**What You Should Know from TH1- Church History 1**

Lakeside Institute of Theology

1. What is Church History?

* The story of the origin, growth and development of the Christian faith and the Christian Church, starting about AD 30, following the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

1. Why is Church History important for us?

* The Christian message is rooted in the fact that God entered human history; Christianity is uniquely historical.
* The history of the Church also is the story of how God the Holy Spirit has continued to act through men and women of the faith.
* Without understanding the past, we are unable to accurately understand ourselves or our faith.
* A knowledge of Church history can keep us from repeating past mistakes and falling into past errors.

1. Why was Palestine in the 1st Century AD the perfect time and place for the start of the Christian Church?
   * Palestine was the crossroads of the world – the central point between three continents (Europe, Asia and Africa).
   * Politically and culturally it was the perfect time for the Gospel message to be shared and for the Church to grow, because:
     1. The Roman roads made travel easy, with no real borders since Rome ruled almost all the known world.
     2. The Roman peace (*Pax Romana*) made travel relatively safe.
     3. Thanks to Alexander the Great, the Greek language was universal, so that it was easy to communicate across cultures.
   * Economically, there was a desperate need for new hope and direction.
   * Morally and religiously, the world was tired and frustrated and ready for a change.
2. Why was the Babylonian Exile such a staggering event for the Jewish people?
   * The Exile confronted Jews with very hard questions:
     1. Is YHWH God NOT as powerful as the Babylonian gods?
     2. Does God no longer love us, or no longer accept us as His Chosen People?
     3. How do we continue without the things that represent our election by God – the Promised Land and the Temple?
     4. How do we worship without the Temple?
     5. Are we to be assimilated into a foreign culture – as happened to the Northern Kingdom of Israel?
3. Why was the Jewish synagogue system started?
   * With the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, and without the possibility for sacrificial worship, the synagogue system was created to provide a place for formalized focus on Jewish prayer and study.
   * The synagogues also provided a center for Jewish community life, to work against assimilation into a foreign culture – as had happened to the Northern Kingdom of Israel.
4. Why did the Jewish people in Jesus’ time have such a desperate longing for a prophetic voice from God?
   * The last Hebrew prophet, Malachi, had been over 400 years earlier and the Jewish people longed to reconnect with God.
5. How did the Hellenistic Greek influence cause problems for the Jewish culture and religion?
   * The dominant presence of a worldwide Greek culture had caused different parties to develop within Judaism:
     1. Pharisees – the “set apart ones” were Jewish fundamentalists, holding to a strict acceptance of all the Hebrew Bible and opposing Hellenization.
     2. Sadducees – liberal, Hellenized Jews who held a limited interpretation of the Torah (but not the rest of the Tanakh), and were open to greater Greek influence.
6. Why did the Jews have such a rabid opposition to Roman occupation of Palestine?
   * It reminded them 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.)*
7. Describe the Jewish “Messianic Expectation” leading up to Jesus.
   * The Messianic expectation in Israel went back to God’s covenant promise to King David, and the hoped-for correction of what appeared to be the end of the Davidic dynasty after the defeat of the Southern Kingdom of Judah by the Babylonians.
   * The Messiah (“Anointed One”) was expected to be a descendant of David, sent by God to defeat Israel’s enemies and again make the Jewish people into a great nation as they had been under King David.
8. For Jesus to be the Messiah, why was his being Jewish so important?
   * 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.
   * 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.
   * 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.
9. In what ways did it appear Jesus 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.
10. Why was there opposition to Jesus as Messiah?
    * 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 “As Rabbi Hillel has said…”
    * 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.
11. What were the very first Christians like?
    * The first Christians were first century Jews from humble birth (as was Jesus) who began to follow Jesus during his life.
12. What is the meaning of “diaspora?”
    * “Scattering” or “dispersion” – historically speaking, especially as a result of conflict or persecution.

1. What is the significance of the Day of Pentecost in the birth of the Church?
   * On that day (the Jewish celebration of the giving of the Law thru Moses at Sinai) the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples of Jesus and they spoke in other tongues – which got the attention of the crowds in the city for the festival. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, Peter preaches the first great Christian evangelistic message, 3000 people believe, and the Church is born.

