disputation with their brothers. Of course, there were no sacrifices but if you sinned your sacrifices would not be pure. To me, this involved a very legislative approach and was probably from the Law. .

In Chapter fifteen the synagogue-like meeting preserved some of the democracy of the ekklesia. **Lewis pp 7 Chap 15 #1, #2. #1 Therefore, appoint for yourselves, worthy bishops and deacons of the Lord. Make sure that they are men who are meek, not lovers of money, but truthful and proven. They will provide among you the services of prophets and teachers. #2 Do not despise them, rather they should be honored, together with the prophets and teacher.** This showed the beginning of the bishop taking over the task of the prophet. This indicated to me the Holy Spirit was not in charge of this process as it should be in the ekklesia-Body of Christ.

Finally in Chapter sixteen, the Didache proved these rules were for the Christian groups derived from the synagogues of the Judaizers (James 2:2) **Lewis pp 8 Chap 16 # 1. # 1 Guard your lives. Keep your menorah's (lamps) burning, and ever prepared, for the hour of our Lord's return is not known.** A reference to a menorah candle stand showed how much the old Jewish influence remained in these buildings that housed these synagogue-like Christian meetings.

From the Didache we move on to a writing in 95 A.D. called First Clement. This was a letter from a leader of the Christian group in Rome to the ekklesia in Corinth who had just fired their preacher (leader). I Clement was the last writing of the time period between Luke's writings and the works of the Apostle John. This thirty year span included the Epistle of Barnabas, the Didache, and First Clement. From the Didache, we saw how the synagogue-like meetings had replaced the ekklesia meetings in some areas. This letter, the First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians, was written from Rome and showed a grossly different picture of the Christian group from that of Paul's writings. We don't see anything from this group in Rome that indicated God was manifesting Himself by the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. This probably was a result of years of meeting as a synagogue-like church. At these meetings only designated persons taught or preached instead of the Gifts coming from various people chosen by the Holy Spirit. This group in Rome existed during a crucial time in Christianity where the organization seemingly overcame the Holy Spirit. In this case the "Gates of Hades" had the upper hand. First Clement was all

about the fate of the leadership rather than the welfare of Jesus' ekklesia.

As we know, in 64 A.D. the Christians of the ekklesia in Rome were killed and their bodies used as torches to light Nero's garden. Since that time, the Christian group in Rome probably no longer met as an ekklesia but rather chose to meet in a more synagogue-like setting, similar to the Jewish Christians of the circumcision (James 2:2). From these reproving writings from Rome, we learned much about the group in Rome and those points of contention in Corinth. Bigg in his "Origins of Christianity," described this as a new direction for the ekklesia. ***Bigg OC pp 70. This is new language pointing to a new direction of thought, and both language and thought are derived, not from the New Testament, but from the Old. Thus at Rome by the end of the first century we find ourselves fairly launched upon the stream of ecclesiastical development . . .it cannot be said that Clement's teaching is novel; it certainly has its roots in the New Testament, but in the Epistle to the Hebrews, or in the Epistle of St. James, not in St. Paul.*** In other words, by 95 A.D., a religious institution was formed in Rome with all its attendant organization. In my opinion, this organization was derived from the synagogue-like meetings. In his "Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power", Hans von Campenhausen discussed Rome and the institution. ***EASP pp 85-86. This development is all the more sharply emphasised by the fact that on the one hand First Clement exhibits an impoverishment of spiritual content, and that on the other its concern is precisely to justify and to protect the rights of the appointed elders against a rebellious congregation. For the first time the presbyteral system is explicitly accounted for as a datum of tradition;*** It sounds like the bishops and elders had taken over the management of the group in Rome. This was a far cry from what the ekklesia was supposed to be according to Jesus in Matthew 16:18 where He said, "He would build His ekklesia on the revelations from God to man." He went even further when he rejoiced and told God in Luke 10:21, "I thank you Father, You have revealed it to babes and the unlearned".

Clement started the epistle by condemning the Corinthians for their sedition. ***ANF Vol 11, pp 5. . . . we feel that we have been some-***

what tardy in turning our attention to the points respecting which you consulted us; and especially to that shameful and detestable (sedition) utterly abhorrent to the elect of God, which a few rash and self-confident persons have kindled to such a pitch of frenzy . . . who did not admire the sobriety and moderation of your godliness in Christ . . . For ye did all things without respect of persons, and walked in the commandments of God being obedient to those who had rule over you . There are several points here worthy of discussion, first they were noted for moderation of their godliness. This would obviously be a synagogue-like group with no manifestations of the Holy Spirit. And the Corinthians definitely had rulers over them and for some reason they had fired them by majority vote.

