Did you ever hear of the Waldensians? Probably not. They were originally known as the Valdese -- the dwellers in the valley. They were also called the Cathars--which meant 'holy ones.' The word Valdese changed through the centuries, and was pronounced Waldenses, and Waldensians. They lived in the Piedmont mountain valleys of northern Italy and Southern France. They were simple people. They were hardworking, faithful people.

There was a Christian leader named Peter Waldo, who ministered to the Waldensians in the 1100's. Because of the similarity of name, he was thought by some to be the founder of the Waldensians. But the Waldensians existed many centuries before Peter Waldo joined them. They were the very first true Christian "denomination," and trace their beginning to the very first century, to the very first generation of Christians.

LUX LUCET IN TENEBRIS

"LIGHT SHINES IN DARKNESS"

"THE LIGHT SHINES IN DARKNESS" was the motto of the Waldensians---they lived up to that motto through all the dark days----YEARS---GENERATIONS!!!---of persecution!!!

From the very first century, the Valdese, the "dwellers in the valley" heard the truth of the Gospel. They had the entire New Testament. All of the Books that have always been the recognized canon of the Christian Church. They lived by its teachings.
The Waldensian ministers were called "barbas". The word meant something like "uncle". These Barbas, and other Waldensian missionaries, spread the light of the Gospel throughout their portion of Europe in those early centuries. They did not build fancy buildings. They did not own lots of land, or have political power. All they had was the simple word of the Gospel. Jesus Saves.

From the fifth century, they refused to recognize the church at Rome as a genuine faithful Christian church. The bishops and popes had set themselves up with political power, lived in the lap of wealth and luxury, and claimed that they were the final authority on all things Christian, and insisted that all Christians everywhere were under their jurisdiction. At the same time, they had taken all the rituals and ceremonies and liturgies of the ancient pagan Roman religions, called them Christian liturgy, and insisted that these ceremonies were the heart and reality of the Christian religion.

They went so far as to deny the work that Jesus had done on the Cross.

They denied the saving power of the Word of God. They denied that Jesus' Blood cleanses us from all sin. They took the existing pagan system of confessions, penances, and purgatory, which the Romans had done in worship of the pagan god called Mithra, the bull slayer, and called this system the Christian way. They declared the death of Jesus on the cross to be not good enough. They told people they had to suffer for their own sins.

You have been told that the Roman Church was the first and only Christian church. That is not true. The Waldensians heard the pure gospel in the first century. They had the Bible from the first century and refused to depart from its holy teachings of Christ's Redemption.

The Roman Church was begun by Emperor Constantine in 312 AD. He set it up along the existing political structure. The office of Pontifex Maximus, "high priest" - had always been held by the leader of the religion of Mithra. Constantine filled the now vacant office with a bishop who didn't mind living in luxury and power next to the emperor. That's where the papacy came from. Jesus Christ had nothing to do with it.
In the following years, the Roman church compromised more and more, until it no longer believed in the Redeeming power of the death and resurrection of Christ. Jesus was the resurrected Son of God, but according to the Roman church hierarchy, you had to go to someone else to get your sins forgiven.

The Waldensians refused to obey anyone but Christ. They recognized no authority but the Bible. They went to Jesus Christ Himself for the forgiveness of their sins.

The hierarchy at Rome could not tolerate defiance against its pretended authority. Their hatred and jealousy against the Waldensians led to the wars and persecutions against the Waldensians that lasted over a thousand years. Yet they still claimed that they had absolute power over everything that called itself Christian.

Revelation 2:6-- Jesus said---But this you have---you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans----which I also hate.

Nicolaitans is a compound word that means "conquerors of the laity"---"overcomers of the people"---the POWERGRABBERS!

How were these bishops and popes "powergrabbers"? They declared that "You can't come to Christ without us and our ceremonies! You must belong to us and be subject to us!"

But the Waldensians had the Bible. The Word of God. They had it in their own language from the very first century, when the Holy Spirit gave it to the apostles who wrote it down. They studied it and lived by it.

Every generation of the Waldensians was faithful to what their parents had read to them from the Word of God. They hated the deeds of the Powergrabbers, which Jesus had declared in the Book of Revelation that He also hated.
Is it really possible for Jesus to look at something going on in His church, among the people He died for, and declare that He hates it?

Yes it is. Read Revelation, chapters 1,2,3.

In the year 1229 A.D., the Roman church had become apostate. An apostate is someone who used to be a Christian but is not, any more. The hierarchy had forsaken its faith, but did not want to forsake its political power.

They held a meeting called the Council of Valencia. They declared that the Bible was a forbidden book. No one but members of the clergy could own or read or translate the Bible!

The 119th Psalm declares that the entrance of God's Word brings Light. These apostate church leaders were not interested in God's Light.

They declared that they themselves were in charge, and that no one but they themselves were allowed to read the Bible. But the Waldensians had the entire New Testament in their own language from the first century. The entrance of God's Word gave light to their souls.

Psalm 119:11. "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against Thee."

The missionary Barbas, (the word used for the Waldensian ministers), ran great risks as they traveled the continent of Europe as peddlers. As they traveled from place to place, they preached Jesus to anyone who would listen. When they were caught, and found to have a portion of the Holy Bible in their possession, they were sent to prison or death.

So they took to memorizing large portions of the Bible, so they would not need the 'incriminating" paper. They travelled as peddlars, and they preached the word of God and the salvation of Jesus Christ wherever they went.
Even the ordinary men, women, and children of the Waldensians, who never left home to go on these missionary journeys, were in constant danger. The official church in Rome could not tolerate any rebellion against its own claim of absolute authority over everything that called itself Christian.

