

# THE DIDACHE

CAN WE TRUST IT?



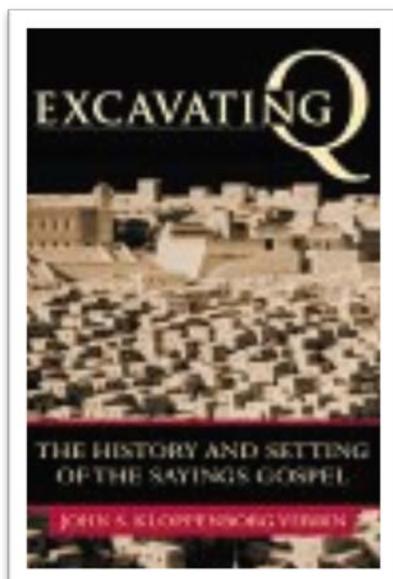
STEVEN RITCHIE



**DIDACHE** simply means “teaching” or “instruction.” The Didache is erroneously called “The Teaching(s) of the Twelve Apostles” although the apostles never wrote it.

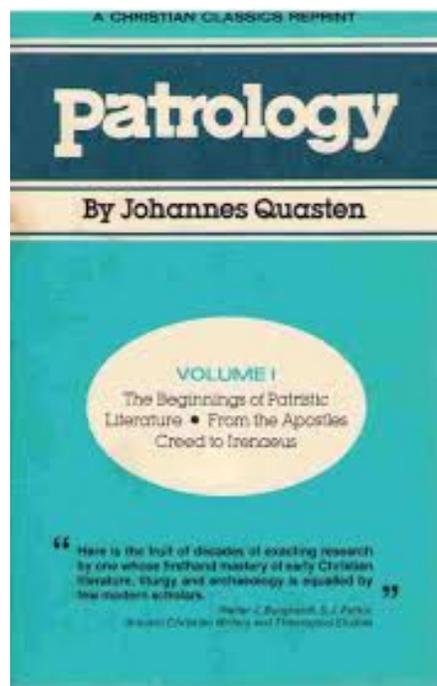
The only manuscript we have of the Didache was discovered in 1873 in Constantinople (modern day Turkey). The manuscript is signed, “Leon, notary and sinner,” and bears the date, A.D. 1056.

John S. Kloppenborg Verbin comments on the Didache (*Excavating Q*, pp. 134-135):



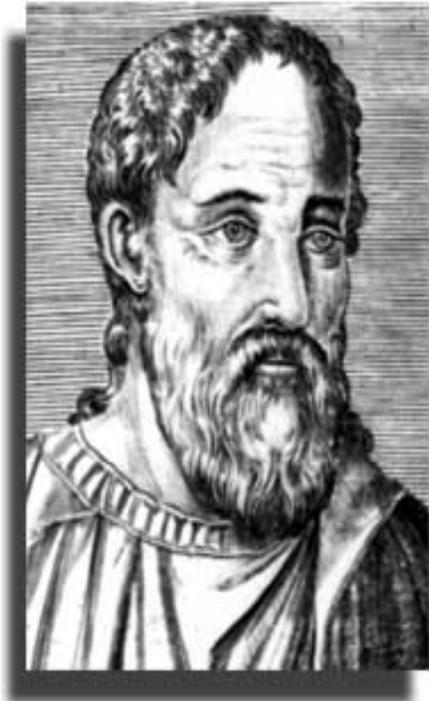
“**The *Didache*, an early second-century Christian composition**, is also clearly composite, consisting of a “Two Ways” section (chaps. 1-6), a liturgical manual (7-10), instructions on the reception of traveling prophets (11-15), and a brief apocalypse (16). **Marked divergences in style and content as well as the presence of doubtless and obvious interpolations, make plain the fact that the *Didache* was not cut from whole cloth.**”

The dominant view today is that the document was composed on the basis of several independent, preredactional units which were assembled by either one or two redactors (Neiderwimmer 1989:64-70, ET 1998:42-52). Comparison of the "Two Ways" section with several other "Two Ways" documents suggests that *Didache* 1-6 is itself the result of multistage editing. The document began with rather haphazard organization (cf. *Barnabas* 18-20), but was reorganized in a source common to the *Didache*, the *Doctrina apostolorum*, and the *Apostolic Church Order* ...”



