

Prescott OLLI Presents:

Lecturer: Professor Bart D. Ehrman, on video
Courtesy of The Teaching Company

Facilitator: John M. Kohlenberger, in person
Courtesy of OLLI, at Yavapai College, Prescott, AZ

From Jesus to Constantine

From Jesus to Constantine

Our Professor

Bart D. Ehrman PhD, is the author of more than twenty books, including four New York Times bestsellers:

- “Misquoting Jesus”
- “God's Problem”
- “Jesus Interrupted “
- “Forged”.

In 2004, Ehrman was the James A. Gray Distinguished Professor of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and is a leading authority on the New Testament and the history of early Christianity. His work has been featured in Time, the New Yorker, the Washington Post and other print media, and he has appeared on NBC's Dateline, The Daily Show with Jon Stewart, CNN, The History Channel, National Geographic, the Discovery Channel, the BBC, major NPR shows, and other top media outlets. of today.



From Jesus to Constantine – Part 1

A History of Early Christianity

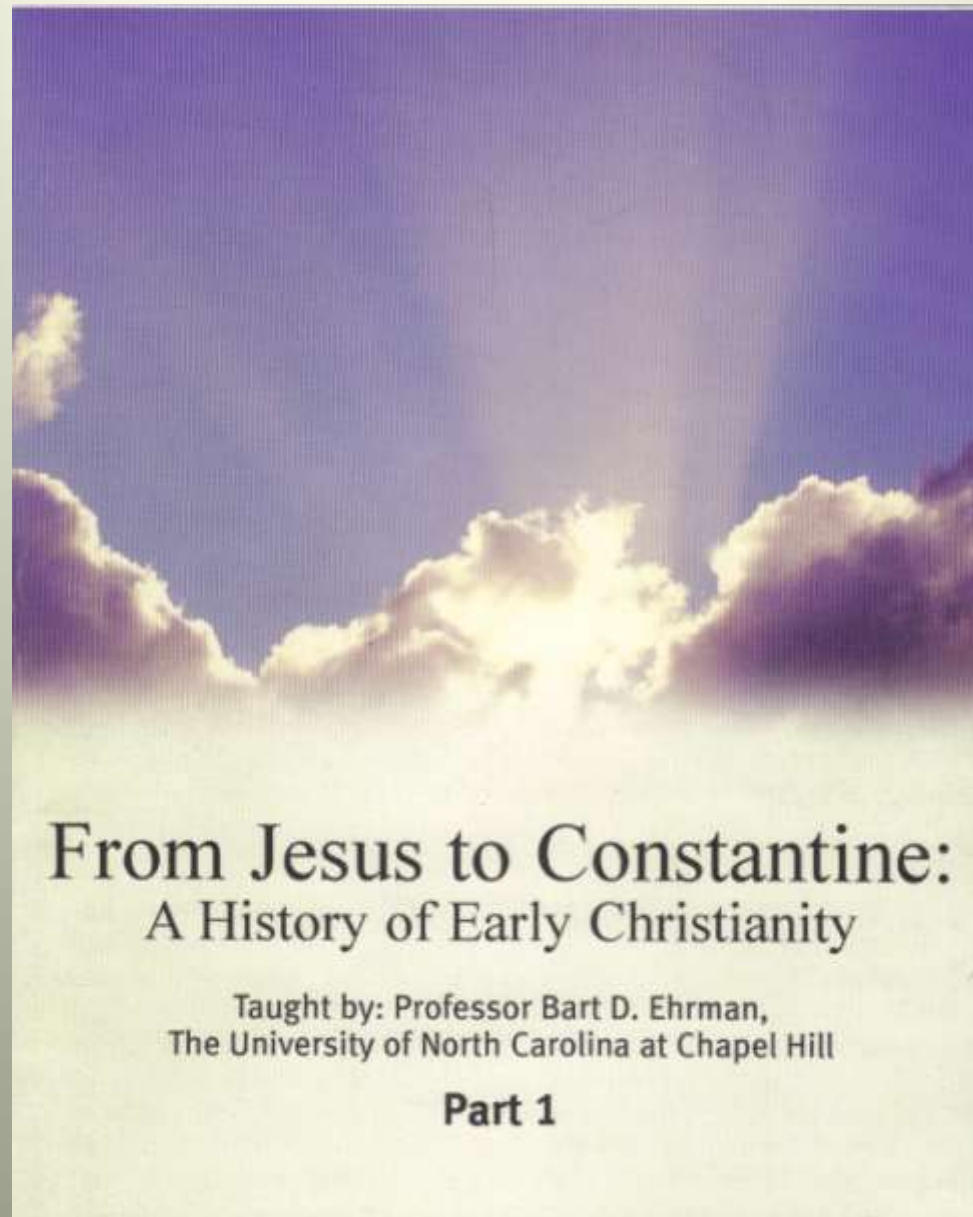
IN THIS SERIES OF LECTURES:

Professor Bart D. Ehrman explores some of the myths and facts of Christianity, so that we may understand how this history has become the basis of our legends, philosophies and politics in our Western world of today.



