

Irenaeus: Against Heresies - Part One
A Great Cloud of Witnesses: A Study of the Early Church
Lesson 9

I. Introduction to Heresies and Heretics

- A. Heresy - a person or group _____ in beliefs _____ to revealed orthodoxy yet claiming orthodoxy with the result of _____
- B. Irenaeus wrote what he wrote against heresies and heretics because the “knowledge falsely so-called” had crept into the _____
- C. Irenaeus’ goal was two-fold:
1. To make it impossible to confuse _____ knowledge with _____ knowledge
 2. To make it impossible for false knowledge to continue as a credible option for _____

II. Gnosticism: Its Presence in History

A. Dates of Influence

1. Gnostic influence lasted from the _____ to _____ century AD
 - a) The Early Church points to _____ as its founder (70-100 AD)
 - b) Another heresy known as Manichaeism seems to have _____ it in the 4th century
 - (1) As a young man searching for answers to life, Augustine fell under the influence of the Manichaeans with their Gnostic undertones (373-384 AD)

B. Manuscript Evidence

1. Nag Hammadi Discovery
 - a) In 1945, near Nag Hammadi, Egypt, 52 papyrus texts were discovered in a jar dated to the 4th century written in the Coptic language revealed to be Gnostic writings verifying the description of Gnosticism by Irenaeus and other Church Fathers
2. Another Famous (Infamous) Manuscript - *The Gospel of Judas*

III. Gnosticism: Its Belief System

- A. _____ truly knows what Gnosticism is...not even the Gnostics

B. General Points of Agreement

1. Belief in _____ with Bythus as the supreme Aeon who started everything
2. Belief in a _____, who is the by-product god who creates everything material, including the heavens and the earth
3. Belief in a radical form of _____
4. Belief that redemption is possible for those with the “_____” through special “_____”
5. Belief that their special knowledge includes _____ to navigate through the universe and _____ to pass through the gates of the planets once the spirit has been released from the body in death
6. Belief that they have scriptural support from the _____ for their belief system
7. Belief that they saw themselves as _____

IV. Gnosticism: Its Cosmogony and Redemption

A. Illustration - Gnostic Cosmogony and Redemption

B. Outline - Realm of the Gnostic Aeons

V. The Verdict of Irenaeus

A. Rule of Faith

1. Heretical views must be weighed against the _____ because this represents the Bible’s boundaries for _____ and _____

VI. For Study...

A. Read: *Deviations from the Truth by Various Heretics*