

3.4 THE BIRTH OF CHRIST TO THE BIRTH OF ISLAM

Just as prophesied by Daniel, 483 years from the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem (444-5 BC), Messiah the Prince was born and was cut off (died), not for Himself, but for all humanity (Dan 9:25-26a). This also coincided with the partial fulfillment of Daniel's other prophecy of the five Gentile kingdoms, specifically during the reign of the fourth kingdom made of iron—the Roman Empire (Dan 2:40; 7:7, 19, 23). Speaking of the years leading up to the First Advent of Messiah, Griffin states:

The New Testament couldn't be more specific on the fact that this trend has held true over the intervening years. In *II Corinthians* 4:4, Satan (Baal) is described as "the god of this world who has blinded the eyes of those who believe not." In *Revelation* 12:9 we read that "Satan . . . deceives the whole world." *II Corinthians* 11:14 states that "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light" and that, on the religious front, he has ministers "who are transformed as the ministers of righteousness." Yes, Satan's ministers masquerade as the ministers of God to deceive the majority of people . . . *It was only when Jesus Christ came on the scene four thousand years after Adam that someone finally qualified to succeed Satan as ruler of the earth* [emphasis added].

And then in regard to the First Advent of Messiah Jesus and the beginning of the Church Age, Griffin continues:

We read the account of that epic battle in Luke, chapter four. . . . Notice carefully that Satan claimed that he had been given control over the whole earth, that it was under his authority . . . At last Satan had met his master. The spiritual "spell" he had held over mankind from the time of creation had been broken—completely smashed—by Jesus Christ . . . Following Christ's Crucifixion many thought that "Christianity" . . . was all washed up, a thing of the past. . . . Christianity "caught fire" on the Day of Pentecost . . . *It was even said that the apostles were "turning the world upside down" (Acts 17:6) . . . prior to this time Satan, the "god of this world" (II Corinthians 4:4), had turned the world upside down by his treacherous tactics* [emphasis added] - (Griffin1993:26-8).

At this time of the First Advent of the Lord Jesus Christ and the birth of the Church, Satan was still at work to steal, kill, and destroy Jesus' mission on earth (Matt 4:1-16; Mark 1:12-13; 8:32-33; Luke 4:1-13; John 8:44; 10:10; 13:21-27). Satan also tried to destroy the fledgling Church through the following forms of the revived Babylonian Mysteries false religious cult: the

mysticism of Simon Magus (the sorcerer mentioned in Acts 8:9-24), Gnosticism, Mithraism, and Kabbalah.

According to Griffin and Bengt Hagglund, Simon Magus had been raised in the Samaritan culture (which was a mix of the Chaldean/Babylonian Mysteries false religious cult imported from Assyria and Judaism, when the northern kingdom of Israel came back from exile in Assyria—2 Kgs 17:24-41) - (Griffin 1993:28-9; Hagglund 1968:34-5). This form of false religion quickly spread throughout the region and even to Rome, center of the Empire. As recorded by Griffin, from James Hasting's, John A. Selbie's and John C. Lambert's *Dictionary of the Apostolic Church* and William Smith's and Henry Wace's *A Dictionary of Christian Biography*:

. . . when *Simon broke with the Christians he renounced all that he had learned. It is more probable that he carried some of the Christian ideas with him and that he wove them into a system of his own. Thus he became the leader of a retrograde sect, perhaps nominally Christian . . . but in reality anti-Christian and exalting Simon himself as the central figure* [emphasis added] (Hastings, Selbie and Lambert 1:497). . . . *The amalgam of paganism and Christianity . . . especially obvious in the Simonian system, is readily explicable in the teachings of Simon Magus . . .* [emphasis added] (Hastings, Selbie and Lambert 1:496). . . . The author . . . of this baptized paganism . . . is Simon Magus (Hastings, Selbie and Lambert 2:566). . . . when Justin Martyr wrote in his *Apology* (152 A.D.), the sect of the Simonians appears to have been formidable, for he speaks four times of the founder, Simon . . . And according to William Smith and Henry Wace (1967 4:682), . . . that he came to Rome in the days of Claudius Caesar (45 AD), and made such an impression by his magical powers that he was honored as a god, a statue being erected to him . . . bearing the inscription . . . (the holy god Simon) (Griffin 1993:30-2).