CONSIDERATIONS:

1. How did Christianity become the most significant religion in the Western world?
2. How did it have a stunning impact from such a humble beginning?
3. How did Christianity relate to the Pagans of the known world?
4. The beginnings of Christianity
5. Christianity and its Jewish roots
6. How did Christianity relate to the Roman Empire?
7. Internal developments within the movements of Christianity
8. The first 300 years of Christianity, seen as a success



OLLI Facilitator
John M. Kohlenberger

From Jesus to Constantine – Part 1

Overview

Part 1 of 2

Lecture 1:	The Birth of Christianity
Lecture 2:	The Religious World of Early Christianity
Lecture 3:	The Historical Jesus
Lecture 4:	Oral and Written Traditions about Jesus
Lecture 5:	The Apostle Paul
Lecture 6:	The Beginning of Jewish-Christian Relations
Lecture 7:	The Anti-Jewish Use of the Old Testament
Lecture 8:	The Rise of Christian Anti-Judaism
Lecture 9:	The Early Christian Mission
Lecture 10:	The Christianization of the Roman Empire
Lecture 11:	The Early Persecutions of the State
Lecture 12:	The Causes of Christian Persecution

From Jesus to Constantine – Part 1

The Birth of Christianity

Consideration 1: How did Christianity become the most significant religion in the Western world?

Lecture 1, an Overview

MAIN TOPICS:

1. Christianity and Western civilization
2. How did Christianity have such an impact after a humble beginning?
3. The impact of Christianity on a society that was pagan and polytheistic
4. The early adherents began the movement
5. A new religion is born from Judaism
6. Christianity in the Empire
7. Internal developments
8. Where did 300 years of development take this new movement?



The 4 Pillars of Christianity

- Canon of Scripture
- Creed
- Practices of worship
- Church structure

From Jesus to Constantine – Part 1

The Religious World of Early Christianity

Lecture 2

MAIN TOPICS:

1. Christianity in the Greco-Roman World
2. Pagans, Polytheists, Local and State religions, plus other considerations
3. The unique context of the One God of the Jews in the Greco-Roman world



From Jesus to Constantine – Part 1

The Historical Jesus

Lecture 3

“Christianity obviously started with the life, teachings and deeds of Jesus.”

MAIN TOPICS:

1. Sketching the life of Jesus
2. Was He “A Prophet in His Own Time”, or was He just a First Century apocalyptic prophet?
3. Or was he a Messiah, a World Class messenger bringing the message to simply “*Love one another*” ... and your world will be better?
4. What ever His message, it troubled the Rulers of the day, particularly Herod & Chiaphas.



A sketch of Jesus
by Glenda Green

NOTE: All the original disciples of Jesus died by 65 AD.

From Jesus to Constantine – Part 1

Oral and Written Traditions about Jesus

DISCUSSION - Lecture 3

SOME POINTS FOR CONSIDERATION:

1. Many sources, views, *interpretations*, emphasis, languages, translations. (Chopra)
2. Christian writings exist beyond Mathew, Mark, Luke and John, outside of the Greco-Roman World.
3. Gnostic or Coptic Christian “Gospel of Thomas” and “Mary” quote Jesus’ sayings. (Apocryphal)
4. Are the gospels of Mark, Mathew, Luke and John more theological than historical?
5. “*The Kingdom of God is at hand.*” Is this Apocalyptic , just a Positive View or did He believe this was HIS END TIME? “Only as a child may ye enter the Kingdom” – “The Kingdom is not across the sea in some exotic place, it is within”.
6. Was Jesus prosecuted because he was so public, so loved, thus offending the Orthodoxy ?

