
Expansion of Early Christianity

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Christ originally sent twelve messengers to spread the news about Him. They organized congregations of believers throughout the Mediterranean World, the Indian sub-continent and beyond. These were diverse bodies of believers, and depending on which of the twelve organized them, reflected different priorities. But they were all “Christian” and all followed Christ’s teachings.

Early Christianity included diverse and sometimes conflicting groups, all calling themselves “Christian.” But conflicts grew in intensity over the centuries that followed. When the Roman Emperor Constantine saw the value in adopting Christianity, he did not realize Christianity was internally fighting over fundamental beliefs. Accordingly, in 324 a.d. Constantine forced an agreement among Christian leaders in Nicaea. The result was the Nicene Creed. This creed marked the beginning of a new era referred to as Historic Christianity.

Historic Christianity divided at about 1,000 a.d. between Rome (Catholic) and Constantinople (Orthodox). That division remains today, more than a millennium later.

Rome’s dominion over Western Europe was further broken up beginning in 1517 when the Protestant Reformation began. What began with Martin Luther, has continued to divide and multiply Christian denominations with different groups placing different emphases on parts of the New Testament.

Arriving at a “unity of the faith,” which Paul hoped could be achieved by Christians (Eph. 4:11-13) is a way off. Christianity has instead become the handmaiden of ambitious men who have diverted resources from the poor to serve themselves. The present state of Christianity is not markedly different from Jerusalem at the time of Christ. The Christian leaders today, like the Sadducees and Pharisees, shear the sheep, consume them, but fail to serve them as Christ did.

Christianity began with personal worship and devotion in the homes of believers. Christ and His twelve built no cathedrals, chapels or church structures, but did give aid to the poor. Isaiah prophesied that only one kind of building would be built for God by His followers: A Temple or House of God, to be built on the mountaintop in Zion, and another in Jerusalem. (Isa. 2:2-3.) Beyond those two structures, all other resources should help the poor, as was once done by early Christians.