This Simonian form of false religion gave rise to Gnosticism, and the revival of Mithraism and the Hebrew Kabbalah in the early second century AD. As noted above in Section 3.3, Mithraism spread throughout the entire Roman Empire, primarily by the Roman soldiers, settled in certain regions, and became known by the following different names: Jewish Kabbalah or Merkabah Mysticism from the house of Herod and the Essenes in Palestine; Therapeutae in Alexandria of Egypt; and Gnosticism, the Hellenistic form of this mysticism.

Gnosticism comes from the Greek word *gnosis*, meaning knowledge. The Gnostics believed they held a secret and special knowledge that focused on dualism of the “good” spirit versus the “evil” matter. According to Dorries, “the material universe is considered to be a cosmic accident, created by an evil god (generally equated as the god of the Old Testament) . . . good spirits are trapped in evil bodies . . . knowledge (gnosis) of self is the key to deliverance . . . Jesus is the deliverer . . . he came to bring the true gnosis . . . and he came to earth as a spirit being,” only appearing to have flesh and blood (“phantom flesh”). Gnostic teachers were prolific during the early years of the Church and came in two forms: those like Marcion (110-160), who founded a separate cult outside of the Church; and those who infiltrated the Church and strove to entice Christians to attend their “special, secret” meetings. Dorries continues, “The most important Gnostic systems of the times were those of Basilides, Valentine and his disciples (Heracleon, Ptolemaeus and Theodotus in the Italian school, the Ophites, Kainites, Perates, Sethians, Justin, and the Naasenes). Representatives of the ultra-Gnostics were Marcion and Carpocrates” (Dorries 2006:115). *Gnosticism was a major threat to the true doctrine of the early Church and was vehemently opposed by John the Apostle, Apostolic Fathers Ignatius of Antioch and Polycarp of Smyrna, and most rigorously and effectively by Irenaeus (130-203), Bishop of Lyons [emphasis added] (Dorries 2002:20-23).*

According to Kirban, Cabala (Cabbala, Qabalah, or in Hebrew, *Kabbalah*) may be described by the following:

. . . occult society which was developed by certain Jewish rabbis. The oldest Cabalistic book was probably penned in AD 120 by Rabbi Akiba. *It was based on a mystical interpretation of the Scriptures. . . Many believe that this secret lore began with the Essenes . . . flourished from about 2 BC to AD 135 . . . The principal source of the Cabala is the Zohar . . . a mystical commentary on the Pentateuch. . . The 22 major cards of the Tarot pack are connected with the 22 Paths used by those who practice Cabala . . . The three major books of the Cabala are the Sepher Yetzirah (The Book of Formation), Sepher ha Zohar (The Book of Splendor) and the Apocalypse (The Book of Revelation) . .*

. and taught that there existed within God's Word a hidden doctrine which was the key to Scriptures . . . this is symbolized by the crossed keys on the papal crest . . . the Tetragrammaton . . . JHVH or YHWH . . . a pentagram (5-pointed star) [emphasis added] - (Kirban 1980:64-9).

Ron Rhodes adds the following:

The word “Cabala” means “to receive,” and refers to heavenly revelation received by Jews and passed on to succeeding generations (Miller, “Cabala,” Fact Sheet, Christian Research Institute, Rancho Santa Margarita, CA). . . . Kabbalists use three basic methods of interpreting the Scriptures—*gematria*, *notarikon*, and *themurah* Kenneth Boa explains it this way: *Gematria* is a method which works with the numerical values of Hebrew letters. . . . *Notarikon* is the system which forms new words or phrases out of the first or last letters of the words in a text. *Themurah*, a System of rearrangement and transposition of the letters of a word, was used to make new words form the original words (Boa 1986:138). . . . There is a close connection between Kabbalism and Freemasonry (2005:106-9).

Additionally, according to Livingstone:

Early Jewish mysticism already incorporated the several tenets that were central to the cult of the Magi, including astrology, numerology and pantheism. However, it is in Merkabah mysticism that we find the first evolution of that doctrine which would become central to all the schools of Hellenistic mysticism, the ascent through the seven planets. . . . The purpose of Merkabah mysticism is union with the highest god, interpreted as the vision of the Chariot of God, described in the first chapter of the Book of Ezekiel. . . . Merkabah texts involved elaborate anthropomorphic descriptions of God, known as Shiur Komar, which were based on the Song of Solomon [emphasis added] (Livingstone 2007:34).

The clear connection between the Kabbalistic and Gnostic cults is the secret knowledge (gnosis), only obtainable by being a part of their “enlightened” or “illuminated” secret group. This gnosis is ultimately used to create a “New World Order,” led by these very same enlightened or illuminated individuals. This is enticingly deceptive, reminiscent of Satan’s work in the Garden of Eden, and is a clear continuance and reemergence of the Chaldean/Babylonian Mysteries cult false religion [emphasis added].

Then, according to Livingstone’s genealogical research, this Mithraic/Kabbalistic bloodline supposedly expanded from Joseph of Arimathea to Britain, “where he established the

first Church in the British Isles, which developed into Glastonbury Abbey. His descendants would eventually culminate in the person of King Arthur (“The Descent from Adam to the Tilghman (Tillman) and Whitten Families through the Royal Houses of Scythia, Ireland, and Scotland,” <http://dreamwater.org/whittenword/sovrealm/gaels.htm>.) . . . King Arthur was also related to Constantine the Great (Robert Vermaat, “The Draco, the Late Roman military standard,” <http://www.lectio.org.uk/articles/draco.htm/>; Keith Blayney, “King Arthur, the Red Dragon and improbable Blayney links,” <http://www.keithblayney.com/Blayney/KingArthur.html/>; Jamie Allen’s Family Tree, “Constantine ‘the Great’ of ROME,” <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~jamesdow/s020/f000004.htm/>). . . .” (Livingston 2007: 43, 45). As mentioned above in Section 3.3, the Druids propagated the “Magian or Kabbalistic” teaching among the Celts. The “Anglo-Saxons” arrived in the region from “the area of modern Germany.” The Saxons were apparently descended from the Scythians, who came from the land of modern Southern Russia between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea (L. Hollins, “The Anglo-Saxon People, Part 2,” <http://www.ensignmessage.com/archives/anglo2.html>; *The Yngling Saga*, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/heim/02ynglga.htm/>) - (Livingstone 2007:47). The Merovingians also came from Scythia and were originally known as the Sicambrians.

During the early fifth century AD, the invasion of the Huns caused migrations of almost all European peoples. About this time, the Sicambrians, “a tribe of the Germanic people collectively known as the Franks, crossed the Rhine and moved into Gaul . . . what is now Belgium and northern France. The Merovingians are believed in occult circles to have originally been Jewish, and descended from the Tribe of Benjamin, who had entered Greece known as Cadmus and Danaus.” The Franks expanded their territory to include both Germany and France by AD 511. The most well-known Merovingian/Frankish king was Charlemagne, “By 800 AD,

the Frankish kingdom included all of modern France, Belgium, Holland, Switzerland, almost all of Germany and large areas of Italy and Spain. . . . In the same year . . . Charlemagne was crowned Emperor by the Pope” (Livingstone 2007:59-61).

This Mithraic/Kabbalistic bloodline also expanded through the Armenians, who considered themselves to be descendents of “Ashkenaz, the son of Magog.” By AD 240, Mani, who was born near Baghdad in AD 214 and related to Persian royal blood, had begun to spread his own brand of Gnostic teaching called “Manichaeism.” His followers claimed that he was “the new Jesus” and his teachings were a blend of Gnosticism, Zoroastrianism and Mithraism, stating that the creator god of the Old Testament was evil in his form of dualism. Manichaeism spread throughout the entire Middle East, and “by 354 AD, Hilary of Portiers wrote” that it had a strong following in southern France. St. Augustine, the Bishop of Hippo in N. Africa, practiced Manichaeism before his conversion to Christianity in the late fourth century.