1. Where was the first Christian church and who made up that fellowship?
   * In Jerusalem, and all those early Christians were Jews.
2. How did the dual Hebrew-Hellenized culture create problems even for the Jerusalem church?
   * The Church provided support for widows and orphans, but there arose accusations that the Hellenistic widows were receiving less that the Hebraic widows – reflecting a deep-seated Jewish prejudice.
3. Who were the first deacons, and why were they appointed?
   * When some complained of inequity in the distribution of support from the Church, the Apostles decided they could not do everything, so they appointed deacons to take care of the material services of the Church.
4. Who was the first Christian martyr?
   * Stephen, one of the first deacons of the Church.
5. What caused the first Christian diaspora, and how would this become important later on?
   * After the stoning of Stephen the Jewish authorities launched an aggressive persecution of Jewish Christians – especially Hellenized Jewish Christians – and so these new believers fled Jerusalem. As these people took their new Christian faith with them, and shared it with others, widespread evangelization occurred.
6. What well-known figure was prominent leader in the first persecution of Christians?
   * Saul, a young Pharisee, who would later have a miraculous encounter with the risen Jesus and become Paul – one of the most important Christian theologians and evangelists.
7. Why did the Jewish authorities persecute the early Christians?
   * + Christianity was seen as threatening the established religious authority
     + Christianity was seen as a Jewish heresy to be stamped out
     + Christianity was seen as having the potential for causing a Roman backlash
8. Who were the first Gentile converts?
   * A Roman centurion named Cornelius – a God-fearing Gentile – and his family in Caesarea; then Gentiles in Antioch of Syria.

1. What was the purpose for the Council of Jerusalem, as recorded in Acts 15?
   * To decide whether gentiles who were coming to faith in Jesus had to follow the Mosaic Law – that is, be circumcised, etc. The Council decided this was unnecessary, and that gentiles could be Christians without first becoming Jews.
2. What were some reasons for the initial rapid spread of Christianity?
   * Jewish converts to Christianity at Pentecost took their faith and witness back home, and others were converted.
   * The Jewish Diaspora *(“scattering”* or *“dispersion”*), esp. since the 6th Cent. BC Babylonian Captivity, meant that for centuries large numbers of Jews were living outside Palestine – providing a place for the Apostle Paul and others to connect throughout the Empire.
   * A large number of “God-fearing Gentiles” – non-Jews attracted to monotheism but unwilling to convert and follow the Mosaic Law – saw Christianity as the answer to their needs.
   * Persecution and dispersal of Hellenistic Jewish Christians following the stoning of Stephen.
3. Who were the Apostolic Fathers?
   * Those who became leaders of the Church after the deaths of the Apostles, and who were reputed to have known and learned from the Apostles. Their writings were highly regarded, and believed by some in the 2nd Century to be worthy of inclusion in the Canon.
4. Who started the first non-Jewish persecution of Christians, where, and why?

* The Emperor Nero (64-68 AD), in Rome, as part of his blaming Christians for the burning of Rome, to take suspicion off himself.

1. Why were Roman citizens generally against Christians and their religion?
   * Christians were unsociable and usually perceived as lower class
   * Rumors of incest & other scandal at secret Christian “love feasts”
   * Rumors of cannibalism.
   * Perceived “atheism” since they worshipped no god you could see
   * Offense against the traditional Roman gods, which might bring

misfortune

1. Why did Roman emperors and other Roman authorities persecute Christians?
   * Nero blamed Christians for the fire that burned Rome in 64 AD
   * Christians were seen as disturbing unity & public order by refusing to worship traditional gods
   * Refusing to worship the Emperor was perceived as treasonous
   * After Christianity broke from Judaism, it was perceived as superstition
   * All the same reasons the general public disliked Christians
2. Who were the Christian Apologists and what service did they perform?
   * A group of intellectual and well-educated Christians who stepped forward in the 2nd Century to defend the Church against the many false charges being used by Roman authorities to justify persecution.
3. What is the definition of “heresy?”

* Heresy is a formal denial or doubt of a core doctrine of the Christian faith.

1. Why did a number of major heresies arise in the 2nd Century?

* The 2nd Century was after the death of all the apostles (the foundational teaching authorities for the Church), but before establishment of a clear New Testament Canon, and therefore before many principle Christian doctrines had been established and agreed upon.