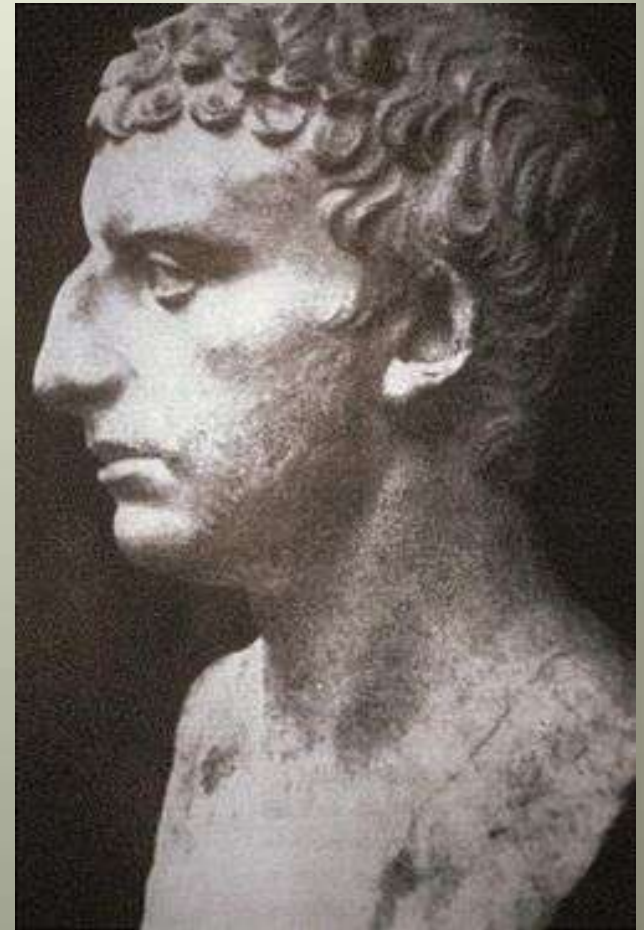
From Jesus to Constantine:

Lecture 3 - The Historical Jesus

“The works of Josephus provide crucial information about the First Jewish-Roman War and are also important literary source material for understanding the context of the Dead Sea Scrolls and late Temple Judaism.”

Before Pliny the elder ... Josephus, among others, did record brief descriptions of a man named Jesus (a common name at the time) who seems, by certain stories, to be the Galilean man of the New Testament.

“**Titus Flavius Josephus** (37 – c. 100 CE),^[2] also called **Joseph ben Matityahu** (Biblical Hebrew: יוסף בן מתתיהו, *Yosef ben Matityahu*),^[3] was a 1st-century Romano-Jewish historian and hagiographer of priestly and royal ancestry who recorded Jewish history, with special emphasis on the 1st century CE and the First Jewish–Roman War, which resulted in the Destruction of Jerusalem and its temple in 70 CE.”



SOURCE: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Josephus>

Other ancient (non-Christian) sources
available at Ancient Manuscripts.Com

From Jesus to Constantine – Part 1

Oral and Written Traditions about Jesus

Lecture 4

“Christianity is not so much about the religion that Jesus proclaimed as the religion that proclaims Jesus.”

MAIN TOPICS:

1. The Death of Jesus.
2. The Resurrection.
3. The Beliefs that followed.
4. Theological developments.
5. Most Gospels were written many years later.



From Jesus to Constantine – Part 1

Traditions about Jesus

DISCUSSION - Lecture 4

SOME POINTS TO CONSIDER:

1. “Christianity is not so much about the religion that Jesus himself proclaimed, as the religion that proclaims Jesus.”
2. MESSAGE: His Death and Resurrection Saves the world, giving us an apocalyptic religion based on Jesus rising from the dead – PHYSICALLY ... CREATING A GOD-MAN!
3. What happened to the “Apocalypse” ... “the end of time”? Here we are!
4. Who, what, how, why, “The Messiah” (Christos =Anointed one)?
5. Other sources tell their own stories: Q source, Gospels of Thomas, Mary , Philip & Paul ... thus, “The religion about Jesus is many different things”.
6. Despite “differences” in the stories from various view points and through time ... Belief is everything, thus creating a GOD greater than those of the Pagans, Polytheists, Jews and others. (Paul traveled ... why not Jesus, too?)

From Jesus to Constantine - Part 1

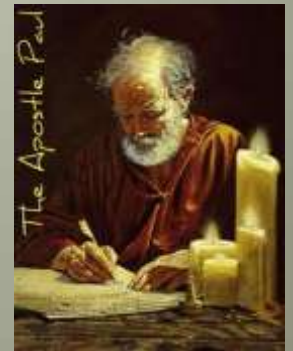
The Apostle Paul

Lecture 5

“Without Paul you would have the religion that Jesus proclaimed instead of the religion that proclaims Jesus.”

MAIN TOPICS:

1. Apostle Paul could be called “a second founder of Christianity”
2. Difficulties in trying to understand Paul’s life and theology
3. Paul’s bibliography
4. The surviving writings of Paul are nearly all letters he wrote to his churches
5. Paul framed Christian ideas into a message of “sins are forgiven by Jesus’ death and resurrection”, as his message to the Western world.



From Jesus to Constantine – Part 1

“Death and Resurrection”

DISCUSSION - Lecture 5

SOME CONSIDERATIONS:

1. “Without Paul you wouldn’t have Christianity, because without Paul you would simply have a sect of Judaism. You would have the religion that Jesus proclaimed rather than the religion that proclaims Jesus.” ... or the actual philosophy and teachings that Jesus believed in and lived. Is Paul a Second Founder?
2. Who was Paul? Why did Bible makers include “his” 13 “books”, or 7 letters in the New Testament (nearly ½ of the books of The Gospel)?
3. “The Apocalypse”, “The coming End” can be any time that you are unsure of “Life”.
4. Are “sins” compelled? Why should one live or die because of “sins”? (“sheen”?)
5. Was the fulfillment of Jewish scriptures the key to new Christian understandings?
6. Despite Jewish (or other) laws ... Do we really know “What God Wants”?
7. Did Paul create a religion “for all” ... and evangelism?

From Jesus to Constantine – Part 1

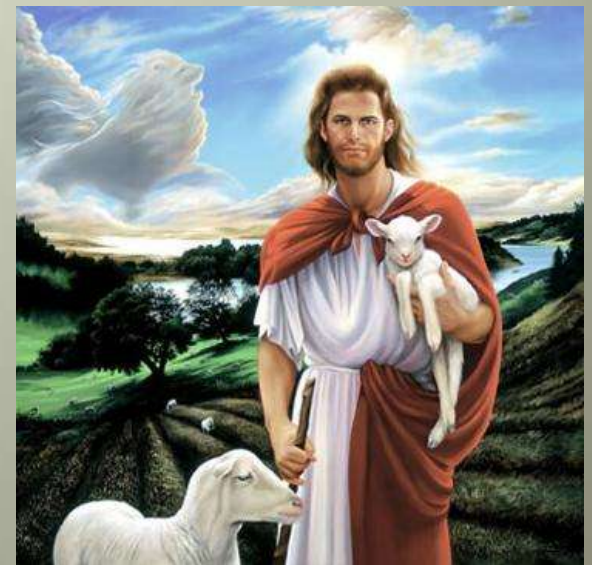
The Beginnings of Jewish-Christian Relations

Consideration 2: How did Christianity have a stunning impact from such a humble beginning?

Lecture 6

MAIN TOPICS:

1. How Christianity sprang from Judaism
2. Jesus was born as a good Jewish boy.
3. What happened to this new movement after Jesus' death?
4. Jesus and the gospel of Mathew



"Love without End" by Glenda Green

From Jesus to Constantine – Part 1

The Beginnings of Jewish-Christian Relations

DISCUSSION - Lecture 6

CONSIDERATIONS:

1. Christianity sprang from Judaism, but Jesus was born Jewish! What was Jesus, a Rabbi, Prophet, Trouble maker ...? Was his philosophy ONLY from his Jewish roots? * Paul traveled ... why not Jesus, too?
2. Did Jesus come to fulfill The Law or change the Law ... Natural Law for a better Way? (People of the Way) Was this a factor for Christianity becoming anti Jewish?
3. The gulf between the believers and non believers began, yet the Jewish roots persist.
4. Genealogy: “Yeshuah ben Joseph” ... vs ... Virgin birth? (Matthew)
5. The coming of age: Paulian Christianity came from a Jewish Roman ... good for Rome! Thus a non Jewish religion was born out of Judaism.



Prescott OLLI Announces:

NO CLASS NEXT WEEK

We'll see again you on Thursday, July 12

From Jesus to Constantine

From Jesus to Constantine – Part 1

Anti-Jewish Use of the Old Testament

Lecture 7 ... Overview

MAIN TOPICS:

1. The conflicting writings of Matthew and Paul. (Also Peter)
2. The Ebionites vs. the Marcionites and then Gentiles join the flock. So, did Jesus come to fulfill the law, or did He come to change the Dogmas of the old Jewish Law?
3. The Old Testament vs. the New Testament – which to go by? Enter Justin the Martyr.
4. The Epistle of Barnabas
5. Further questions.



Parting of the ways

From Jesus to Constantine – Part 1

Anti-Jewish use of the Old Testament

Lecture 7 ... Highlights



1. Did Jesus tell the world to follow the “Law”, or give it a New Dispensation? Paul’s followers chose “Belief” in the miracle of death and resurrection.
2. Starting from seeming Jewish roots, this new movement emerges with two philosophies. Some adherents become anti-Jewish.
3. An evolution is taking place. Justin the apologists emerges. Circumcision now seen as a punishment. Adam=Christ?
4. “Barnabas” believed that the Jewish scriptures have been “misunderstood” and were “Christian” all along.
5. These new Christians use the old Jewish Texts, to “cherry pick” support for Paul’s view of what his new religion is all about.

From Jesus to Constantine – Part 1

What to believe: Old or New Testament?

Lecture 7 ... Discussion

1. Did Jesus come to fulfill the law, or did He come to simplify the Dogmas of the old Jewish Law, for a religion for ALL?
2. Why did He heal, “plow” or “harvest” on the Sabbath – which were against the Laws of the Jewish Traditions?
3. Did not Jesus tell us of a loving God, as opposed to the vengeful God of the Jews?
4. Is “The Way” simply to “Love thy God and thy neighbor as thyself” or is it to “follow the Laws of Moses” ... or else?
5. Kosher ... circumcision ...? Who “misunderstood” the Mosaic Laws and later scriptures?
6. Would not a God of Love welcome all back into the fold (His Heart) ... if they could ever leave?



What Is “The Way”?

From Jesus to Constantine – Part 1

The Rise of Christian Anti-Judaism

Lecture 8

MAIN TOPICS:

1. The writings attributed to Paul, Matthew, Justin & Barnabas.
2. Conflicts & Persecutions develop as traditional this early Jewish Sect separates from traditional Judaism.
3. Christianity becomes a separate (yet “Ancient”) religion.
4. For Jews and Pagans: any “other” religion must be “false”.
5. The writings of Melito and Sardis, about “The Sacrificial Lamb”.
6. Constantine’s conversion changed everything! Christianity later became the official religion of “The Empire”.



Birth creates new
out of the old.

From Jesus to Constantine – Part 1

How this new religion, about a Jewish teacher becomes Anti-Jewish.

Lecture 8 - Discussion

1. Did the writings of Paul, Matthew, Justin & Barnabas accurately portray the message of Jesus, The Christ?
Paul and Peter disagreed on early “policy”.
2. How did the “Jewish Uprisings”(66-70 C.E.) affect this new “movement”?
3. Is Christianity an “ancient” religion?
4. Melito of Sardis: Connected Passover to Easter, by way of the Sacrificial Lamb. Thus, Jews killed The God-Man?
5. Are “other” religions truly “false”?
6. Did we loose some Pagan Wisdom about the understandings of “Mother Nature”, as the focus turned to the intellectual teachings about an exclusive “Father God”?



A new religion is born
out of a Jewish sect

From Jesus to Constantine – Part 1

The Early Christian Mission throughout the Roman Empire

Lecture 9

MAIN TOPICS:

1. Paul's “Calling” stressed “sin” and “death” with “saving” from death by “resurrection”!
2. Paul’s unique story of Jesus and his knowledge of the Greco-Roman world helps him spread this new religion.
3. The Acts of Paul strongly influence Christianities developments in and around Rome.
4. Christ is now projected as the One and Only Son of the One and Only True God ... above all others ... saving the world from the impending judgment.



The Pauline influence.

From Jesus to Constantine – Part 1

The Early Christian Mission

Lecture 9 - Discussion

1. What were the keys to the spread of Christianity? What BELIFS were necessary?
2. Where is the evidence that all Christians were “lower class”? Paul certainly was not!
3. Christianity was Multilingual – Aramaic, Latin, Greek and others ... understandable in many countries. (Paul of Tarsus [and Jesus] was multilingual)
4. Early books of what became the Bible ... Paul does not mention his “preaching” in Grecian Forums or Roman Market Places (businesses?).
5. Was Paul the salesman that “sold” this new religion ... emphasizing “dead idols”, fear of apocalypse and judgment ... resurrection, salvation, miracles and exclusivity?
6. If Jesus lived and taught unconditional LOVE, how did the One God of Judaism, become one who Judges good and bad and punishes, then becomes the Exclusive “True” God ... for all ... Only if they are Christians?

