



presents

# CHURCH HISTORY MONTHLY

Apr 2022, Vol. 2, no. 4, Page 1/2

## Timeline of Topics.

- Quote:
- 700s, Isaac of Ninevah, Orthodox monk
- Old Testament
- What is the oldest piece of the OT that we have?
- 1700s
- Origin of the Easter Sunrise Service
- American Church History
- Origin of Mormons and discussing their success

### Did you know? (100 False NT books exist)

A little known fact is that within a 125 years of Jesus' birth, 125 different writings existed that claimed to be Christian. Most were not, of course, and it took the early church about 300 years to weed out the heretical and error-filled books and arrive at the true 27 books of the New Testament. These extra books are referred to as Apocrypha. If you would like to learn more about them, I will teach a free, online three-week class starting on Monday (Apr 4). It will take 3-4 hours per week, you will meet people from around the world in the class, and you will learn about both types of NT Apocrypha.

---To join, click here

Some of the Apocrypha:

- Acts of Peter and the Twelve Apostles
- Gospel of Thomas
- Gospel of Judas
- Revelation of Peter
- The Arabic Infancy Gospel of the Savior
- Gospel of Nicodemus
- Acts of Paul and Thecla

***Already taken these classes? Invite a friend to take them.***

***How did the Easter Sunrise Service begin?  
Hint, the same people who started it also sent out some of the first Protestant missionaries.***

For the answer to this question, we have to meet Count Zinzendorf from Germany and a group of Christians who once lived in present-day Czech Republic. Count Kikolaus Ludwig Graf von Zinzendorf (1700-1760) owned a large tract of land in what today is eastern Germany. Living in Germany, he followed in the footsteps of Martin Luther and was a Protestant. Across the border in Bohemia and Moravia lived a people known as the *Unitas Fratrum* (Latin, "society of brothers"), or also as the *Bohemian Brethren*. Although also Protestant, they were few in number and persecuted. Because of this, they sought a safe haven. Zinzendorf agreed to allow these Christian immigrants to move to his land; they built a village and named it *Herrnhut*. *Herrnhut* became a magnet for others who were oppressed due to differing Protestant ideas. They did have struggles but remained unified. Due to Zinzendorf's influence, they immediately began to send out missionaries. Thus this group, now known as the *Moravians*, was mission-minded from its inception. Within two decades missionaries had been sent to places as far away as Greenland, South Africa, Georgia (to work with Indians), and the West Indies (to work with black slaves). *Herrnhut* became such a widely recognized center of Christian missions that even John Wesley visited in 1738. Part of the community gathered early on Easter morning in 1732 at the town's cemetery. They gathered to watch the sun rise and celebrate the rising of Jesus from the dead. And so the Easter Sunrise Service was born. Those who had gone out as missionaries continued this practice. The groups in the West Indies and Georgia eventually traveled to Pennsylvania, founding the city of Bethlehem. And the Moravians in newly-established Bethlehem celebrated Easter in 1741 with the first Easter Sunrise Service in America.

**Explaining how great the mercy of God is: “A handful of sand, thrown into the sea, is what sinning is, when compared to God’s Providence and mercy. Just like an abundant source of water is not impeded by a handful of dust, so is the Creator’s mercy not defeated by the sins of His creations.”**

**Isaac of Nineveh, Orthodox bishop and monk (d. c. 700)**

## **MORMONS: THE MOST SUCCESSFUL UTOPIAN MOVEMENT OF 1800S AMERICA**

Over the years many people have come to America in order to better their living conditions. But, some Americans felt that being in America was not enough, so they formed separate groups that were self-reliant and independent. Many of these groups developed in the 1800s and are known as Utopian communities, since they wanted to establish a Utopia on earth. The self-identity of these groups ranged widely, some Christian, some with their own unique form of religion, and some socio-economic. Some lasted several years, and at least two are still in existence. But don’t think it was a minor trend: over 100 of these communities formed in the 1700s to early 1900s, with many being Christian.

The communities generally discouraged frequent interaction with “outsiders.” In some cases, members gave all their possessions to the group. When members decided to leave, some groups returned the belongings or investments or property, and, in other cases, not. In some communities members were allowed to keep their possessions. But all the communities strongly encouraged members to donate money, time, and energy to community projects.

In some cases, the whole community moved. The Harmonists began in Pennsylvania, bought 30,000 acres in Indiana and moved the whole group (700 members) in 1814, then returned to Pennsylvania in 1825. They sold the land in Indiana to another Utopian group, which itself failed after a couple of years.

Concerning family life, some groups practiced celibacy, most groups practiced one-man-one-woman marriages, one practiced one man-multiple wives, and one practiced complex marriages (every man is married to every woman). Of all the communities founded in the 1800s, only two remain. One is very small and one is very large. The Shakers, as of 2021, had 3 members. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, also known as the Mormons, has over 15 million members. Why were the Mormons so successful when all others failed? This is my guess:

1. They practiced polygamy until 1890. That practice was rejected right as Utah became a state (1896).
2. Early on, Mormons developed the practice of young men going on mission trip (even in the mid-1800s).
3. Most people do not know this, but the Mormons were forced to move over long distances 3 times, ending up in Salt Lake City. This travel produced a strong cohesion amongst the young group.
4. Salt Lake City is located in the desert beside a salt lake. This ensured the one thing they wanted after being forced to move so many times: isolation. After all, who would want to live because a salt lake in the desert? This isolation produce a community self-reliance that Mormons still feel today.
5. Their leader, Joseph Smith, was shot and killed. Mormons view him as a martyr, and martyrs have a way of causing their followers to sacrifice even more.

### *What is the earliest piece of the Old Testament that has been discovered?*

The earliest known fragment of Scripture that has been discovered is not on parchment (animal skins), stone, or pottery. Instead, it was etched onto a piece of flattened silver and is called Ketef Hinnom II and dates to around 600 BC. When discovered, the piece of silver, which measures about 1 1/2 inch by a half inch, was rolled up like a tiny scroll. Some scholars believe that a string ran through the “scroll” and was worn as a necklace. But the fact that it was rolled like a scroll caused problems because, well, it is hard to unroll a small roll of silver.

Eventually the Israel Museum laboratory slowly unrolled the silver over a period of months. They could tell there was writing but could not read it because the metal was worn down and distorted. Therefore, the researchers developed new techniques involving electronic photography and computer analysis in order to read the writing.

What was written on Ketef Hinnom II? “May he [or she] be blessed by Yahweh, the warrior [or helper] and the rebuker of [e]vil. May Yahweh bless you, keep you. May Yahweh make his face shine upon you and grant you p[ea]ce.” The second and third sentences are a shortened form of what is known as the High Priestly Prayer found in Numbers 6:24-26. The brackets [] mean that part was missing or added to make sense. “Yahweh” is the name for God which He gave to Moses.

So there you have it: the oldest part of the Bible that we have is, in fact, a blessing.

Questions, comments, or want to join  
a free class contact Mark at  
marknickens@gmail.com

©2022 Mark Nickens

Original work or adapted from studythechurch.com  
A division of Trinitas Institute, LLC