

Church History 1

Apostles to Pre-Reformation

April 19, 2013 – Apostles to Catholic Christianity Lecture
Lakeside Institute of Theology
Ross Arnold, Spring 2013

Church History 1 (TH1)

1. Introduction to Church History
2. Apostles to Catholic Christianity
3. Persecution, Heresies & the Book
4. Emperors, Bishops, Saints & Intellectuals
5. Councils, Monks, Popes & Augustine
6. Schisms, Barbarians & Gregory the Great
7. Charlemagne, Cathedrals, Crusades & Scholastics
8. Poverty, Inquisition, Babylonian Captivity... & Final Exam

History Of the Early Church

- Jewish Roots

Christianity began as an offshoot of Judaism, at a time when the great Jewish expectation was that God would send a Messiah (the *Christ*, or *Anointed One*) to bring freedom to the Jews, and establish the Kingdom of God on earth – which Jews thought meant elevation of Israel both religiously and politically, as it had been under King David, and with a Jewish ruler like David.

Historical Roots

- 332 BC – Alexander the Great controls Palestine
- 323 BC – Alexander dies at age 33; Empire split
- 198 BC – Seleucids gain control of Palestine
- 190 BC – Antiochus IV starts Jewish oppression
- 167 BC – Maccabean Revolt begins
- 161 BC – Jewish independence; Hasmonean Dynasty
- 63 BC – Pompey captures Jerusalem for Rome
- 37 BC – Rome appoints Herod the Great as king
- c. 4-6 BC – Jesus Christ is born in Bethlehem
- 26-36 AD – Pontius Pilate is procurator of Palestine
- c. 30 – Jesus crucified, resurrected, ascended
- c. 30 – Pentecost; Church grows; Jewish persecution
- c. 34 – Stephen is 1st Christian martyr; Christian Diaspora begins
- c. 34 – Saul is converted and becomes Paul

The Jewishness of Jesus

- God had promised that the Jews and all peoples of the earth would be blessed through His promise to Abraham.
- God spoke through his prophets (esp. Isaiah, Daniel, and Ezekiel) that he would send a Messiah to save his people. (See Isaiah 7:14; Daniel 7:13ff).
- By Jesus' time the Jews had been oppressed by foreign powers for most of the previous 500+ years. (Even the independence gained under the Maccabeans didn't feel like freedom.)
- So the Jews were looking for the promised Messiah to free them and, many believed, to announce the end of the world and the coming of God's judgment.
- But their expectation was for the return of the king like David who would make them politically great, or for a leader like Judas Maccabees who would drive out the oppressors and again bring them freedom.

Jesus LOOKED like he might be the Messiah...

- He was a Jew, a descendant of David, who met all the prophetic requirements (born of a virgin, in Bethlehem, etc.).
- He observed Jewish Law and traditions (mostly).
- He frequently quoted the Law and Prophets.
- He spoke in the synagogues, where Jews gathered.
- He was clear that his ministry was (first) to the Jews.
- He performed miracles and was clearly gifted by God as a leader and teacher.
- His Transfiguration in Matthew 17 was in the presence of Moses and Elijah.

Why there was opposition to Jesus

- He was not the political leader (like King David or Judas Macabbeas) they expected.
- He spoke on his own authority: “I say unto you...” rather than “Thus saith the Lord...”
- He claimed to be the fulfillment of the Law and Prophets.
- He broke some of the rules – like healing on the Sabbath.
- He predicted the marvelous Temple in Jerusalem would be destroyed. (Especially difficult after Maccabean Revolt had been about reclaiming and re-consecrating the Temple.)
- He hung around with a bad crowd, including tax collectors and sinners.
- He openly criticized Jewish religious leaders.
- Some feared he would cause an uprising that would give the Romans an excuse for destroying the Jewish nation.
- He claimed to be the Son of God.
- He really was the Son of God, and the Devil didn't like it.

So they rejected Him.

The Apostolic Church

- The first Christians ...
 - The first Christians were first century Jews from humble birth (as was Jesus) who began to follow Jesus during his life.
 - After the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus' followers in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost.
 - At Pentecost (the Jewish celebration of the giving of the Law thru Moses at Sinai) were Jews from all over the Eastern Mediterranean region – a result of the Jewish Diaspora (“scattering” or “dispersion”), especially resulting from the Babylonian Captivity.
 - Empowered by the Holy Spirit, Peter preaches the first great Christian evangelistic message, and the Church is born.

The Day of Pentecost

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ² Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶ When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. ⁷ Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸ Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? ⁹ Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome ¹¹(both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" ¹² Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"

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The Day of Pentecost

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: “Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say.

²²“Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. ...²⁴ But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.

³⁶“Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.”

³⁷ When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”

³⁸ Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off - for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

⁴⁰ With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” ⁴¹ Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

Acts 2:14-15,22,25,36-41¹

The Apostolic Church

- The Church in Jerusalem.
 - From the beginning there was a strong church in Jerusalem, made up of:
 - Those who had followed Jesus during his life.
 - Those who believed because of witnessing the risen Jesus.
 - Those Jews from Jerusalem who were converted at Pentecost and following.
 - It was from this first church that the faith spread.
 - The Jerusalem church reflected both unity and diversity, especially between “Hebrew” Jewish Christians and “Hellenized” Jewish Christians:
 - All things were held in common, but there were accusations that the distribution of support was unequal, with Hellenized Jewish widows not receiving as much as Hebrew Jewish widows. (Acts 6:1)

Hebrew vs. Hellenized Jewish Christians

In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. ² So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. ³ Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them ⁴ and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.”