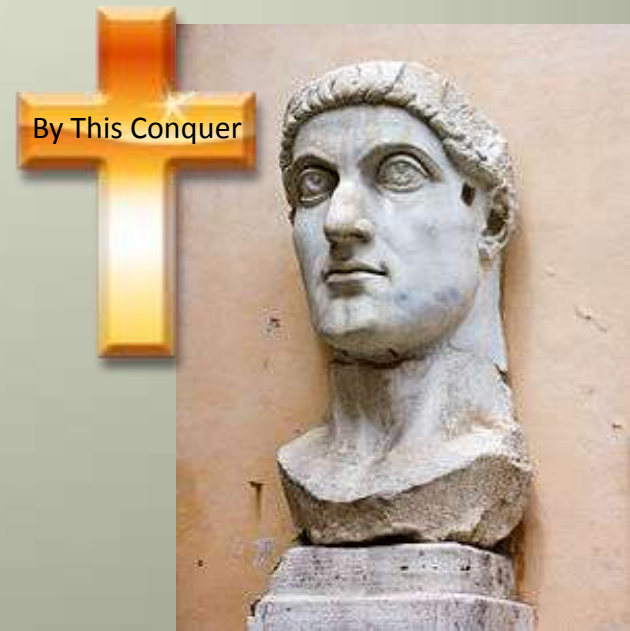
From Jesus to Constantine – Part 1

The Christianization of the Roman Empire

Lecture 10

MAIN TOPICS:

1. Miracles ... Impress for Success!
2. Three centuries of upheaval pay off.
3. How did Christianity grow before Constantine approved of it?
4. Constantine's conversion changed everything.
5. Exclusivity and Miracles created devoted followers, even among the aristocrats and rulers of Rome.



Constantine.

From Jesus to Constantine – Part 1

The Roman Empire becomes Christian

Lecture 10 - Discussion

1. Joseph of Arimathea became the 12th Disciple. Also, there were 75 to 120 “followers”, many were well educated. Were the “miracles” and/or “thousands of conversions” exaggerated? Some disciples were “Theraputae”.
2. Once Constantine “converted”, (313) Christianity became politically correct. He decreed, *"it is proper that the Christians and all others should have liberty to follow that mode of religion which to each of them appeared best"*!
3. A God more powerful, grander than any other, the fear and horror of not “living right” and Miracles ... Impress for Success! THEN: Exclusivity gives the message, “Don’t be left out”! (Very Communal)
4. Did Jesus have a twin, or did he have a look-alike? (Didymos Judas Thomas) ... in India ... where some say that one of “The Wise Men” came from and Jesus traveled to and learned from?
5. Plato told the world about the perils of a “Hell”. Did Paul to repeat it?
6. Want about Commitment? Is being “Right” better than being “Loving”? How about an ideal to Live for rather than one to dire for?

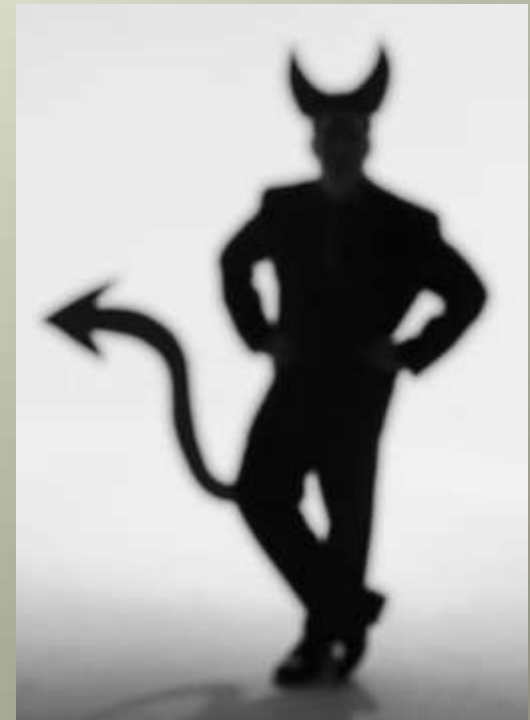
From Jesus to Constantine – Part 1

Persecutions of the Early Christians

(Reflections)

Lecture 11

1. **Persecutions:** Christian exclusivity denies the validity of all other religions, so they fight back. “The Devil” creates clashes between Celts and Christians in Vienne and Lyons, Gaul.
2. Questions arise about the meetings of this seeming “secret society”. (same today)
3. Dispelling the myths about “The Persecutions”!
4. When, where, how and why the persecutions started.
5. This minority religion was persistent, despite Dioclesions laws!



The Devil made me do it!

From Jesus to Constantine – Part 1

Early Persecutions of the Christians

Lecture 11 - Discussion

1. How big a factor was the “belief” in the “the devil”, the exclusive, all powerful Christian God and the “End Times”?
2. Have you changed your perceptions about the persecutions of Christians or their martyrdom? Why were normally tolerant Pagans intolerant?
3. Were Christians the only people persecuted? Were other unpopular individuals and groups also persecuted?
4. Christian Persecutions: Who persecuted whom 1000 years later in the Inquisitions?

NOTES: The years, 64-66 A.D. marked the end times for the origins and disciples of Christianity ... in Jerusalem, Rome, Española, Gaul and Britannia.

Christianity became the official religion in Arles France by 250 AD . Roman generals (including Constantine) “retired” there!

More may be found about our Professor, Bart D. Eherman, PhD. at

<http://www.bartdehrman.com/>

Common Myths About Early Christian Persecution

1. Christianity was an illegal religion in the empire, constantly opposed by the Roman Emperors.
2. Christians were everywhere hunted down and martyred for their faith.
3. Christians had to go into hiding in the Roman catacombs to avoid detection.
4. Many thousands of Christians died in the early persecutions.
5. Christians were opposed because they worshiped Jesus as God, and this was seen as a threat to the Roman belief that the emperor was God.

From Jesus to Constantine – Part 1

The Causes of the Persecutions

Consideration 3: Why did Pagans oppose Christianity ?

Lecture 12

MAIN TOPICS:

1. Why were so many people offended by Christianity?
2. The martyrdom of Polycarp. 156 AD.
3. Persecutions rooted in fear, judgment and anger about “Our God” vs. “Your God”.
4. In the End: “Recant or pay the consequences.”



More may be found about our
Professor, Bart D. Ehrman, PhD. at
<http://www.bartdehrman.com/>

From Jesus to Constantine – Part 1

The Causes of the Persecutions

NOTE: Christian persecutions were local, occasional and sporadic.

Lecture 12 - Discussion

1. Were the persecutions due to local politics ? (as was the Crucifixion)
2. The martyrdom of Polycarp ... how much of this account is historical fact and/or theological fiction?
3. To what extent were the persecutions fuelled by a fear of the unknown? Or, was this just a clash of The Gods? Is this still happening today, between our present major world religions?
4. Can you think of other instances (current?) of “opponents” claiming immorality to tarnish those they oppose?
5. What have we learned? Do we still have some of these things happening today?

More may be found about our Professor, Bart D. Ehrman, PhD. at

<http://www.bartdehrman.com/>

Further Reading - Handout

Expand your knowledge during your break

BART EHRMANS LATEST BOOKS:

- 1. Did Jesus Exist?: The Historical Argument for Jesus of Nazareth**
- 2. The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture**
- 3. Forged: Writing in the Name of God--Why the Bible's Authors Are Not Who We Think They Are**

GOING BEYOND THE MAIN STREAM:

- 1. The Third Jesus**, by Deepak Chopra
- 2. The Mystical Life of Jesus: An Uncommon Perspective on the Life of Christ**, by Sylvia Brown
- 3. Edgar Cayce's Story of Jesus**, by Edgar Cayce and Jeffrey Furst
- 4. The Essenes**, by Dolores Cannon
- 5. Any of the Conversations with God books**, by Neale Donald Walsch

From Jesus to Constantine

End Part 1



To be continued in Part 2

A Future OLLI session (In the Winter Season)

