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had such an effective ministry, it seems very likely that at least some of those “dwelling at Jerusalem” had been influenced by his ministry.

4. Jesus’ Teachings on Repentance

Jesus taught a strict message of repentance. Luke records Jesus using the term twelve times. “Repent” is the first word Matthew records Jesus as using. Jesus taught many thousands of people in His short ministry. On one occasion, He fed five thousand men with their families (probably about 20,000 people) and healed all their sick. On another occasion, Jesus fed a crowd of about four thousand men (probably about 16,000 people). We know of many occasions in Jesus’ ministry where He preached to multitudes. In describing Jesus’ ministry, Matthew uses the term multitude forty-two times. For someone who had seen crowds as big as twenty thousand, the term multitude would mean a great number of people. They were accustomed to seeing much greater crowds than what we can gather. Since Jesus taught repentance, there would have been tens of thousands of people who had been taught about repentance. Jesus also taught extensively in the synagogues. Matthew says He went about “all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues” (Matthew 9:35). All this was done in a very small area (a little larger than the state of New Hampshire). The “saturation” of the populace was far greater than anything we have ever witnessed in modern times (also see Luke 4:14; 23:5).

5. The Disciples of Jesus

Jesus commissioned twelve disciples and later added seventy more to that number. Between John the Baptist, Jesus and seventy-two known disciples, the message of repentance would have been very well established in that small area where they confined their ministries. The fact that Peter began his outline of the new-birth message with the word “repent” only adds to our belief that the disciples were faithful to Jesus’ teachings on repentance.

6. Influence From the Upper Room

The one hundred twenty who received the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost would have understood repentance. The church started with 120 altar workers!

7. Enough Time to Repent

The Holy Ghost was poured out early in the morning. Since John, Jesus and over eighty disciples preached repentance, a great number of people had been influenced toward repentance. Those assembled had much less repenting to do than most other people, so it is easy to believe they understood how to repent and that they had enough time to repent, since they had so many people to help them repent.

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Repentance at Pentecost?—E. W. Wheeler

“Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41).

Did three thousand people repent before receiving the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost? The short answer is “yes,” because we have no scriptural authority to believe anyone can receive the Holy Ghost without repenting. We also know it was a common practice to require people to repent before being baptized. The larger question then, is how could this have happened? We need to keep several points in mind here.

1. Doctrinal and Spiritual Background of the People

Those who received the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost were devout Jews. The KJV calls them “devout,” from the Greek term *eulabies*, which Thayer defines as “reverencing God, pious, religious.” Both the Amplified, and the NIV, render this term as “God fearing.” The men gathered on the Day of Pentecost were God’s chosen people who came from all parts of the known world. Their devotion sets them apart as deeply religious. They came from Jewish stock who believed in one God for many generations, dating back to Abraham. To be considered “devout,” they would have had to have been faithful to the Jewish faith which taught very high standards of moral behavior; strict family values; loyalty to, and financial support of, places of worship; respect for spiritual leaders and the promise of a Messiah whom they were to follow. They had much less repenting to do than those we reach for today.

2. Their Stay in Jerusalem

These men were “dwelling” at Jerusalem. They were not mere visitors, but had resided there for some time. During this time of residence in Jerusalem, it is very likely they heard much about repentance. They were not only deeply religious, but spiritually sensitive to the voice of God. The Spirit led them to Jerusalem to be part of the birth of the church, which would be built on the foundation of Judaism. God knew who to prompt to return to Jerusalem.

The Scriptures do not tell us how long they had been residing at Jerusalem, but it is very possible that many had been back in Jerusalem long enough to have heard Jesus or some of His many disciples teach.

3. John the Baptist and Repentance

Repentance was a key element in the teachings of John the Baptist, who had a very wide and great influence over the thinking of many. John began his ministry with the word “repent” (Matthew 3:1-2). He taught a very strict message of repentance, refusing to baptize many religious leaders (Matthew 3:7-10).

John baptized a great number of people. Matthew says he baptized “all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan,” (Matthew 3:5). The Gospel of John says “*all men come to him*” (John 3:26). Peter says John preached “throughout all Judea” (Acts 10:37).

The influence of John’s ministry lived long and traveled far. John had disciples, many years after his death and far from Judea. Apollos was John’s disciple. He was from Alexandria, but was in Ephesus, serving God faithfully, according to John’s teachings, when he was converted (Acts 18:24-28). Paul converted twelve men at Ephesus who were faithful disciples of John. Since John

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Success Can Be Very Seductive—Galen Gregg

I had a recent conversation with a young man who had been wronged. He is trying his best to do the will of God and God is blessing with success. The wrong done to him gave him the opportunity to get a bad attitude. That's how failure almost always starts.

One of this young man's efforts had been misunderstood. Remarks were repeated to others and to him that were unkind and could even be interpreted as insulting. I heard hurt in his voice. He had been misunderstood and accused unjustly by someone he should have been able to trust. It will be easy for him to let it fester. Bitterness is subtle. I think he will make it just fine, but I know if it were me I would have a struggle.

Following is something I came across called "Paradoxical Commandments of Leadership." I don't know its origination.

- ◆ People are illogical, unreasonable, and self-centered—Love them anyway.
- ◆ If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish ulterior motives—do good anyway.
- ◆ If you're successful, you'll win false friends and true enemies—succeed anyway.
- ◆ The good you do today will perhaps be forgotten tomorrow—do good anyway.
- ◆ Honesty and frankness make you vulnerable—be honest and frank anyway.
- ◆ The biggest man with the biggest ideas can be shot down by the smallest man with the smallest mind—think big anyway.
- ◆ People favor underdogs but follow only hot dogs—fight for the few underdogs anyway.
- ◆ What you spend years building may be destroyed overnight—build anyway.
- ◆ People really need help but may attack you if you help them—help them anyway.
- ◆ Give the world the best that you have and you will get kicked in the teeth—give the world the best that you have anyway.
- ◆ If better is possible, then good is not enough.

Rise above. Eagles soar where the air is crisp and clean. Chickens peck and scratch in the barnyard manure. Soar above it man . . . soar above.

The Age of Narcissism—D.S. Garza

“Remember that there will be difficult times in the last days. People will be selfish . . .”

Narcissistic personality disorder is defined as a condition that’s characterized by a preoccupation with one’s self and by an exaggerated sense of self-importance. The origin of the word *narcissism* comes from Greek mythology. The story is an old one—the young man Narcissus falls head over heels in love with his own reflection and the tale ultimately ends in tragedy as he pines away adoring the image of his own face.

Society at large suffers from narcissism. For example, when one parent doesn’t want his child to pray in school, he wants to deny all children the option of praying in school. Certain groups do not want anything even remotely religious in our courtrooms, symbolic or otherwise, so they seek to ban it. While the teaching of Islam in our public schools is regarded as promoting multiculturalism and tolerance, the teaching of Christianity is viewed as being intolerant and divisive. The problem is that one group or segment of society has an inflated sense of importance. What else could explain their sense of entitlement and self-absorption? This driving force makes a very small segment of the populace bent on trying to make everyone else acquiesce to its demands.

Exaggerated self-esteem is one of the hallmarks of a narcissistic personality. Self-esteem seems to be overrated in our public schools. It’s not whether students understand what they are reading, or if they have efficient math skills, but what’s considered really important, is how they feel about themselves. So the result is that we are turning out confident dummies—people who feel good about themselves but can’t spell, read, or write. A study completed in the 1980’s confirms this point. While Americans scored lowest in overall competence in math skills and Koreans scored highest—when the students were asked to evaluate their math skills, the results were exactly opposite: the Americans thought they scored highest, and the Koreans thought they scored lowest.

Narcissism and the spirit of selfishness have destroyed many marriages. One study asserts that narcissists "are more likely to have romantic relationships that are short-lived, at risk for infidelity, lack emotional warmth, . . ." exhibit “dishonesty, and over-controlling and violent behaviors.” In order for marriage to be successful, it must be selfless, not selfish. The Bible says, “Love is patient and kind; it is not jealous or conceited or proud; love is not ill-mannered or selfish or irritable; love does not keep a record of wrongs” (1 Corinthians 13:4-5 GNB).

In this age of narcissism we must detest self-absorption and selfishness. One man said, “The only thing necessary to change heaven into hell—if God were to allow it—is selfishness.” “Where there is jealousy and selfishness, there is also disorder and every kind of evil” (James 3:16 TEV). An author of a recent book that deals with misconceptions surrounding black culture said, “There was a generation that understood that it was . . . God, first; family, second; and me, last.” But today’s generation is about . . . me, myself, and I.

In a recent Republican debate, one of the candidates was asked about “black on black crime.” His response was remarkable. He said that what a child needs is a mother and a father. Unfortunately, the spirit of Narcissus has visited some of the poorer areas of our cities. Fathers are missing in action. And because of this, these children will never have a loving and devoted father to teach and guide them. Women also have been visited by this selfish spirit resulting in their aborting their own babies. Abortion is a completely narcissistic act. Another candidate responded to a question on abortion by saying that, “in thirty years as a medical doctor he has not ever had to perform an abortion for purely medical reasons.” Simply put, a woman becomes pregnant and she aborts her child because she does not want it.

Alcoholism and drug addition are also narcissistic. An alcoholic will not stop drinking for anybody including his wife or children. Regardless of the trauma caused to their marriage, the anguish inflicted on the children, and the toll they take on society, they expect everyone to put up with all the chaos and nonsense that they can possibly cause. After all, it’s a sickness.

Absalom, a son of David, would have been able to play the role of Narcissus very well. There are even a few striking parallels to their tragic lives: (1) both were taken by their own appearance (Absalom was so vain that he polled his hair once a year); (2) both had avoidable deaths; (3) both their names live on in infamy, (they will forever be remembered for their narcissism and self-love); (4) both have been immortalized—Narcissus has a flower named after him; Absalom erected a pillar to himself. Absalom was a self-promoter. He was a legend in his own mind. He desperately needed the limelight. He could not help but trumpet his own supposed wisdom. But the Bible says, “Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips” (Proverbs 27:2). It is always better for someone else to praise our achievements.

A person who was the complete opposite of Absalom was Cornelius. His prayer built a memorial before God; Absalom reared up a memorial to himself. Cornelius built something in God that benefited others. Absalom, and the Absalom’s of this world build kingdoms for themselves. The Bible says, “Eating too much honey is not good, and searching for honor is not honorable” (Proverbs 25:27 GW). It also says, “It isn’t the person who makes his own recommendation who receives approval, but the person whom the Lord recommends” (2 Corinthians 10:18 GW). Let’s build something for God. The benefit is two-fold: (1) it is something that will truly last, and (2) it will always benefit others.

The Secrets of Intangible Wealth—Thomas Weisser

Recently the World Bank did a study on what constitutes the wealth of a nation. They found that the intangible assets of a nation are more important in determining wealth than its tangible assets. Tangible assets include oil, natural gas, coal and mineral resources, cropland, pastureland, forested areas, machinery, equipment, structures and urban land. Intangible assets include trust among people, an efficient judicial system, clear property rights, and effective government.

They found that the countries with very little intangible wealth are poor. Those with large amounts of intangible wealth are rich. The poor countries offer very little opportunity for their citizens. The rich countries offer great potential for their citizens. Poor countries are poor because they lack skilled workers and the institutions supporting economic activity. Rich countries are rich because of the skills of their populations and the quality of the institutions supporting economic activity.

When the New Testament was written the great world empire was the Roman Empire. In Paul's epistle to the church in Rome he ignores the glories of that empire, and instead points out its moral depravity. In the course of his letter he points to a downtrodden people dominated by Rome. He asks the question; "What advantage then hath the Jew?" The advantage was intangible; "unto them were committed the oracles of God." The Old Testament was and is much more valuable than all the products of Greek and Roman philosophy, religion, and culture.

When considering the spiritual wealth of churches that call themselves Christian, we must look for intangible wealth. If we just considered tangible wealth, we could be led astray and would find ourselves in deep spiritual poverty. The wealth of churches is not measured by tangible assets such as land, buildings, etc. It is measured by the quality of intangibles such as the message preached and the hope given. The most valuable message to a sinner is the gospel. This is summed up in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The way the sinner makes this real to himself is by dying in repentance, being buried with him in baptism, and arising to newness of life with the infilling of the Holy Ghost. This new-birth experience is encapsulated by Peter in Acts 2:38.

Churches that do not preach this basic gospel message are poverty stricken spiritually. Churches that do preach this gospel have great wealth and their members can accomplish great things spiritually.

The Origin of the Trinity—William Chalfant

Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 150-213), head of one of the early Christian schools, was heavily influenced by philosophy and Gnosticism. He admitted that he was opposed by Christians who still considered philosophy "evil." He made fun of their opposition and said that they were light and ignorant. He denounced the "so-called orthodoxy, who like beasts which work from fear, do good works without knowing what they are doing."

But Clement, of course, *knew* what he was doing! He had a special *gnosis* (knowledge) that the ignorant "orthodox" did not possess. And from this supercilious, gnosticizing attitude of the so-called Christian "apologists," such as Justin, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian, the Logos doctrine sprang, blasphemously adding a second divine "Person" to the Godhead, with their teaching of Christ "emanating" from the Father before the virgin birth. Even men, such as Irenaeus of Lyons, who professed to be anti-gnostic, adapted the gnostic idea of a second divine Person, who "emanated" from the Father. They re-characterized the Lord Jesus into an eternal "subordinated" divine Person. This blasphemous feature is still present in their teaching today.

The Trinity can be seen in the pantheons of the pagan gods, and it can be traced back through Rome and Greece to Babylon. In those pantheons, "triads" of gods were well known, such as the Sumerian El-lil (storm god), Ea (water deity), and Anu (sun god). The prominent triad in the Roman pantheon was Jupiter, Venus, and Mercury (the messenger or "logos" god). The Alexandrian Neo-Platonic teachers, such as Numenius of Apamea (fl. A.D. 175), and the earlier Philo of Alexandria, were already attempting a syncretism of paganism, Judaism and Christianity. Numenius boasted that he had gone back to Plato, Socrates, and Pythagoras, and "to the ancient tradition of the Brahmins, Magi, Egyptians, and Jews, (to restore to the philosophical schools) the forgotten doctrine of Three Gods."

Such influences were not lost upon the Catholic "architects" of the Trinity doctrine during this time period. Charles Bigg called Numenius, along with the Catholic father, Clement of Alexandria, "a founder of Neo-Platonism." Clement influenced Hippolytus, Tertullian, and Origen (all of them considered "architects" of the Trinity doctrine).

Tertullian (A.D. 160-220) "perfected" the Christian "Triad," adding the Holy Spirit to the Logos as the "third divine Person." He was a Montanist, and emphasized the "Holy Spirit" as a separate divine Person. It is interesting that almost all of the "architects" of the Christian "Trinity" were outside the pale of the orthodox Apostolic Church. Justin Martyr was not even accepted by the bishops of the Roman church, who were Oneness. Irenaeus opposed the duly elected Roman bishops because of his affinity for the Montanists. Hippolytus, a student of Irenaeus, left the district of Rome and caused a split. He opposed Bishops Zephyrinus and Callistus, who were believers in the Oneness of God. And Tertullian wrote his great trinitarian work (*Against Praxeas*) as a Montanist!

The architects of the Trinity were not part of the orthodox Apostolic Church. They opposed the truth, and had no valid connection with the teaching of the apostles. Why should we accept their doctrine which was formed by rebels?