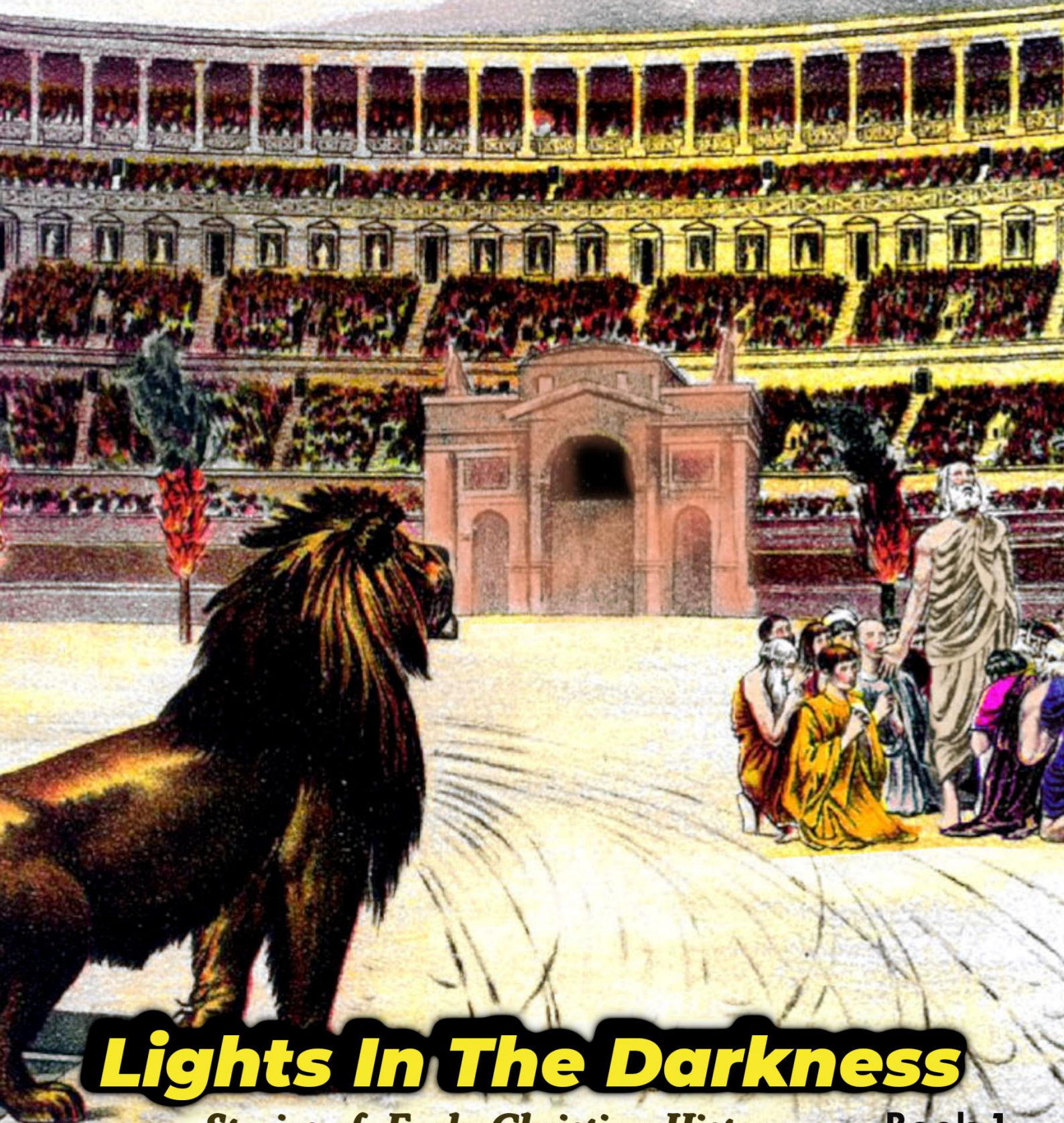


# **TROUBLE OR TRICK?**

*The Early Years*



***Lights In The Darkness***

*Stories of Early Christian History*

**Book 1**



# **Introduction to the *Lights in Darkness* Early Christian History Booklets**

*The Bible tells us about Jesus' disciples and the work they did after Jesus returned to heaven. But what happened to the Christian church after the disciples died. What is the history of Christianity that happened after the Bible was written? In these booklets we will see what the early history of Christianity was like.*

*These booklets are based on the history from the book the "Great Controversy" and also from other history books.*

One day when Jesus was here on earth, His disciples asked Him about what would happen in the future. Jesus told them that the city of Jerusalem and the temple would be destroyed. And after Jerusalem was destroyed there would be a great time of trouble (**Matthew 24:15-21**).



