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Dear Associates and Friends,

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I wrote this month's article "[Christian in Name Only](#)" as an encouragement. You might not feel that way as you begin reading it, but that was my intent. In the article I address God's warnings and punishments toward His children, His *Ekklesia*, because those warnings and punishments are real, sometimes severe, and are to be avoided. It may impact on when you are resurrected, and that may not be when Christ returns.

The idea of being a "Christian in name only" denotes a false façade, hypocrisy by someone professing to be a Christian. In this Newsletter I want to give a quick overview of "false brethren" as a sidelight to those who are "Christian in name only." Any discussion of false brethren should start with Cain who must have acted falsely to get close enough to his brother Abel to strike and kill him.

### ***False Brethren in Israel and the Ekklesia***

Many have infiltrated God's people. The Moabite women seduced the Israelites so they would turn away from YHWH. Sex rites were part of the religious rituals of Moab and the Moabite women attempted to overwhelm Israel with sexually liberal religious practices (Numbers chapters 22–25). The mixed people known as Samaritans were brought to the area of the former northern kingdom of Israel and tried to mingle with the southern people. They continued to live and mingle with Israelites and were somewhat disreputable half-Israelites. Simon Magus, a Samaritan, shows up later as one of the original false brethren in the early *ekklesia*. The Idumeans and Iturians were also a mingled half-Jewish people:

**"It could rightly be said of both the Idumeans and Iturians that many accepted their Judaism in a religious sense often in a half-hearted way (Josephus called them 'half Jews') though obviously there were some Idumeans who took their conversions seriously."**

• [The People That History Forgot, Chapter 9](#)<sup>1</sup>

Samaritans, Idumeans, and Iturians all at various times tried to benefit from associating with and calling themselves Jews or later Christians. As Dr. Martin notes in his book, the Samaritans in particular (the "People" of the title) often posed as an alternately Jewish then Christian people. Many of them became Christian leaders.

Satan was a murderer and a liar from the beginning (John 8:44), portraying himself different than he is, as do his servants and ministers. The Gospels make clear that this applies to many of the scribes, Sadducees, and Pharisees. Later it applied to false Christian leaders after the time of the apostles:

**"For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works."**

• [2 Corinthians 11:13–15](#)

Jesus warned of false prophets who would come to the people "**in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves,**" even prophesying and performing miracles (Matthew 7:15–16, 19–23). Believers in Christ

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Ernest L. Martin, [The People That History Forgot](#) (Portland, OR: Associates for Scriptural Knowledge, 1988).

and in His resurrection were not false and did not lie. They were sheep sent out amongst the wolves just like the disciples (Matthew 10:16). During the time of the apostles there was, among others, the Jew named Barjesus who was a sorcerer and a false prophet (Acts 13:6).

Simon Magus (Acts 8:9–25), a believer for a very short time (verse 13), became a great enemy of the truth, in Christian history forming Christian apostate congregations and giving an evil reputation to believers.<sup>2</sup> A more comprehensive story of the rise of false Christianity is told in Dr. Martin’s book *The People That History Forgot*. The Samaritans readily incorporated some biblical teachings with proto-gnostic pagan beliefs and doctrines such as the immortal soul and its companion non-biblical doctrine of hell-fire punishment.<sup>3</sup> These doctrines became dominant when Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire and was politicized.

Jesus through the apostle John warned about liars in Christian congregations, even with entire congregations masquerading as Jews worshipping in synagogues of Satan (Revelation 2:9, 3:9). John also wrote about many who were false believers in Christian congregations in his time. He called them antichrists:

**“Little children, it is the last time: and as you have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.”**

• **1 John 2:18–19**

The apostle Paul writes of men at the time of Christ’s return who are traitors to the faith (2 Timothy 3:1–6). Jesus talked about many false leaders:

**“For there shall arise false Christs [plural], and false prophets [also plural], and [they] shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.”**

• **Matthew 24:24**

At the end before Christ returns, there will be a final Antichrist and False Prophet who pose as righteous individuals. Along with evil spirits they succeed in deceiving most of the world (Revelation chapter 13).

## **Thank You**

Many of you have helped ASK remain independent for decades. It is a remarkable achievement for you to be faithful and we are extremely grateful for your dedication, persistence, and loyalty. At present ASK is continuing its work, dedicated to understandable presentations of straightforward biblical teaching. Every time I do a radio program or work on ASK material I have you, my audience, in mind. You represent the *ekklesia* of God, a small corner and portion of it, yet you are laying the groundwork for the future.

Pray that the information on the ASK website and the written materials, books, audios, and videos will remain available to serve the people of God. New people coming to the ASK website report that they are stunned at the vast array of fascinating biblical teaching that is available, and most of it is free to everyone around the world. It is free because you help provide for their access. Pray that God opens the hearts of those new people to help others, as you have done. Thank you and God bless you all.

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<sup>2</sup> Eusebius, *Church History*, Book 2, §§13–14.

<sup>3</sup> At this time (and for the next 300+ years) most all of the *ekklesia* believed in the biblical doctrine of universal salvation. See Dr. Martin’s article “[The Recognition of Universal Reconciliation, Part 2](#)” and my article “[The Recognition of Universal Reconciliation, Part 3](#).” See also John Wesley Hanson’s book, *Universalism, the Prevailing Doctrine of the Christian Church during its First Five Hundred Years* (Boston and Chicago: Universalist Publishing House, 1899) available free from Google Books. The concept of “eternity” did not enter theological discourse until the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD.