

# **OUR ROOTS: A HISTORY OF THE CHURCH PART ONE: WHERE DID PAGANISM COME FROM?**

In 1976 there was an incredible event on American television. The broadcast of Alexander Haleys Roots became one of the most watched TV shows in history. Roots was billed as the true story of Haley's family, traced back six generations to a west African called Kunta Kinte who was captured by slave traders in The Gambia and sold to American plantation owners. It was a cultural phenomenon when it appeared in 1976 and earned Haley 200 literary prizes, a 32 million dollar estate, the friendship of President Jimmy Carter. The lesson is that people like to know where things, ancestors, traditions and so on, came from.

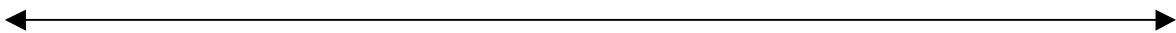
This evening we start a look at our Spiritual Roots. The way that the church, the denominations, the traditions we now hold dear came to us. First a brief overview of Church History will help. Many Bible teachers have seen the Seven Churches of Revelation as being representative of the course of the church from Pentecost to the end.

## **DID YOU KNOW JESUS WROTE SOME LETTERS TO HIS CHURCH?**

Two thousand years ago Jesus wrote letters to His beloved church. He sent it by way of the last living Apostle, John. These letters were a group message, customized for seven churches representing all of the churches then and now.

Ask any Bible student how many epistles (letters) are in the New Testament. He will probably answer 21 : 13 authored by Paul, plus Hebrews, which appears anonymous; and the seven "general epistles" by Peter, James, John, and Jude.

We usually overlook the seven most important letters: the seven authored by Jesus personally. For many reasons, these seven letters, comprising Chapters 2 and 3 of the Book of Revelation, are probably the most important part of this book for you and me.





successive eras the church would pass through from Pentecost to the last days of Apostasy.

- ⇒ **4TH : JESUS GIVES A SPIRITUAL MESSAGE:** Finally, “He that hath an ear, let him hear . . .” Note the singular “ear” this is the practical and personal message from Jesus to each of us, this may be the most valuable part of the entire book.

These letters describe the unfolding of all subsequent church history. In any other order, this prophetic panorama would not be true! These letters seem to be the explanation for the interval between the 69th and 70th "weeks" of Daniel 9. Just as the Book of Acts covers about 30 years of the growth and ministry of the church; the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> chapters of the Book of Revelation cover the next 1,900 years.

## **THERE WILL BE SEVEN STAGES OF CHURCH HISTORY**

CHRIST FADING FROM HIS CHURCH: The Church throughout the Ages: **SEVEN SUCCESSIVE STAGES<sup>1</sup> IN CHURCH HISTORY.** For just a moment, let me give you a perspective- there are seven letters in Revelation 2 - 3 that give us the church in prophetic perspective - the church from Christians ascension until He comes to take His church - from century one to the rapture. In the first place, the seven Churches represent seven phases or periods in the Church's history, stretching from the time of the apostles to the coming again of Christ, the characteristics of which are set forth partly in the names of these churches, but more fully in the epistles addressed to them.

- ✓ There was the Ephesian period--30-60 AD a period of warmth and love and labor for Christ, dating directly from the apostles, in which defection began by the gradual cooling of the love of some, the false professions of others and the incoming of undue exaltations of the clergy and church offices.
- ✓ Then came the Smyrna period--60 -300 AD the era of martyrdom, and of the sweet savor unto God of faithfulness unto death, but marked with further developments of defection in the establishment of castes and orders, the license of Judaizing propensities, and consequent departures from the true simplicities of the Gospel.
- ✓ Then followed the Pergamite period, 300-500 AD in which true faith more and more disappeared from view, and clericalism gradually formed itself into system, and the church united with the world, and Babylon began to rear itself aloft.
- ✓ Then came the Thyatiran period-- 500-1500 AD the age of purple and glory for the corrupt priesthood, and of darkness of truth; the age of effeminacy and clerical domination, when the church usurped the place of Christ, and the

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<sup>1</sup> This material drawn from J.A. Seiss, The Apocalypse, pp.