1. What was the heresy of Ebionism?
   * Jewish Christians who insisted Gentile Christians must obey the Mosaic Law (circumcision, etc.) in order to be Christians. Also called "Judaizers."
2. What was the heresy of Gnosticism?
   * A dualistic belief that the material world was evil and should be shunned, while the spiritual world should be embraced; and that acquiring *gnosis* (“mystical knowledge”) was the key to spiritual development. Jesus was not the divine "Savior," but instead simply the most important bringer of *gnosis*.
3. What was the heresy of Marcionism?
   * A dualistic belief system claiming Jesus was the savior but denying that he was co-eternal with the Father, while rejecting the Old Testament and saying the Hebrew God was a separate and lower entity than the God of the New Testament. (This was perhaps the greatest heretical threat ever to the Church.)
4. What was the heresy of Montanism?
   * A prophetic movement claiming new, direct and ecstatic revelation from the Holy Spirit that – so it was claimed – superseded the authority of Jesus or Paul or the Apostles or anyone else.
5. What was the role of the early Christian Theologians, and how did they differ from the Apostolic Fathers or Christian Apologists?
   * The Apostolic Fathers had, for the most part, addressed specific theological questions that arose; while the Apologists had responded to accusations against the Church by Roman authorities. But the more comprehensive heresies of the 2nd Century (like Marcionism) demanded more complete exposition of orthodox Christian beliefs, and this was provided by a group of scholars called the Christian Theologians.
6. What is meant by the “Biblical Canon?”
   * The set of books Christians have determined to be divinely inspired and thus rightly included as part of the Christian Bible.

1. How did the heretic Marcion influence the creation of the New Testament Canon?
   * Part of Marcion's heresy was to reject all of the Old Testament, and to include only an edited version of Luke, and the letters of Paul. By declaring that THIS was the New Testament, Marcion forced the church to decide how and why they disagreed, and to put together an orthodox version of the New Testament Canon – which from early on was very close to our current New Testament.
2. How did the persecution of the Emperor Decius differ from previous persecutions, and what special problem did this create for the Church?
   * Earlier persecutions sought to wipe out Christianity and so virtually all who were arrested were either martyred or became apostate. Decius believed the problems in the Roman Empire was because they had stopped worshipping the old gods, and so his goal was not to kill Christians, but to convert them back to pagan worship. Many of those who refused to recant their Christian faith under torture were later released. This meant the Decian persecution created a complicated mix of those who gave in, those who fled, those who falsified *libellum* documents to avoid persecution, those who withstood torture & survived, and those few who died. The Church later had to decide how to deal differently with these different groups.
3. What was the Edict of Milan and why was it so important?
   * The Edict of Milan (313 AD) was a treaty agreement between imperial opponents Constantine and Lucinius to guaranteed freedom of religious worship – allowing Christianity to be openly practiced for almost the first time in the Church's history.
4. What two major innovations did the Emperor Diocletian introduce to the Roman Empire, and how would this later affect the Church?
   * Believing the Roman Empire had become too large and complex to be ruled by one man, he divided the Empire into two – the Western and Eastern Roman Empires.
   * He also saw the many problems that arose when people completed to become emperor, so he tried to make a more productive succession process by creating a team of FOUR emperors – two senior (*augustus*) emperors and two junior *(caesar)* emperors – with a preset plan that the *augustii* would step down after ten years, the *caesarii* would become *augustii* and appoint their new *caesarii.*
5. According to tradition, what specific event prompted Constantine to support Christianity?
   * Tradition tells that before the critical Battle of Milvian Bridge against a more powerful opponent, Constantine had a vision of a Christian symbol (the *chi rho*) and heard the words, "In this sign, conquer." He had the symbol painted on his soldiers' shields and banners, and proceeded to win an unlikely victory, after which he went on to rule the entire Roman Empire.
6. What is meant by “Apostolic Succession?”
   * The belief that there is an unbroken chain of ordination from the Apostles (the foundation for all Church authority) to bishops, and on down to all ministers of the Church– so that every Christian minister can trace ordination back to an Apostle.
7. How was the leadership of the Early Church organized, and how did this change over time?
   * By early 2nd Century, there were three distinct positions of authority within the Church – bishops, presbyters (elders) and deacons.
   * For a considerable time, the titles “bishop” and “elder” appear to have been interchangeable.
   * Bishops as “senior pastors” over the churches in a city or an area came about when some elders were recognized as having greater spiritual maturity and/or learning to help lead the Church, especially when persecuted.
8. Why did both apostolic succession and the authority of bishops become so important to the Church from the late 2nd Century onward?
   * The implication of apostolic succession was that if the line of Christian ordination went back unbroken to the apostles, there was a far greater likelihood that the correct teaching (which was based on the apostles) would be passed down – along with the spiritual authority of the apostles.
   * Emphasis on the authority of bishops and on apostolic succession came especially in response to the challenge of heresies in the late 2nd and 3rd centuries.