Church historians such as Johannes Quasten wrote that the *Didache* **was not written during the lifetime of the original apostles and that “the document was tampered with by later insertions.”** *Patrology* Vol. 1, Page 36

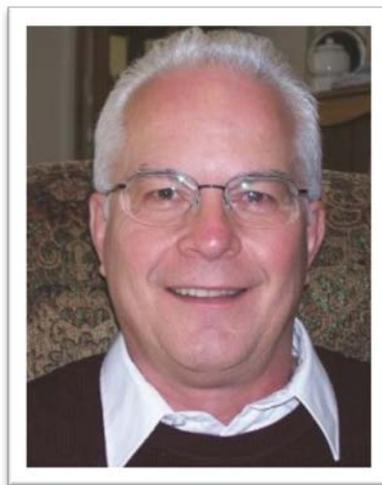
Johannes Quasten wrote, “... the document does not go back to the apostolic times ... Furthermore, such a collection of ecclesiastical ordinances presupposes a period of stabilization of some duration. **Scattered details indicate that the apostolic age is no longer contemporary, but has passed into history.**” *Patrology* Vol. 1, Page 36, Johannes Quasten



In the early fourth century, Eusebius of Caesarea wrote that “... the so-called Teachings of the Apostles ...” was “spurious” (Eusebius History 3:25) because it was not written by the apostles.

There is so much controversy over the authenticity of the Didache that I had to expend an enormous amount of time researching the historical data to uncover the truth. After thorough research, I have concluded that the Didache contains the beliefs and practices of some early Christians during the early to mid-second century. It was known as a “spurious” document by the time of Eusebius because it was not recognized as being the actual “teaching” of the original twelve apostles.

The Didache appears to be a collection of early to mid-second century Christian writings combined together by an unknown scribe sometime in the second century. Unfortunately, scholars have identified so many later interpolations and editions to the Didache that we can no longer trust the veracity of its contents.



*Photo: Thomas Weisser, author of the book, “Was The Early Church Oneness or Trinitarian?”*

The following data and quotes are from the book “Was The Early Church Oneness or Trinitarian?” – By Thomas Weisser

The particular part that we are concerned with is Didache 7.

“But concerning baptism, thus shall ye baptize. Having first recited all these things, **baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in living (running) water.** But if thou hast not living water, then baptize in other water; and if thou art not able in cold then in warm.”

This part of Didache 7 is not problematic. I can see a preference for baptizing in running water (rivers) because the water is usually cleaner, but I don’t see why there would be a preference for cold water above warm water among the early Christians. Although the passage appears a bit nonsensical, there is no clear violation of inspired scripture.

The Didache merely repeats the words of Mathew 28:19 which is a command to baptize in THE NAME (the Name in the singular) of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit which the apostles proved to be Jesus (Acts 2:38; Acts 8:16; Acts 10:48; Acts 19:5). In chapter 9, the Didache goes on to say, “But **let no one eat or drink of your Eucharist, unless they have been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus.**” Thus there is no scriptural contradiction in the Didache at this point because Didache chapter 9 clarifies that water baptism into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is properly carried out “into the name of the Lord Jesus.” However, the next sentence in Didache 7 presents a problem with dating as it contradicts both scripture and early Christian history.

“But **if thou hast neither, then pour water on the head thrice (three times), in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.**”

Trinitarians claim this proves the Early Church was Trinitarian rather than Oneness.

Thomas Weisser wrote,

“Let us first consider that we are dealing with either a forgery” or a document that was corrupted by later interpolations. “Although it is ascribed to the Apostles they probably never saw it. Secondly, the internal evidence points to Didache 7 as an interpolation, or later addition. In Didache 9, which deals with communion, the writer says, ‘**But let no one eat or drink of this**

**eucharistic thanksgiving, but they that have been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus** (the Greek text says “Iesous” which is Greek for Jesus) ...”

It is unlikely that Didache chapter 9 was a later interpolation adding baptism into the name of the Lord Jesus because we know that the first century apostles baptized “in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 8:16; Acts 19:5). It is also very interesting that Didache 9 says, “But let no one eat or drink of this Eucharistic thanksgiving (the Lord’s Supper)” but only those who “have been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus.” It is probable that this sentence was never tampered with. Therefore, I believe that Apostolic Assemblies should never give the Lord’s Supper to unbelievers who have not repented and have not been baptized in Jesus Name. For the Lord’s Supper is only for true believers who have been baptized.

Didache chapter 9 states the absolute necessity of being baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus (i.e., “Iesous” - the same Greek word as in Acts 2:38; Acts 8:16; Acts 10:48; Acts 19:5). This represents an obvious contradiction and gives validity to the argument that at least part of Didache 7 is an interpolation.

Thomas Weisser wrote, “Thirdly, **the writer's approval of baptism by pouring presents a problem with dating it in the first century. Church Historian Charles Bigg pointed out that Didache 7 “must have been written after A.D. 250.” He argued that “pouring was generally unacceptable in baptism as late as Cyprian (c.250). Therefore, Didache 7 could be no earlier than the late third century.”**

From the book, “Was the Early Church Oneness or Trinitarian?” By Thomas Weisser – The Symposium on Oneness Pentecostalism, 1986. St. Louis, Mo. / Bigg, Charles, The Doctrine of the Twelve Apostles (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1898), p. 58.

There are some interesting contents within the Didache that were likely written in the early second century. Yet there are so many later interpolations and editions to the Didache that we cannot be certain about the veracity any of its contents. Therefore I’m going to read the Didache and give my commentary on the portions of the Didache I think were written in the second century, while exposing some of the obvious interpolations

# The Didache



## The Lord's Teaching Through the Twelve Apostles to the Nations.

**Chapter 1. The Two Ways and the First Commandment (likely composed from genuine early second century Christian literature).** There are two ways, one of life and one of death, but a great difference between the two ways. The way of life, then, is this: First, you shall love God who made you; second, love your neighbor as yourself, and do not do to another what you would not want done to you. And of these sayings the teaching is this: Bless those who curse you, and pray for your enemies, and fast for those who persecute you. For what reward is there for loving those who love you? Do not the Gentiles do the same? But love those who hate you, and you shall not have an enemy.

Abstain from fleshly and worldly lusts. If someone strikes your right cheek, turn to him the other also, and you shall be perfect. If someone impresses you for one mile, go with him two. If someone takes your cloak, give him also your coat. If someone takes from you what is yours, ask it not back, for indeed you are not able. Give to everyone who asks you, and ask it not back; for the Father wills that to all should be given of our own blessings (free gifts). Happy is he who gives according to the commandment, for he is guiltless. Woe to him who receives; for if one receives who has need, he is guiltless; but he who receives not having need shall pay the penalty, why he received and for what.

And coming into confinement, he shall be examined concerning the things which he has done, and he shall not escape from there until he pays back the last penny. And also concerning this, it has been said, Let your alms sweat in your hands, until you know to whom you should give.

**Chapter 2. The Second Commandment: Grave Sin Forbidden (likely composed from genuine early second century Christian literature).** And the second commandment of the Teaching; You shall not commit murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not commit pederasty, you shall not commit fornication, you shall not steal, you shall not practice magic, you shall not practice witchcraft, **you shall not murder a child by abortion nor kill that which is born.** You shall not covet the things of your neighbor, you shall not swear, you shall not bear false witness, you shall not speak evil, you shall bear no grudge. You shall not be double-minded nor double-tongued, for to be double-tongued is a snare of death. Your speech shall not be false, nor empty, but fulfilled by deed. You shall not be covetous, nor rapacious, nor a hypocrite, nor evil disposed, nor haughty. You shall not take evil counsel against your neighbor. You shall not hate any man; but some you shall reprove, and concerning some you shall pray, and some you shall love more than your own life.

**Chapter 3. Other Sins Forbidden (likely composed from genuine early second century Christian literature).** My child, flee from every evil thing, and from every likeness of it. Be not prone to anger, for anger leads to murder. Be neither jealous, nor quarrelsome, nor of hot temper, for out of all these murders are engendered. My child, be not a lustful one. For lust leads to fornication. Be neither a filthy talker, nor of lofty eye, for out of all these adulteries are engendered. My child, be not an observer of omens, since it leads to idolatry.

Be neither an enchanter, nor an astrologer, nor a purifier, nor be willing to look at these things, for out of all these idolatry is engendered. My child, be not a liar, since a lie leads to theft. Be neither money-loving, nor vainglorious, for out of all these thefts are engendered. My child, be not a murmurer, since it leads the way to blasphemy. Be neither self-willed nor evil-minded, for out of all these blasphemies are engendered.

Rather, be meek, since the meek shall inherit the earth. Be long-suffering and pitiful and guileless and gentle and good and always trembling at the words which you have heard. You shall not exalt yourself, nor give over-confidence to your soul.

Your soul shall not be joined with lofty ones, but with just and lowly ones shall it have its intercourse. Accept whatever happens to you as good, knowing that apart from God nothing comes to pass.

**Chapter 4. Various Precepts (likely composed from genuine early second century Christian literature).** My child, remember night and day him who speaks the word of God to you, and honor him as you do the Lord. For wherever the lordly rule is uttered, there is the Lord. And seek out day by day the faces of the saints, in order that you may rest upon their words. Do not long for division, but rather bring those who contend to peace.

Judge righteously, and do not respect persons in reproving for transgressions. You shall not be undecided whether or not it shall be. Be not a stretcher forth of the hands to receive and a drawer of them back to give. If you have anything, through your hands you shall give ransom for your sins. Do not hesitate to give, nor complain when you give; for you shall know who is the good re-payer of the hire. Do not turn away from him who is in want; rather, share all things with your brother, and do not say that they are your own. For if you are partakers in that which is immortal, how much more in things which are mortal? Do not remove your hand from your son or daughter; rather, teach them the fear of God from their youth.

Do not enjoin anything in your bitterness upon your bondman or maidservant, who hope in the same God, lest ever they shall fear not God who is over both; for he comes not to call according to the outward appearance, but to them whom the Spirit has prepared. And you bondmen shall be subject to your masters as to a type of God, in modesty and fear. You shall hate all hypocrisy and everything which is not pleasing to the Lord.

Do not in any way forsake the commandments of the Lord; but keep what you have received, neither adding thereto nor taking away therefrom. In the church you shall acknowledge your transgressions, and you shall not come near for your prayer with an evil conscience. This is the way of life.

**Chapter 5. The Way of Death (likely composed from genuine early second century Christian literature).** And the way of death is this: First of all it is evil and accursed: murders, adultery, lust, fornication, thefts, idolatries, magic arts, witchcrafts, rape, false witness, hypocrisy, double-heartedness, deceit, haughtiness, depravity, self-will, greediness, filthy talking, jealousy, over-confidence, loftiness, boastfulness; persecutors of the good, hating truth, loving a lie, not knowing a

reward for righteousness, not cleaving to good nor to righteous judgment, watching not for that which is good, but for that which is evil; from whom meekness and endurance are far, loving vanities, pursuing revenge, not pitying a poor man, not laboring for the afflicted, not knowing Him Who made them, murderers of children, destroyers of the handiwork of God, turning away from him who is in want, afflicting him who is distressed, advocates of the rich, lawless judges of the poor, utter sinners. Be delivered, children, from all these.

**Chapter 6. Against False Teachers, and Food Offered to Idols (likely composed from genuine early second century Christian literature).** See that no one causes you to err from this way of the Teaching, since apart from God it teaches you. For if you are able to bear the entire yoke of the Lord, you will be perfect; but if you are not able to do this, do what you are able. And concerning food, bear what you are able; but against that which is sacrificed to idols be exceedingly careful; for it is the service of dead gods.

**Chapter 7. Concerning Baptism (Later Trinitarian interpolations were added).** And concerning baptism, baptize this way: Having first said all these things, baptize into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, in living water [running water]. But if you have no living water, baptize into other water; and if you cannot do so in cold water, do so in warm. But if you have neither, pour out water three times upon the head into the name of Father and Son and Holy Spirit. But before the baptism let the baptizer fast, and the baptized, and whoever else can; but you shall order the baptized to fast one or two days before [Not a single instance in the book of Acts defers baptism. All who believed were always baptized the same day they heard the gospel from human lips].

**Chapter 8. Fasting and Prayer (the Lord's Prayer) [Likely composed from genuine early second century Christian literature with some interpolations].** But let not your fasts be with the hypocrites, for they fast on the second and fifth day of the week. Rather, fast on the fourth day and the Preparation (Friday) [I seriously doubt that the first century church commanded fasting on the fourth and sixth day of the week – there is no scriptural precedent]. Do not pray like the hypocrites, but rather as the Lord commanded in His Gospel, like this:

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily (needful) bread, and forgive us our debt as we also forgive our debtors. And bring us not into

temptation, but deliver us from the evil one (or, evil); for Thine is the power and the glory forever..

**Pray this three times each day [Perhaps the original author wrote “pray like this (or similar to this) Jesus said to pray “after this manner”, he never meant that we should repeat this prayer with vain repetitions].**

**Chapter 9. The Eucharist [Ritualistic prayers were probably added later].** Now concerning the Eucharist, **give thanks this way [Perhaps the original author wrote to pray like this (or similar to this), or “give thanks after this manner,” but it is hard to believe that the earliest Christians were commanded to repeat prayers and thanksgiving by reading a ritualistic text. Jesus commanded us not to pray with “vain repetitions” “like the heathen”].** First, concerning the cup:

**We thank thee, our Father, for the holy vine of David Thy servant, which You made known to us through Jesus Thy Servant; to Thee be the glory forever (No hint of Trinitarian terminology).**

And concerning the broken bread:

**We thank Thee, our Father, for the life and knowledge which You made known to us through Jesus Thy Servant (No hint of Trinitarian terminology); to Thee be the glory forever. Even as this broken bread was scattered over the hills, and was gathered together and became one, so let Thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into Thy kingdom; for Thine is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ forever.**

But **let no one eat or drink of your Eucharist, unless they have been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus;** for concerning this also the Lord has said, "Give not that which is holy to the dogs" [**Notice that this text is diametrically opposed to chapter 7 where water is poured over the head three times: once in the title Father, once in the title Son, and once in the title Holy Spirit. Therefore it is likely that this portion of Chapter 9 was a part of the original early second century teaching, but a small section of chapter 7 was interpolated later to support pouring water over heads three times and invoking three titles: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.**]

**Chapter 10. Prayer after Communion (If the original author meant to “pray like this”, or similar to this, this text may be genuine).** But after you are filled,

**give thanks this way [Jesus commanded us not to use “vain repetitions” in prayer]:**

We thank Thee, holy Father, for Thy holy name which You didst cause to tabernacle in our hearts, and for the knowledge and faith and immortality, which You made known to us through Jesus Thy Servant; to Thee be the glory forever. Thou, Master almighty, didst create all things for Thy name's sake; You gave food and drink to men for enjoyment, that they might give thanks to Thee; but to us You didst freely give spiritual food and drink and life eternal through Thy Servant. Before all things we thank Thee that You are mighty; to Thee be the glory forever. Remember, Lord, Thy Church, to deliver it from all evil and to make it perfect in Thy love, and gather it from the four winds, sanctified for Thy kingdom which Thou have prepared for it; for Thine is the power and the glory forever. Let grace come, and let this world pass away. Hosanna to the God (Son) of David! If anyone is holy, let him come; if anyone is not so, let him repent. Maranatha. Amen.

**But permit the prophets to make Thanksgiving as much as they desire [Here we find the early second century second style of worship which was spontaneously conducted by prophetic inspiration].**

**Chapter 11. Concerning Teachers, Apostles, and Prophets [Likely composed from genuine early second century Christian literature].** Whosoever, therefore, comes and teaches you all these things that have been said before, receive him. But if the teacher himself turns and teaches another doctrine to the destruction of this, hear him not. But if he teaches so as to increase righteousness and the knowledge of the Lord, receive him as the Lord. But concerning the apostles and prophets, act according to the decree of the Gospel. **Let every apostle who comes to you be received as the Lord. But he shall not remain more than one day; or two days, if there's a need. But if he remains three days, he is a false prophet [This portion of chapter 11 could not be inspired. We know that the apostle Paul often remained in a city for long periods of time (such as Corinth), so it seems that the practice of not receiving apostles for more than one or two days was a deviation from the first century practice of the apostles].** And when the apostle goes away, let him take nothing but bread until he lodges. If he asks for money, he is a false prophet. **And every prophet who speaks in the Spirit you shall neither try nor judge; for every sin shall be forgiven, but this sin shall not be forgiven. But not everyone who speaks in the Spirit is a prophet; but only if he holds the ways of the Lord. Therefore from their ways shall the false prophet and the**

**prophet be known.** And every prophet who orders a meal in the Spirit does not eat it, unless he is indeed a false prophet. **And every prophet who teaches the truth, but does not do what he teaches, is a false prophet. And every prophet, proved true, working unto the mystery of the Church in the world, yet not teaching others to do what he himself does, shall not be judged among you, for with God he has his judgment; for so did also the ancient prophets. But whoever says in the Spirit, Give me money, or something else, you shall not listen to him. But if he tells you to give for others' sake who are in need, let no one judge him.**

**Chapter 12. Reception of Christians [likely composed from genuine early second century Christian literature].** But receive everyone who comes in the name of the Lord, and prove and know him afterward; for you shall have understanding right and left. If he who comes is a wayfarer, assist him as far as you are able; but he shall not remain with you more than two or three days, if need be. But if he wants to stay with you, and is an artisan, let him work and eat. But if he has no trade, according to your understanding, see to it that, **as a Christian, he shall not live with you idle.** But if he wills not to do, he is a Christ-monger. Watch that you keep away from such.

