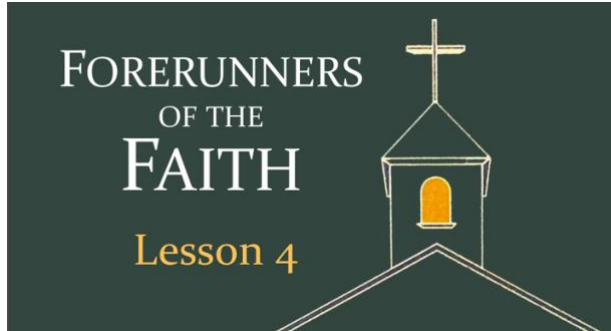


## Forerunners of the Faith



### Contending for the Faith

#### Key Passage

Jude 3–4

<sup>3</sup>Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you exhorting that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.

<sup>4</sup>For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.”

#### Introduction

- \_\_\_\_\_ (from a Greek word meaning “legal defense”) refers to a defense of the faith in the face of external attack.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (from a Greek word meaning war) refers to theological disputation or debate.

#### Historic Accusations

Early Christians were accused of:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

#### Justin Martyr (c. \_\_\_\_ - 165)

- Embraced Christianity as the true philosophy
- Used the concept of the divine \_\_\_\_\_ (or \_\_\_\_\_ from John 1) to converse with those in Greek philosophy.

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### **Justin Martyr cont.**

- Important works include Dialogue with Trypho and two Apologies
- Started a training school in Rome.
- After debating a Roman philosopher named Crescens, Justin was denounced to authorities as a Christian.
- He was beheaded around the year 165.

### **The Polemicists**

- The New Testament warns about the reality of \_\_\_\_\_: Acts 20:29–30
- From the earliest stages of church history, we see both the rise of false teachers (who seek to distort the truth) and the resolve of genuine believers (who are zealous to defend the truth).
- In response to the errors of false teaching, the church carefully articulated its own doctrinal convictions.
- Those theological convictions were grounded in the authority of Scripture; yet the articulation of those convictions was often clarified in the face of heretical attack.

### **Ancient Heresies**

- **The Ebionites**
- The Savior: They denied the deity of Jesus, the Trinity, the Virgin Birth, and the death of Jesus as an atonement for original sin; taught a form of adoptionism.
- The Scriptures: They rejected Paul's epistles and also held to a redacted version of the gospel of Matthew.
- Salvation: As descendants of the Judaizers, they insisted that the Mosaic Law was necessary for salvation and was, therefore, obligatory for all Christians.

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- \_\_\_\_\_
- The Savior: They denied both the full humanity and the unique deity of Jesus Christ.
- The Scriptures: Created their own scriptures, including the so-called “Gnostic Gospels. These writings date from the 2nd to the 4th centuries.
- Salvation: Generally portrayed as ascension to the spiritual realm through gnostic enlightenment.
- \_\_\_\_\_
- The Savior: Taught that the God of the Old Testament was actually an evil demiurge who created the material universe. Christ came to save people from that God.
- The Scriptures: Rejected all of the NT except for 10 of Paul’s epistles and a redacted version of Luke’s gospel.
- Salvation: Marcion’s “gospel” rejected a biblical understanding of sin, promoted antinomianism, and denied the hope of a physical resurrection.
- **Manichaeism**
- The Savior: Evil caused by the force of darkness (Satan) fighting against the force of good (God). Jesus sent to awaken humans to the inner light inside them.
- The Scriptures: Mani wrote six sacred books that contained the teachings of Manichaeism.
- Salvation: Salvation came from identifying oneself with the good soul of light and not the evil body of darkness.
- **Monarchism** limited the Godhead to one person.
- **Adoptionism** taught that God was so impressed with Jesus that He adopted Him as His Son (at His baptism or ascension).
- \_\_\_\_\_ taught that God manifested Himself in the mode of the Father in the Old Testament, in the mode of the Son during Jesus’ earthly ministry, and in the mode of the Holy Spirit during the church age.

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- \_\_\_\_\_
- The “New Prophecy” was advocated by Montanus and two prophetesses, Maximilla and Priscilla, who claimed the Holy Spirit was giving new revelation to the church through them.
- They insisted on a strict form of asceticism and taught that the world was about to end.
- Asceticism – severe self-discipline and avoidance of all forms of indulgence,
- Their movement was characterized by ecstatic “charismatic” phenomena, like prophecy and dreams.
- They were rejected by the mainstream church because:
  1. The church was suspicious of their ecstatic behavior and extreme asceticism.
  2. By declaring himself to be the mouthpiece of the Holy Spirit, Montanus elevated himself to a position of authority that challenged the authority of Scripture.
  3. Many of the predictive prophecies made by the Montanists did not come to pass.
  4. Montanist prophets were seemingly “taken over” or “possessed” by the spirit through which they prophesied. They no longer exhibited self-control.
  5. The Montanists condemned any Christian (as being carnal) who refused to accept their prophecies as true.
  6. Some Montanists embraced modalism.

## Irenaeus of Lyons (c. \_\_\_\_ - 202)

- Wrote a 5-volume work known as \_\_\_\_\_.
- Noted that Scripture is the “pillar and ground of our faith.”
- Martyred in France around the year 200.

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### Tertullian of Carthage (c. 155-240)

- From Carthage
- Lawyer by training
- Father of \_\_\_\_\_
- Opposed heresies like Modalism
- Coined the term “\_\_\_\_\_”
- Opposed \_\_\_\_\_
  
- Defected to Montanism at the end of his life

### Origen of Alexandria (c. 184-253)

- One of the most influential Christian thinkers of the early church, producing roughly \_\_\_\_\_ treatises on various theological subjects.
- A mix of positive and negative contributions
- Promoted an allegorical hermeneutic centering on Christ
- Organized the first systematic approach to theology in On the First Principles.
- Taught some strange doctrines, like annihilationism and the pre-existence of the soul
- In later history, his teachings (especially related to subordinationism) were denounced as heretical
- According to Origen, each text of Scripture has 3 levels of meaning:
  1. The body: the \_\_\_\_\_ meaning focused on what the text says if taken at face value.
  2. The soul: the \_\_\_\_\_ meaning involved the moral truth behind the text.
  3. The spirit: the \_\_\_\_\_ meaning allowed the interpreter to turn the text into a series of symbols or metaphors, which were generally interpreted in way that point to Christ.

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### Cyprian of Carthage (c. 200-258)

- Responded to the Novatianist crisis
- Emphasized the unity of the church
- Taught that one cannot have God as his Father, who does not have the true church as his mother

### Additional Heresies

- **Novatianism and Donatism** (3rd/4th centuries)
  - Should those who denied Christ be allowed back into the church?
- **Arianism** (4th century)
  - Is the Son of God equal to the Father?
- **Pelagianism** (early 5th century)
  - Are sinners born with a depraved nature?
  - Is salvation wholly by grace or is it possible to gain heaven by good works?
- **Nestorianism/Eutychianism** (5th century)
  - How do the two natures of Christ relate to one another?