Next, the letter showed how the Christians had become legalistic and institutionalized in Rome. *ANF Vol 1, pp 16. These things therefore being manifest to us, and since we look into the depths of the divine knowledge, it behoves us to do all things in (their proper) order, which the Lord has commanded us to perform at stated times. He has enjoined offerings (to be presented) and service to be performed (to Him), and that not thoughtlessly or irregularly, but at the appointed times and hours. Where and by whom He desires these things to be done. He Himself has fixed His own supreme will, in order that all things being piously done according to His good pleasure may be acceptable unto Him.* Things were done in their proper order and at stated times. This personified the synagogue-like meetings and not the ekklesia. Clement even went back to the Jewish hierarchy to describe the levels of authority. *ANF Vol 1, pp 16. Those, therefore, who present their offerings at the appointed times, are accepted and blessed; for they sin not. For his own peculiar services are assigned to the high priest, and their own proper place is prescribed to the priests, and their own special ministrations devolve on the Levites. The layman is bound by laws that pertain to laymen. Let every one of you, brethren, give thanks to God in his own order, living in all good conscience, with becoming gravity, and not going beyond the rule of the ministry prescribed to him.* This was probably the first time the word "layman" was mentioned in the early Christian writings. The Roman Christian gathering was rife with hierarchy and levels of authority including the layman at the bottom. It's hard to believe that

by 95 A.D. they had strayed this far from Jesus' ekklesia. Maybe these are the "Synagogues of Satan" mentioned by Apostle John in his Revelation.

On the question of leadership, we must ask, why didn't Jesus go to the Jewish hierarchy? God meant for His leadership to be different from the world. In Luke 10:21, Jesus rejoicing, told God, "I thank you for you have revealed this to the babes and unlearned..." When it was revealed to Peter that Jesus was the Son of the Living God, Jesus told them in Matthew 16:18, on the revelation from God, I will build My ekklesia. He used the ekklesia because it was the basic unit of democracy and not ruled by important people. Then in Matthew 23:9, He told them more about leadership when He said, "Call no man in the ekklesia on earth father, for you have one Father Who is in heaven". Peter said in Acts 6:3, "select men from among you, filled with the Holy Spirit to look after this business". In Acts 13:2, the Holy Spirit told the ekklesia, "separate now for Me, Barnabas and Saul for the work which I have called them".

We get just a hint from Clement's writing about what problem the Corinthians were concerned about to cause the action against their leaders. As Clement vilified them with a psalm, he gave us a hint. ***ANF Vol 1, pp 9. "Let the deceitful lips become silent," (and "let the Lord destroy all the lying lips,) and the boastful tongue of those who have said, Let us magnify our tongue; our lips are our own; who is lord over us?"*** From this we can surmise the Corinthians were concerned their leaders were lording over them by not allowing them to speak and say what they felt was from the Lord. Then in another place as Clement was again vilifying them he used a passage to describe their problem. ***ANF Vol 1, pp 11. . . . "Wherefore let us not be double-minded; neither let our soul be lifted up on account of His exceedingly great and glorious gifts. Far from us be that which is written, "Wretched are they who are of a double mind, and of a doubting heart; who says, These things we have heard even in the times of our fathers; but, behold, we have grown old and none of them has happened unto us."*** Here, I believe, the Corinthians were lamenting the fact that in Corinth some great things had happened in the past, but they had grown old and nothing else had happened to

them. It sounded like they wanted a more active ekklesia-Body of Christ where again the Gifts would operate in their group. Clement called them foolish ones and indicated this star-struck attitude really made him angry. If the Corinthians left out the Holy Spirit they didn't have a chance for miracles or manifestations from God.

Another passage revealed the spiritual situation in Rome when Clement described the personal attributes of a person and called them special gifts. *ANF Vol 1, pp 15. Let our whole body, then, be preserved in Christ Jesus; and let every one be subject to his neighbor, according to the special gift bestowed upon him. Let the strong not despise the weak, and let the weak show respect unto the strong. Let the rich man provide for the wants of the poor . . . He who made us and fashioned us, having prepared His bountiful gifts for us before we were born, introduced us into His world. Since, therefore, we receive all these things from Him, we ought for everything to give Him thanks . . .* This passage told me Clement had no idea about the Gifts of the Holy Spirit to the ekklesia-Body of Christ taught and preached by Paul the Apostle. Throughout church history, people continually try to replace the real Gifts of the Holy Spirit with the attributes of a good man.

Of interest, especially since Clement sent this letter to the Corinthians criticizing them for their actions, he agreed to let the majority decide the issue. Evidently he was not ready to proclaim himself Pope and decide this issue for them. *ANF Vol 1, pp19. Who then among you is noble-minded? who compassionate? who full of love? Let him declare, "If on my account sedition and disagreement and schisms have arisen, I will depart, I will go away whithersoever ye desire, and I will do whatever the majority commands; only let the flock of Christ live on terms of peace with the presbyters set over it."* This was interesting because the majority had already decided to terminate these officials in the first place. Clement wanted them to have presbyters set over their group because he was so zealous for the organization.

The letter of First Clement was for me an amazing document to have been written in 95 A.D. It very well could have been written by the

main-line denominational churches of today. This, I think, showed the tremendous influence the Jewish Christians of the circumcision had exerted on the Christians in Rome. This wasn't even close to the spiritual nature of the ekklesia-church in Paul's time. What was lacking was any reference or need for the workings and Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Paul recognized this absence when he first arrived in Ephesus in 55 A.D. and met with the disciples (believers of Jesus) who had not even heard there was a Holy Spirit (Acts 19:1). Apollos, who was ministered to by Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:26) probably fell into that same category. In Rome in 95 A.D. the Judaizers again showed their influence because here we had a synagogue-like church instead of the ekklesia of Jesus with no real indication of the Holy Spirit.