

Just Thinking Apologetics

Continuing with the theme of Gnosticism, just who were some of the early Gnostics and what did they believe? Simon the Sorcerer of Acts 8 is mentioned to be one of the early Gnostic teachers by early church fathers. His disciple, Menander (a Samaritan) is also believed to have followed the Gnostic way. Menander lived at the end of the first century. Menander taught he would live forever, but that claim disappeared when he died.

At the beginning of the second century, Saturninus came along. He believed that Jesus was not really a man of flesh, but was incorporeal or he had a spiritual makeup. This heretical belief was called Docetism. Another heretical spin off of Gnosticism was adoptionism. This view saw Jesus as only a man in which Christ's divine nature descended upon him at his baptism. This divine nature departed before the crucifixion of Jesus.

One of the most influential Gnostic teachers was Marcion. He believed that the God of the Old Testament was wrathful, while the God of the New Testament was loving. The church father Tertullian attacked Marcion and his beliefs. However, Marcion was one of the first individuals to try and collect a New Testament canon (word of God). Marcion only considered Paul's epistles and the Gospel of Luke to be authoritative. Next week we will consider specific beliefs of Gnosticism and why these beliefs were rejected.