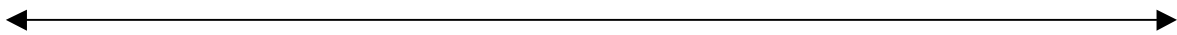


3. The FALSE HEALING CENTER OF THE ANCIENT WORLD with drug induced stupors, snakes and the false god of healing: Asclapius
4. Finally, SATANIC CENTER OF THE ANCIENT WORLD, the Devil himself had a personal throne there for the time as headquarters for his global rebellion.

Christ has one messages to this church : Repent of being wed to the world, stop worldliness... with unbelievers.

- ✓ The majority of those who call themselves Christians in our world today follow a way of worship that would have offended the apostles and early saints.
- ✓ What do I mean?
  1. The statues of Christ and saints with candles and incense burning before them are idolatrous.
  2. The incense, the orders of priests and monks (would be contradictory to Christlike humility), the calendar of observances, the titles of pontiff, vicar, most excellent, holy water, purgatory, and so much more. All that came directly from the pagans. The early saints tried to convert! How did this happen? Remember the progression?
- ⇒ There was the Ephesian period--30-60 AD a period of warmth and love and labor for Christ, dating directly from the apostles, in which defection began by the gradual cooling of the love of some, the false professions of others and the incoming of undue exaltations of the clergy and church offices.
- ⇒ Then came the Smyrna period--60 -300 AD the era of martyrdom, and of the sweet savor unto God of faithfulness unto death, but marked with further developments of defection in the establishment of castes and orders, the license of Judaizing propensities, and consequent departures from the true simplicities of the Gospel.
- ⇒ Then followed the Pergamite period, 300-500 AD in which true faith more and more disappeared from view, and clericalism gradually formed itself into system, and the church united with the world, and Babylon began to rear itself aloft.
- ✓ So this period is the historic portrait of the era when the true Holy Catholic Church united with Roman paganism.
- ✓ It is the timeless portrait of any so called Christian who loves and joins in with unbelievers and in the world system.

It warns of the deadly sin of being in love and communion with that which God has condemned and will destroy.....G has told us there is only one action to take when confronted with worldliness and apostasy: SEPARATE FROM IT!



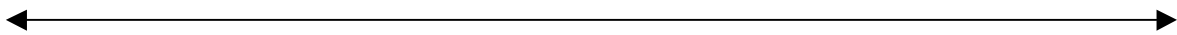
- ✓ 2 Corinthians 6:14-17 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?15 And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?16 And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people." 17 Therefore "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you."
- ✓ James 4:4-8 Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.5 Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"? 7 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.
- ✓ 1 John 2:15-17 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.16 For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. (Remember how the Apostle John dealt with the infidel apostate Celsius? He ran out of the bath house when he was told Celsius was in there!)
- ✓ Revelation 18:1-4 And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. 2 And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. 3 For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. 4 And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.

## **LISTEN TO THE ADMONITION REVELATION 2:14-15**

Christ said you are in sin "I have few things against you!"

1. First, you have BALAAM'S DOCTRINE = what is that?

- ✓ "Put stumbling block..." Numbers 22-25 records how Moabites contacted Balaam prophet for hire, he prophesied 4x promising Israel's conquest of











- fast (what we now know as Lent) as a memorial to Tammuz' death and resurrection.
4. After the forty-day fast, a joyful feast (see the origins of *Easter*) called Ishtar took place. At this feast colored eggs were exchanged and eaten as a symbol of the resurrection (see the reasons for modern Easter eggs and Easter bunnies?). Finally hot cakes marked with the letter T (to remind everybody of Tammuz) were baked and eaten! (see where the wafer of the host in Roman Catholic mass comes from?)

Ezekiel 8:14 Then He brought me to the entrance of the gate of the Lord's house which was toward the north; and behold, women were sitting there weeping for Tammuz.

## **THE APPEAL REVELATION 2:16**

Finally now, the heart of the message this morning. Let's review the lessons we've learned.

- ✓ God can save - the vilest offender - even Pergamum or you.
- ✓ The same Word of God that saves, can dawn the destiny of one who neglects to be saved.
- ✓ Watch out since Satan can't conquer you he will seek to defile you!