

# The Gnostic Hall of Infamy

## Saturinus and Basilides

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Saturinus was a Syrian who arose to prominence among the Gnostics. He taught that the world and man were made by angels. As made by the angels, man was unable to stand erect, but wriggled on the ground like a worm. The Father of all then sent forth a "spark of life" which gave man an erect posture and made him live. After death, this spark of life returns to those things which are of the same nature and the rest of the body is decomposed.

He taught that Jesus was without birth, without body and without figure, but merely had the appearance of humanity. He taught that the God of the Jews was one of the angels – and one of particular evil. Christ came to destroy the God of the Jews, but to save those who believe in him, who possess his spark of life.

He taught that there were two kinds of men made by the angels, one wicked and the other good. He taught that marriage and procreation were from Satan and were forbidden. He taught abstinence from meat which gave his followers the appearance of self-control.

Basilides was from Alexandria, Egypt. He set for an elaborate version of the Gnostic pantheon which we will not describe in detail. He taught the existence of 365 heavens, the number of days in the year. These exist in increasing degrees of loftiness and these are inhabited by angels of increasing rank. At the lowest rank are those angels who formed the world and the chief of these is the God of the Jews. The angels divided the world and its inhabitants among themselves. The God of the Jews sought to subject the other angels to himself and the other nations to the Jews. For this reason, he was opposed by the other angels. For this reason, the nations are at enmity with his people (the Jews).

Seeing these things happening, the supreme Father (who is without birth and nameless) sent Nous (Christ) to deliver those who believe in him from the angels. He did not suffer death by crucifixion, but Simon of Cyrene died in his place. Simon of Cyrene was in fact transfigured by Christ so that he appeared to be Jesus while Christ took the appearance of Simon. While Simon was being crucified, Christ stood by deriding and laughing at them.

Basilides further taught that those who know these things (Gnostics) have been freed from the angels who made the world. For this reason, they had no reason to confess "him who was crucified," but rather, "him who came in the form of a man, and was thought to be crucified." He declared, "If any one confesses the crucified, that man is still a slave, and under the power of those who formed our bodies; but he who denies him has been freed from these beings, and is acquainted with the dispensation of the unborn father."

He taught that salvation belongs to the soul alone and the body is by nature subject to corruption and will not be saved. He disregarded the Old Testament Scriptures as the product of inferior angels and the God of the Jews. They also practiced magic.