⁵ This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. ⁶ They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

⁷ So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

The Start of Persecution

Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, performed great wonders and signs among the people. ⁹ Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called)—Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia—who began to argue with Stephen. ¹⁰ But they could not stand up against the wisdom the Spirit gave him as he spoke.

¹¹ Then they secretly persuaded some men to say, "We have heard Stephen speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God."

¹² So they stirred up the people and the elders and the teachers of the law. They seized Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrin. ¹³ They produced false witnesses, who testified, "This fellow never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law. ¹⁴ For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us."

¹⁵ All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

Acts 6:8-15

The Start of Persecution

“You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised. You are just like your ancestors: You always resist the Holy Spirit! ⁵² Was there ever a prophet your ancestors did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him— ⁵³ you who have received the law that was given through angels but have not obeyed it.”

⁵⁴ When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. ⁵⁵ But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ⁵⁶ “Look,” he said, “I see heaven open & the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”

⁵⁷ At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, ⁵⁸ dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul.

⁵⁹ While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” ⁶⁰ Then he fell on his knees and cried out, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” When he had said this, he fell ₅ asleep.

Acts 7:51-60

Christian Diaspora as Mission

And Saul approved of their killing him.

On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. ² Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. ³ But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison.

⁴ Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. ⁵ Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah there. ⁶ When the crowds heard Philip and saw the signs he performed, they all paid close attention to what he said. ⁷ For with shrieks, impure spirits came out of many, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. ⁸ So there was great joy in that city.

The Church Spreads to the Gentiles

At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. ² He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly. ³ One day at about three in the afternoon he had a vision. He distinctly saw an angel of God, who came to him and said, “Cornelius!”

⁴ Cornelius stared at him in fear. “What is it, Lord?” he asked.

The angel answered, “Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God. ⁵ Now send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Simon who is called Peter. ⁶ He is staying with Simon the tanner, whose house is by the sea.”

⁷ When the angel who spoke to him had gone, Cornelius called two of his servants and a devout soldier who was one of his attendants. ⁸ He told them everything that had happened and sent them to Joppa.

The Church Spreads to the Gentiles

Now those who had been scattered by the persecution that broke out when Stephen was killed traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, spreading the word only among Jews. ²⁰ Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. ²¹ The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

²² News of this reached the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. ²³ When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. ²⁴ He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.

²⁵ Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, ²⁶ and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.

Acts 11:19-26

The Council of Jerusalem

Certain people came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the believers: “Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.”² This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question.³ The church sent them on their way, and as they traveled through Phoenicia and Samaria, they told how the Gentiles had been converted. This news made all the believers very glad.⁴ When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything God had done through them.

Acts 15:1-4

The Council of Jerusalem

The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them. ¹³ When they finished, James spoke up. “Brothers,” he said, “listen to me. ¹⁴ Simon has described to us how God first intervened to choose a people for his name from the Gentiles.

¹⁹ “It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. ²⁰ Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood. ²¹ For the law of Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath.”

Acts 15:12-14, 19-21 ²⁰

The Apostolic Church

- Reasons for the rapid initial spread of Christianity
 1. The Jewish converts to Christianity at Pentecost took their faith and witness back home, and others were converted.
 - Priscilla & Aquila from Rome; Apollo from Alexandria, etc..
 2. The Jewish Diaspora (*“scattering”* or *“dispersion”*), esp. since the 6th Cent. BC Babylonian Captivity, meant that for centuries before Jesus large numbers of Jews were living outside Palestine.
 3. Persecution and dispersal of Hellenistic Jewish Christians following the stoning of Stephen.
 4. A large number of “God-fearing Gentile” – non-Jews attracted to monotheism but unwilling to convert if it meant following the Mosaic Law.

Growth of Christianity by AD 70



Growth of Christianity, 1st & 2nd Centuries

THE EXTENT OF CHRISTIANITY IN THE 1ST AND 2ND CENTURIES A.D.



Fates of the Apostles

1. Judas Iscariot hanged himself, c. AD 30.
2. James the brother of John, beheaded at Jerusalem, c. AD 44.
3. Philip, hanged on a pillar at Heropolis, in Asia Minor, c. AD 54.
4. James the Just (brother of Jesus), thrown to his death from the Temple in Jerusalem, AD 63.
5. Peter, crucified in Rome during the persecution of Nero, c. AD 64.
6. Paul, beheaded in Rome during the persecution of Nero, c. AD 67.
7. Andrew, crucified at Patrae, in Achaia, c. AD 70.
8. Nathanael/Bartholomew, flayed & crucified, in Armenia, c. AD 70.
8. Thomas, run through with a lance, c. AD 70.
9. Matthias, crucified and stoned, Ethiopia, c. AD 70.
10. Matthew, beheaded at Nad-Davar, Ethiopia, c. AD 60-70.
11. Thaddeus, shot with arrows, Mesopotamia, c. AD 72.
12. Simon, crucified in Syria (Persia), c. AD 74.
13. John died of old age in Ephesus, c. AD 95.

The 1st Century AD and the Early Church

- The Roman occupation and oppression rubbed against the Jewish sense of independence.
 - It smacked of both the Babylonian Exile and the Seleucid oppression – previous times when foreign unbelievers had controlled God’s Chosen People.
 - It was economically almost unbearable.
 - It was the cause of frequent minor rebellions, and would eventually result in the Great Jewish Revolt, which prompted Rome to destroy Jerusalem and the Temple in AD 70. *(Leading to same questions as the Babylonian Exile.)*
 - It would also eventually cause the final and complete split between Jews and Christians, when Christians refused to support the Bar Kochba rebellion in 132 AD. *(Prior to this, many Christians had continued to participate in the Jewish community and ritual.)*

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