Manichaeism became its own specialized Gnostic heresy in Armenia—Paulicianism. Although Armenia was the first country to declare Christianity as its state religion in AD 301, it also gave birth to this form of Manichaeistic Gnosticism. Its name came from their respect for Paul (Saul) of Tarsus and his writings. However, they basically rejected the rest of the New Testament writings, along with the entire Old Testament (*The Catholic Encyclopedia*, “Paulicians,” <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11583b.htm/>) - (Livingstone 2007:50-3). As these Paulicians fled persecution, they arrived in the land of the Khazars, who were a Turkish/Scythian tribe, also descended from Gog and Magog, Togarmah, and Ashkenaz (*Wikipedia*, “Ashkenazi Jews”). In occult circles, the Khazars were supposed to descend from the “Tribe of Simeon, who had been assimilated into the Edomites. . . . At its height, the Khazarain Empire covered the area of the Ukraine, southern Russia to the Caucasus, and the western portions of Kazakhstan and

Uzbekistan.” Then, they migrated to modern-day Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Lithuania. In Hungary, the Khazars encountered the Magyars, who also descended from Scythia. (Livingstone 2007:54-7).

Later on in this early period of Church history, Satan attacked Christianity and Early Church orthodoxy at its understanding of the very person and nature of Jesus Christ with deceptive heresies in the forms of Ebionism, continued Gnosticism or Docetism, Arianism, Apollinarianism, Nestorianism, and Eutycheanism. While the secret Kabbalah sect was perverting the Pentateuch of Judaism, a part of the newly formed Christian Church (being almost exclusively converted Jews) stumbled into the heresy of *Ebionism* (from the Old Testament *eujonim*, meaning “the poor,” originally a name honoring the Christians of Jerusalem) while trying to protect their Jewish roots. *The Ebionites believed in strictly following the Law of Moses, discounted Paul’s interpretation of the Law, put Jesus on the same level as the Old Testament prophets, and denied Jesus’ preexistence, virgin birth, Incarnation, or anything having to do with His divinity until he was “adopted” by God the Father at His baptism or resurrection. This faction was called the “Judaizers” by Paul, who fought vehemently in opposition to them* [emphasis added] - (Hagglund 1968:31-2; Hart 1999:281). On the other hand, a continuing form of Gnosticism, or Docetism, “(from the Greek *dokeo*, meaning ‘to seem or appear’) rejected the incarnation and sufferings of Christ” (Hart 1999:281). This continued Gnosticism had the same beliefs as outlined above and was refuted by John’s Gospel, his Epistles and by Irenaeus (Dorries 2002:20-23).

Origen’s (185-254) neo-Platonic, allegorical, interpretative philosophy spawned not only his *First Principles* (the first recorded attempt at systematic theology), but also speculative teachings on his part (e.g., pre-existence of the human soul, *apokatastais*—restoration of all

things—and subordinationism). These teachings later led to the *heretical beliefs of Universalism (the belief that all of creation will ultimately be saved, possibly even including Satan himself) and Arianism (that Jesus was not co-equal, co-eternal, or even of the same ousia, or substance, with the Father, but was created as a “second God,” subordinate to the Father)* [emphasis added]. This Arianism, named after Arius (256-336), was refuted by Athanasius (297-373), who included the term “*homoousios*,” or same substance with the Father, in the Nicene Creed formulated for the Council of Nicea in AD 325 (and later in the Athanasian Creed) and *Against the Arians* (Dorries 2002:26-8). *Apollinarianism* (from Apollinaris (310-392)) taught the trichotomy of human nature: physical body, sensitive soul, and a rational soul (made of the will, mind and spirit). It also taught that *Jesus “did not have a human soul and spirit. The only part of Christ that was human was His physical body”* [emphasis added]. This heresy was refuted by Athanasius and the three Cappadocian Fathers—Gregory of Nyssa, Basil the Great and Gregory of Nazianzus—and the Council of Constantinople in AD 381 (Dorries 2002:29-30).

Nestorianism (from Nestorius (381-451)) taught that *Jesus was just a man who was “indwelt by the divine Christ of Logos. The nature of the union of divine and human natures in Christ was moral only”* [emphasis added]. Thus, Jesus was adopted by the Father and existed as two separate persons brought together by will. Cyril of Alexandria (375-444) refuted Nestorianism by saying that Jesus had “two natures inseparably joined to form the unique Person of Jesus Christ,” and that “Jesus did not have independent personal existence in His humanity.” Nestorianism was also condemned by the Council of Ephesus in AD 431 (Dorries 2002:31-2). *Eutycheanism* (from Eutyches (384-454)) taught that *Jesus had two natures before the Incarnation and only one after (His human nature was “swallowed up into His divinity”), and therefore, Jesus’ body was not the same substance as Adam’s race or humanity* [emphasis

added]. This was refuted by “The Definition of Faith” of the Council of Chalcedon in AD 451. Specifically, this definition addressed the fact that Jesus had the same substance as the Father and the same substance as humanity and that both natures existed “without confusion, without change” in the one Person of Jesus Christ; thus being “fully God and fully man” at the same time (Dorries 2002:32-3).

As the Early Church Period was coming to a close and at the beginning of the Medieval Church Period, Satan stepped up his plan of lies and deception against the truth (and of the Church beginning to fill the void in preaching/teaching the Eschatological Gospel) by the establishment of another major world religion: *Islam* (Arabic, meaning submission) by Muhammad al-Jahiliya (var. sp.: Muhammed, Mohammed) in the early seventh century AD. According to Josh McDowell and John Gilchrist, Muhammad was born about AD 570 in Mecca, Arabia, to “the Hashimite clan of the *Al Qu’raysh* tribe.” His father died before his birth. His mother died when he was six. He was raised first by his grandfather and later by his uncle (McDowell and Gilchrist 1983:14).

The following is taken from Kirban, Levinson and Robert S. Ellwood regarding Muhammad and Islam. Kirban provides the following background:

The people who lived on the desert in this region were called Arabs. Arab means arid. . . . The Arab . . . worshipped many gods of the sky . . . stars and the moon and even what they believed were sacred stones. The center of this stone reverence was Mecca. A square structure of stone in Mecca became their holiest shrine in the world. It was called Kaaba, which means cube. It has been rebuilt 10 times. They believed the first Kaaba was erected by angels from heaven; the second by Adam; . . . the fourth by Abraham and his son Ishmael . . . The eighth was built in Mohammed’s lifetime in AD 605. . . . in this era the Kaaba contained . . . the Black Stone, apparently a meteorite, was considered sacred and was built into the wall . . . several statues representing gods. One was called Allah (the ‘up’ one), a tribal god. . . . The Quaraish tribe began worshipping Allah as the chief god (1980:89, 91-3).

Ellwood adds that before Muhammad and Islam, the Arabs were considered to have lived in “times of ignorance.”

Kirban and Levinson continue with the following. In AD 610, *Allah* revealed himself to Muhammad in a cave outside of Mecca and sent the angel Gabriel with further messages revealing himself and stating that Muhammad was to be his prophet. Over the next four years Muhammad openly announced himself as the prophet of Allah. This announcement created much friction among the Arabs and Muhammad was rejected by the governing authorities. In 619, Muhammad’s wife and powerful uncle died and persecution increased until 622, when he and his followers emigrated from Mecca to Yathrib (later called Medina). This became known as the *Hijra* (year of emigration) and the first year of the Muslim calendar. Additionally, the following is provided according to Kirban. In the early days of Islam, Muslims “adopted several of the Jewish rites” and fast days and they prayed facing Jerusalem. However, when relations with the Jews became strained over their disputation of Muhammad’s prophetic claims and visions, Muslims were told to face Mecca when praying. And, Muhammad allowed no opposition to his rule, “Asma, a local woman poetess, attacked Mohammed in her rhymes. It cost Asma her life . . . Two other poets were also executed. . . . local Jews accused Mohammed of idolatry. In one battle captured Jews were given the choice of choosing Islam or death. The 600 fighting men chose death. They were slain and buried in the market place of Medina. Their women and children were sold into slavery.” After many internal wars, Muhammad conquered Mecca in 630 and unified the Arabs. He then proclaimed Mecca to be “the Holy city of Islam.” Mohammed died in 632 (Kirban 1980:91-94; Levinson 1996:91-2; Ellwood 1998:176).