For 40 years after Jesus told His disciples about Jerusalem being destroyed it did not happen. God was giving the people in Jerusalem time to hear the gospel that was preached by the disciples. He wanted the people in Jerusalem to be saved. But most of the people in Jerusalem just became more and more wicked.

Many of the people in Jerusalem did not listen to the messages from God the disciples were giving. They did not want to hear about Jesus. They became more evil. Parents and children killed each other. Even in the temple people killed each other. Yet the people of Jerusalem thought they were still God's people and that nothing bad would happen to them or the temple. They thought God would protect them. But God was not with them anymore. The people of Jerusalem had rejected God's Son Jesus and also the messages His disciples gave them. They were not doing God's work anymore. They were no longer His people. The time had come for Jerusalem to be punished.

The Roman army surrounded the city in the year 66 AD. The people inside the city were trapped. There

were still Jews inside the city who had become Christians. These Christians knew Jesus had told them that when they saw Jerusalem surrounded by armies they should know that the city was going to be destroyed. And that was the sign that they should run away and hide in the mountains.

In order that the Christians in Jerusalem could run away from the city, God made the Roman army leave for a short time. When the army left, all the Christians ran away from the city. So when the Roman army came back later and destroyed the people and the city of Jerusalem, not one single Christian was killed. The Christians had all run away into the mountains, to a little town called Pella.

Now that Jerusalem was destroyed what else had Jesus said would

happen? Remember He said there would be a great time of trouble. He told His followers they would be *"hated of all nations"* (**Matthew 24:9**). He told them that many of them would be thrown in jail or killed.

It happened just as Jesus said it would happen. Around the time the city of Jerusalem was destroyed the Roman government started to put the Christians in jail or kill them. The Romans worshiped idols. The Christians said everyone should worship the true God and not idols. Some of the Romans believed and became Christians. But many Romans did not. They still wanted to worship their idols and to do all kinds of other sins. They did not like the Christians. They wanted to destroy the Christians.

The Romans blamed the Christians for their troubles. If there was an earthquake, it was the Christians' fault. If there was a fire that destroyed many homes, it was the Christians who started the fire. That is what the idol worshipers said, but it was not true. The Christians were a kind people who loved everyone and who wanted to be like Jesus.

But satan used these false stories to make more and more people not like the Christians. And so the Roman people who still wanted to worship their idols tried their best to destroy the Christians.

They chased the Christians away from their homes. Some of the Christians were whipped. Some were beaten. Some were thrown in jail. Others were fed to hungry lions or

burned to death or killed in any other way the idol worshipers could think of.

Everywhere the Christians went the idol worshipers tried to destroy them. The Christians had to hide in caves or in the mountains. There were tunnels underground that dead people were buried in. In these tunnels the Christians would hide from those who were trying to kill them.



Often when the Christians were found by the idol worshipers they were given a choice. They could choose to



worship Jesus and be killed. Or they could choose to give up their belief in Jesus and they would be kept alive. Some of the Christians gave up their faith in Jesus so they could live. But many of them chose to stay faithful to Christ even if they were killed.

One faithful Christian who would not give up his faith in Jesus was Polycarp, a friend of the disciple John. When he was an old man he was caught by soldiers and taken to the court. Polycarp was told that if he wanted to live all he had to do was to say, "The king of the Romans is Lord," and give a little bit of incense to a statue of the Roman king. But Polycarp said: "Eighty-six years I have served Christ, and He never did me any wrong. How can I speak evil of my King who saved me?" Since Polycarp

would not worship the Roman king, he was then taken and killed.

Many other Christians were faithful like Polycarp. Because of the faithful Christians many of the idol worshiping people became Christians. They saw how the Christians were not afraid of dying for Jesus and so they also wanted to serve Jesus.

So no matter how hard satan and the idol worshipers tried to get rid of the Christians, they still grew stronger. The Christians while they hid, still trusted in the promises of God. Even when they had no home and had to hide underground they did not complain. They were full of faith and patience. Even if they had to die they knew God had promised that if they were faithful until they died, they would *"receive a crown of life"* in

heaven (**Revelation 2:10**). They knew that for all the people that love Jesus, death is only a short sleep. When Jesus comes back all those who loved Jesus will be raised from their graves and go to heaven.

Every day more and more people saw the strong faith of the Christians. And many of these people also became Christians. The Christian church was growing bigger as more people became Christians.

Satan and the idol worshipers were very angry. They wanted to get rid of the Christians. But the more they tried to destroy the Christians the more people there were who became Christians.

Now satan used a different plan to destroy the Christians. Instead of

killing them he would make them join with the worldly people. He would mix Christianity with idol worship. This was satan's plan and the idol worshipers helped satan to do this work.

In the Bible, Paul had warned the early Christian church that before Jesus would come back there would be a *"falling away"* where many Christians would fall away from the truth (**2 Thessalonians 2:3**). God had showed Paul this would happen. Now the time came that this happened, just like God had said it would.

For a little time, the Christians stopped having so much trouble. The Christians were not killed or put in jail anymore. Now like satan had planned the idol worshipers joined with the Christians. But the idol worshipers didn't really want to be Christians



according to the Bible. They just wanted to mix Christianity with their idol worship. They thought if Christianity and idol worship were mixed together then there would be peace between the idol worshipers and Christians. This was the trick of Satan. He knew that the Christians would have to disobey God to join with the idol worshipers. Then they would be worshiping the idols while still thinking they were Christians.

In the year 312 AD the Roman emperor [or king] who was named Constantine became a Christian. But Constantine did not become a true Christian. He just claimed to be a Christian to unite the Christians with the idol worshipers.



A real gold coin with Constantine's picture on it.\*

*\* The "person" behind Constantine is a picture of the sun-god, Sol Invictus. This coin is from 313, the year after Constantine became a "Christian". He was still honoring the sun-god.*

What happened then was Christianity and idol worship mixed with each other. This started a new Christianity that was not the Christianity of the Bible. The idols of the idol worshipers were brought into the Christian churches. But now instead of them being idols they were said to be statues of Jesus or Mary or other people in the Bible. The special days of idol worship, and their idol practices came into the church. The Romans worshiped the sun god and the first day of every week was his special day. The Christians worshiped on the seventh day of the week, the Sabbath, like the Bible said. Now the idol worshipers told the Christians that if they worshiped God on Sunday the same day the idol worshipers worshiped the sun-god, everyone could worship on the same day. So Sunday worship came into the

Christian church. In the year 321, Constantine made a law which said all the people must rest on Sunday.

There were many, many other false teachings that came into the Christian church when it mixed with idol worship. Since the Bible only teaches truth and would show that the church was now a false Christian church, the people were not allowed to read the Bible. Only the priests and other church leaders were allowed to explain it to the people.

Not only were the people forbidden to read the Bible but now a new Bible was translated which contained many false teachings in it. It was this Bible that was given to the priests.

There were a few faithful Christians who stood firm for the truth and

refused to join with the idol worshipers. But most of the Christians thought joining with the idol worshipers was a good thing. So the majority of Christians accepted the false teachings and began to follow the idol worship practices. This was how the early Christian Church turned into the Roman Catholic Church.

But as new people were born into or joined the Roman Catholic church, the new people did not always understand that it was mixed with idol worship. Some of these people really loved Jesus and wanted to worship Him. When the true Christians would find these people they would help them understand from the Bible what was the truth of God. Even today there are people who love God in many different churches. But everyone who loves God must read the Bible and find out if



what their church teaches is the truth. God's true people have always tested every teaching by the Bible to know if it is right or wrong.

So what happened to the few true Christians who stayed faithful when most of the Christians joined with idol worship? In the Bible God had said that just like light and darkness had nothing in common so true Christian believers were not to join with idol worshipers and unbelievers. **(2 Corinthians 6:14-17)**. When most of the Christians agreed to mix their Christian worship with idol worship they started going down a road that led them farther and farther away from the truth and the right way. Satan was very happy that so many Christians were following his ways now. Once the Christians were on his side, satan made them start to cause

trouble and to hurt the other Christians who were standing for the truth.

There was a long battle in the Christian church between truth and error, light and darkness. At last the faithful Christians decided they needed to leave the false Christians. They were not willing to give up the truth.

Because the Christian church joined with the idol worshipers, the world went into a very dark time where the light of truth was hidden by the great spiritual darkness of errors. That time is often called the Dark Ages.

But throughout all that time God always had people who were true and faithful to His Word. In this series of books we will look at many of the people who kept the light of truth

burning during those times of great darkness.

We can learn many important lessons from the early Christians. The true Christians lived holy lives and had a strong faith in God. This caused the worldly people, the idol worshipers, who loved their sins, to hate the Christians, just like Cain hated Abel because Abel obeyed God (**Genesis 4:1-10**).

We should stand for the right like the true Christians did. We should never give up the truth. Whatever happens to us we know that if we are faithful to God, we will get a crown of life in heaven one day (**Revelation 2:10**).

Are you willing to stand up for the right like the early Christians did?



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