**Chapter 13. Support of Prophets [likely composed from genuine early second century Christian literature].** But **every true prophet who wants to live among you is worthy of his support. So also a true teacher is himself worthy, as the workman, of his support. Every first-fruit,** therefore, of the products of wine-press and threshing-floor, of oxen and of sheep, **you shall take and give to the prophets,** for they are your high priests. But if you have no prophet, give it to the poor. If you make a batch of dough, take the first-fruit and give according to the commandment. So also when you open a jar of wine or of oil, **take the first-fruit and give it to the prophets; and of money (silver) and clothing and every possession, take the first-fruit, as it may seem good to you, and give according to the commandment [The first fruits of all income “according to the commandment” sure sounds like tithing].**

**Chapter 14. Christian Assembly on the Lord's Day [likely composed from early second century Christian literature].** But every Lord's day gather yourselves together, and break bread, and give thanksgiving after having confessed your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure. But let no one who is at odds with his fellow come together with you, until they be reconciled, that your sacrifice

may not be profaned. For this is that which was spoken by the Lord: "In every place and time offer to me a pure sacrifice; for I am a great King, says the Lord, and my name is wonderful among the nations."

**Chapter 15. Bishops and Deacons; Christian Reproof [likely composed from genuine early second century Christian literature].** Appoint, therefore, for yourselves, **bishops and deacons** worthy of the Lord, men meek, and not lovers of money, and truthful and proved; for **they also render to you the service of prophets and teachers.** Therefore do not despise them, for they are your honored ones, together with the prophets and teachers.

And reprove one another, not in anger, but in peace, as you have it in the Gospel. But to anyone that acts amiss against another, let no one speak, nor let him hear anything from you until he repents. But your prayers and alms and all your deeds so do, as you have it in the Gospel of our Lord.

**Chapter 16. Watchfulness; the Coming of the Lord [likely composed from early second century Christian literature].** Watch for your life's sake. Let not your lamps be quenched, nor your loins unloosed; but be ready, for you know not the hour in which our Lord will come. But come together often, seeking the things which are befitting to your souls: for the whole time of your faith will not profit you, if you are not made perfect in the last time.

For in the last days false prophets and corrupters shall be multiplied, and the sheep shall be turned into wolves, and love shall be turned into hate; for when lawlessness increases, they shall hate and persecute and betray one another, and then shall appear the world-deceiver as Son of God, and shall do signs and wonders, and the earth shall be delivered into his hands, and he shall do iniquitous things which have never yet come to pass since the beginning. Then shall the creation of men come into the fire of trial, and many shall be made to stumble and shall perish; but those who endure in their faith shall be saved from under the curse itself.

And then shall appear the signs of the truth: first, the sign of an outspreading in heaven, then the sign of the sound of the trumpet. And third, the resurrection of the dead -- yet not of all, but as it is said: "The Lord shall come and all His saints with Him." Then shall the world see the Lord coming upon the clouds of heaven.

## **FIVE HISTORICAL FACTS ABOUT THE DIDACHE:**

- 1. The document was not written by the apostles.**
- 2. The document was not written during the first century. According to Johannes Quasten, “Scattered details indicate that the apostolic age is no longer contemporary, but has passed into history.” This is why the Didache was known as a “spurious” document which was not considered a part of sacred scripture.**
- 3. The Didache was compiled by an unknown scribe who collected materials written in the early to mid-second century.**
- 4. The Didache likely contains some accurate historical information about the teachings and practices of the early to mid-second century Christian communities which were probably the same, or similar to that of the first century Apostolic Church.**
- 5. However, scholars have identified so many subsequent interpolations to the Didache that we cannot be certain about the accuracy of any of its contents.**



**GLOBAL IMPACT MINISTRIES**  
**[www.apostolicchristianfaith.com](http://www.apostolicchristianfaith.com)**