Speaking about the formation of the two factions of Islam, McDowell and Gilchrist note:

When Muhammad died he had not revealed any plan which the leadership in Islam could use to determine his successor . . . Eventually a power struggle developed as different

factions promoted their own successors over their rivals. The major division came between those who believed the successor (Khalifa or Caliph) should be elected by the Islamic leadership . . . Sunnis (followers of the prophet's way) . . . and those who believed the successor should be hereditary, through 'Ali, Muhammad's son-in-law, who was married to his daughter, Fatima . . . Shi'ites (followers of the 12 Imams descended from the prophet). . . . The Sunni/Shi'ite conflict remains to this day a center of international controversy (McDowell and Gilchrist 1983:18-9).

According to Colin H. Deal, Islam (divided into the two factions of Sunni/Shi'ite) became the fifth Gentile kingdom described in Daniel 2:33, 41-3 (represented by the iron and clay feet of Nebuchadnezzar's statue). After the Muslims "conquered Palestine in 636," then "the Arabic language and Islam prevailed within a few centuries" (Deal 1983:9).

Next, the main beliefs of Islam are addressed. Islam primarily believes in peace and submission to the word of *Allah* contained in the following three essential elements. Firstly, *Allah* revealed his will to Muhammad, which is recorded in the *Qur'an*. Muhammad taught that he was no more than one of a line of prophets; but his message (recorded in the *Qur'an*) was God's final word. In Islamic theology, *Allah* has given man 104 revelations, of which four have been preserved: the Pentateuch to Moses, the Psalms to David, the Gospel to Jesus, and the *Qur'an* to Muhammad. The first three have been so corrupted that they cannot be trusted and so the *Qur'an* replaces these. The *Qur'an* contains 114 chapters on topics from ethics to metaphysics. Additionally, Muslims have Islamic Law (*shariah*—the path), taken from traditions and sayings of Muhammad; *Qiyas*, opinions of Islamic jurists; and *Ijma*, consensus from a group of Islamic judges representing a community.

There are divisions within Islam, but the vast majority belongs to the main body commonly called Sunnites. Secondly, there is a confessional element to their faith (*shahada*); i.e., "There is one God, who does not beget or is begotten . . . and there is like unto him no one. . . There is no god by *Allah*, and Muhammad is the Messenger of *Allah*." Thirdly, there remains

an obligation of duties element to their faith. This is characterized by the Five Pillars of Islam (the first of which directly relates to the second element): 1) Confession (*shahada*) – as addressed above; 2) Worship/Prayer (*salat*) – five times a day facing Mecca; 3) Legal almsgiving (*zakat*); 4) Fasting (*sawm*) – which applies mainly to the month of *Ramadan* occurring during summer; and 5) Pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*) – which must be performed at least once in a lifetime. There is an additional optional duty; *jihad*, or exertion in the way of *Allah* (accomplished by protecting the faith, overcoming unbelievers, or purifying unbelievers). Islam teaches one final judgment at the end of time, after which the faithful will spend eternity in paradise. If a Muslim dies in the act of *jihad* they are assured a place in paradise (Levinson 1996:94-5; Ellwood 1998:177-8).

As seen from the testimony given above, Islam was rejected by other Arab tribes first. Then, it was considered idolatry and based on false, unsubstantiated visions by the Jews. *And finally, it was considered to be heresy by the Christians, since it rejects the Trinity, the deity of Jesus Christ and the need for atonement/salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ* (Tsoukalas 1999:49) [emphasis added]. As stated in Section 2.3 above, after the rise of Islam, the Eschatological Gospel countered with the following: a renewed focus on the orthodox Creeds of the Church; the rejection of Origen's allegorical eschatology; the solidification of the Eschatological Gospel as part of systematic theology through the writings of John of Damascus, Pope Gregory the Great, Isidore of Seville, and Julian of Toledo; and finally by comparing the rise of Islam to the rise of the antichrist. All of this began the journey into the Medieval Church Period.