From Jesus to Constantine

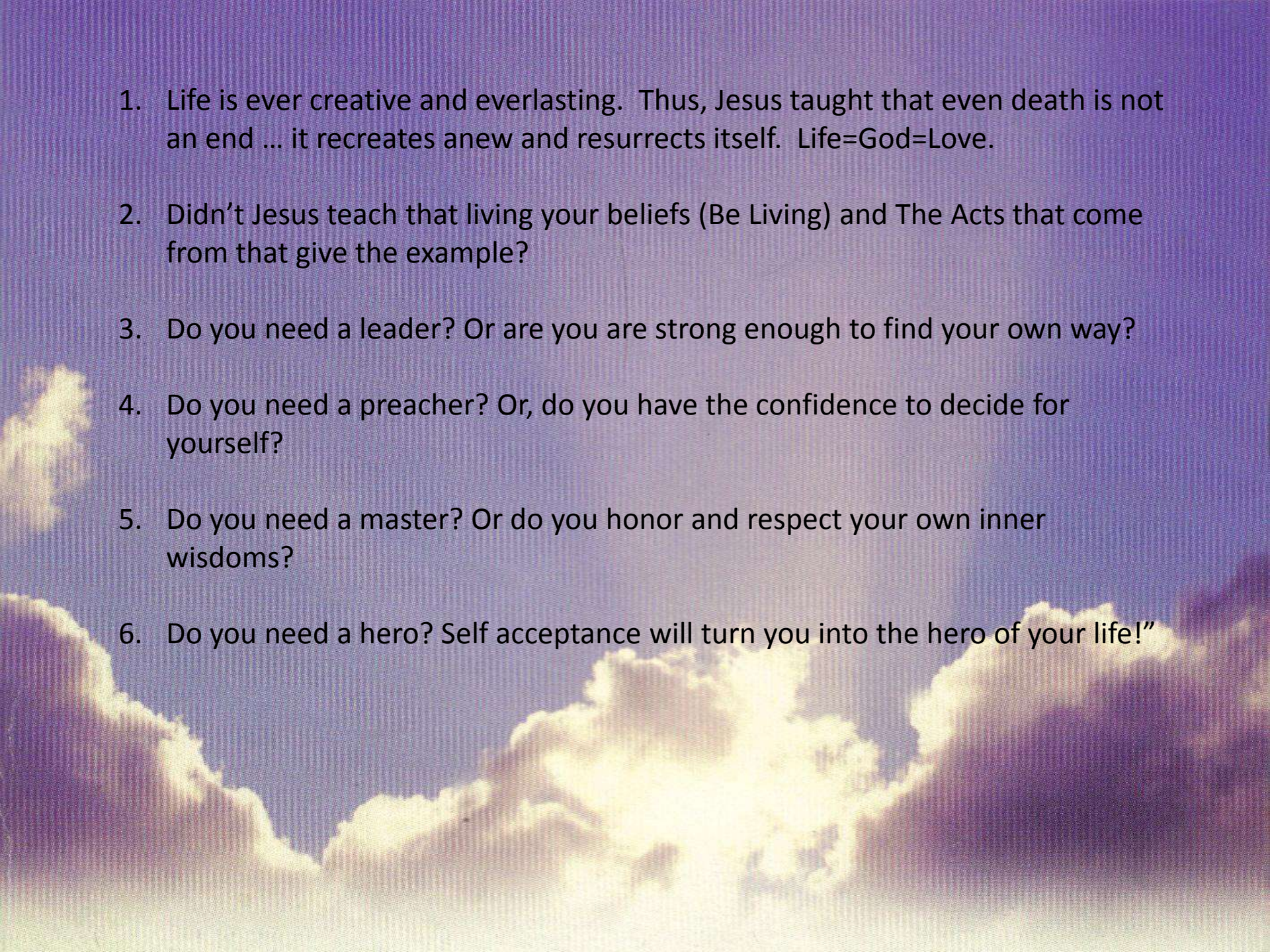
Part 2



In this OLLI class, we will discover and discuss the second and third centuries of Christian history.

Together, we will examine early Christian reactions to persecutions, the apologists and new communities as this religion evolves into its second century of existence. We will then learn more about the Apocrypha and Sacred writings as certain of these books became an official part of the church Canon. We will then learn more about how the early church offices, liturgy and theology developed. In our final meeting, we shall find out how the doctrine of “The Trinity” came about and how that helped Christianity become the religion of The Roman Empire.

This course will be facilitated by Rev. John M. Kohlenberger in the Fall II (November-December 2012) session of the OLLI Program at Yavapai College in Prescott Arizona.

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1. Life is ever creative and everlasting. Thus, Jesus taught that even death is not an end ... it recreates anew and resurrects itself. Life=God=Love.
 2. Didn't Jesus teach that living your beliefs (Be Living) and The Acts that come from that give the example?
 3. Do you need a leader? Or are you are strong enough to find your own way?
 4. Do you need a preacher? Or, do you have the confidence to decide for yourself?
 5. Do you need a master? Or do you honor and respect your own inner wisdoms?
 6. Do you need a hero? Self acceptance will turn you into the hero of your life!"