Many times over the years, great armies would overrun the valleys of Piedmont, in the attempt to destroy the Waldensians and their faith in the Bible as the only authority regarding the teachings of Jesus.

The efforts of the succeeding popes to destroy the Protestant faith of the Waldensians in the Piedmont valleys were highly organized military campaigns.

One of these campaigns took place in 1486. Pope Innocent VIII called upon Charles I, the Duke of Savoy, to assemble an army to destroy the "heretics" who dared to believe that Christ was the Head of His own Church, and there was no other.

Other foundation can no man lay, but Jesus Christ, the chief cornerstone.

**Who is a rock save our God?**

An army of over 18,000 men, looking forward to victory and plunder, marched into the valleys to wage war against the saints of God.

The large and fierce army marched into the valleys. The general in charge decided to split his force and storm all of the mountain villages at the same time. It was the battle of David and Goliath.

Goliath was Rome, armed with swords and spears, versus David, the poor humble Waldensians.
who fought with bows and arrows.

Isaiah 54:17 The Lord told His people, "NO WEAPON FORMED AGAINST THEE SHALL PROSPER."

The invasion broke up in disarray. One of the leaders of the soldiers of the invading army was called "Nero of Mondovi". He and his men managed to get to the top of a ridge. When the Waldensians assembled there saw him, they fell on their knees in prayer.

Nero of Mondovi mocked then. He thought they were already conquered. He lifted the visor on his helmet, in order to laugh at them with greater ease, and shouted "you shall be saved with a vengeance."

At that moment a Waldensian arrow, fired by an anonymous "David, pierced his forehead, killing this "Goliath."

His army fled in disorganized retreat, getting lost in the unfamiliar terrain, and falling to their deaths over the slippery mountain slopes.

Charles 1, Duke of Savoy, withdrew his support from the expedition. The pope's representative, called the Papal Legate, was sent away having been told the mission was complete.

Then a representative of the House of Savoy met with the Waldensian Barbas, to assure them that the war against them was over. During this meeting, he met some Waldensian children. He exclaimed in surprise, "Is it possible that these are the children of heretics?" His surprise was due to the fact that he had been told that the Waldensian "heretics" were monsters born with black throats and a horn in their forehead. It was attitudes like that, that earned that time of history the name "Dark Ages."

When there was not an actual war being waged against them, the Waldensians were still under
threat of the Inquisition. To explain it in modern terms, the Holy Office of the Inquisition was the Religious Police. These church officers invaded every family, every home, to make sure that the religious laws were being obeyed. Waldensian parents taught their children the Bible. The religious police would arrest the parents, and take the children away from them and put them in monasteries and nunneries, where they would be taught the ancient pagan ceremonies that were now called Christian liturgy, and would be denied the Light of God's Word.

The history of the Waldensians is a history of non-stop persecution, non-stop arrest, torture, imprisonment, beatings, hangings, and burnings. It began in the fifth century, and continued through all generations to the 1700's. But each generation of Waldensians held faithful to the teachings of the New Testament. Jesus Christ is the Head of His church. There is no human being that can claim to be the head of Christ's church. Sins are washed from our souls by the power of the blood shed by Jesus on the cross. The Word of God, given by the Spirit of God, is the authority in all things. Jesus forgives our sins when we repent of them and ask Him to forgive us. The true Christian must be obedient to Christ alone, not the pope.

In the 16th century, great event shook the entire continent of Europe. The Reformation.

The true, Bible believing Christians, had always existed, from the very first century. The largest enduring group, over the centuries, was the Waldensians.

But the Reformation started something new. the German nobles took the side of Martin Luther against the pope, and it began a political revolution as well as a religious one.

Starting with Germany, and moving to England and the Netherlands, this new idea took hold. People began to think, "We should be free people, free to serve Jesus Christ in obedience to the true Gospel."

Almost all of the Reformers had been members of the Roman clergy. They began to read the Bible, and learn what the gospel message really is, and rebel against the religious tyranny that had ruled the world for so many centuries. The political setup of the world was shaken. The entire history of the world was shaken. The entire history of the world
was shaken.

News of these events reached to remote Waldensian homes in the Piedmont mountains. The barbas sent Barba Martin of the town of Lucerna to investigate. He returned from his journey with a good report. The gospel was being preached in Germany, in Switzerland, and France. the same Gospel the Waldensians had believed and held true to since the first century.

A city in Switzerland, named Geneva, seemed to be the center of activity for this movement, and two Barbas were sent to Geneva to meet and greet the Reformers there.

The meeting was looked upon as a miracle by both sides. The Reformers, here was a church that had been preserved in the pure gospel from the first Christian century. The Waldensians met Christians who were just now coming out of centuries of religious darkness, and were re-discovering the Bible that had been their own strength and constant Light for centuries.

**LUX LUCET IN TENEBRIS**

The Waldensians and the Reformers greeted each other with great joy.

These two Barbas were arrested on their way home. One of them was burned alive in the town of Dijon. The everyday punishment in those days. The judgment of the Roman church upon all who refused to recognize or obey the pope.

In 1532, September 12, two years later, there was a historic meeting in the small town of Chanforan in the Angrogna Valley. This came to be known as the Synod of Chanforan.

The Waldensians embraced the brothers and sisters in Christ who were just coming out of the religious darkness that had ruled for centuries. The Reformers embraced a people who had known and believed the true gospel from the very beginning.
You have been told that the Roman Church was the first and only Christian church. That is not true. The Waldensians heard the pure gospel in the first century.

The Waldensians refused to obey anyone but Christ. They recognized no authority but the Bible. They went to the Reformer embraced a people who had known and believed the true gospel from the very beginning.

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