1. Why did the Church, starting around the end of the 2nd Century, begin to limit leadership to men only?
   * By the end of the 2nd century official leadership of the Church was entirely masculine, though there are indications of women in earlier leadership. This likely was due to prominent roles women had as leadership of some pre-Christian pagan cults, & especially within Gnosticism.
2. Who were the “confessors” who came out of the persecutions of Decius and Valerian, and why were they important?
   * The persecutions of Decius and Valerian caused many Christians to renounce their faith and worship pagan gods. Those who survived persecution & torture without lapsing – the “confessors” – were highly regarded & held by many to be more spiritual. So some looked to these “confessors” to decide how to treat those who had lapsed.
   * Cyprian of Carthage insisted that bishops and other Church leaders (and NOT the “confessors”) must decide on the lapsed. A schism (split) resulted in both the churches of Carthage and Rome.
3. What were the Seven Ecumenical Councils and why were they important?
   * After Constantine became emperor and Christianity was legal, there were seven great gatherings of leaders from all over Christendom (thus "ecumenical"), for the purpose of organizing and coordinating Church efforts, making decisions about things like leadership , and – perhaps most importantly – considering and deciding whether questionable beliefs were heresies. The first council – the Council of Nicaea – for example, determined that the theology of Marcionism was a heresy.
4. What was the primary reason for the growth of the Monastic movement in the 4th Century?
   * When Christianity became legal and even favored in the Empire, many felt this was a bad thing. Suddenly bishops competed for positions, wealthy people had a great deal of influence, and the emperor involved himself actively in the business of the Church. All of this made it more difficult to be spiritual, and so the monastic movement grew as a means to seek greater holiness.
5. What two important forms did the monastic movement take?
   * The anchorite (solitary) monastic movement, especially as led by St. Anthony in the Egyptian dessert.
   * The cenobitic (communal) monastic movement, founded by Pachomius.
6. Why was Augustine’s theology of free will so important?
   * It was a key point in his refutation of Manicheaism, but it became even more important later as one basis for the theology of the Protestant Reformation.
7. What was the special significance of Augustine’s book, ***The City of God***?
   * The fall of Rome in AD 410 had caused widespread panic throughout Christendom, as people saw Rome as the Eternal City, the seat of the Church, and they feared its fall might mean the Christian faith had faltered. In ***The City of God***, Augustine argues that the fall of any earthy city – even Rome – was not as important as the realization there is an eternal city in heaven – the City of God – and that it is in that City that Christians should put their trust.

1. What obvious change occurred in Western Europe after the sack of Rome by the Visigoths in 410 AD?
   * It was no longer one territory (the Western Roman Empire), but was broken up into a great many smaller kingdoms.
2. What significant change occurred among the barbarian tribes (usually starting with their kings) in the late 5th and 6th centuries?
   * They converted to Christianity.
3. In what keys ways was Gregory the Great one of history’s most important popes?
   * He has been called “Father of Christian Worship” for his revisions to the Mass & contributions to church music (*Gregorian Chant*).
   * Very prolific writer – over 850 letters, sermons, commentaries, & *The Rule for Pastors* – which defined the episcopal office.
   * Had great passion for missions, sending missionaries to non-Christian tribes throughout Europe – most notably to Britain.
   * His charitable efforts were widespread and comprehensive – especially because the government in Constantinople was not responding to humanitarian needs in the West – setting an important precedent for humanitarian outreach by the Church.
   * His good deeds and leadership, in the absence of political leaders, caused the people to look to the papacy for government – both during Gregory's life and later.

1. What title did Charlemagne assume in 800 AD, and why?
   * He was crowned Holy Roman Emperor by Pope Leo.
   * His military conquests had again brought together most of Western Europe under one authority. This is why Charlemagne is called the “Father of Europe.”
   * A committed Christian, Charlemagne supported the papacy, as his father (Pepin the Short) had before him, and so he received the support of the pope and the Church
   * Charlemagne instituted widespread administrative reforms, including standardizing weights, measures and customs policies.
   * He encouraged developments in education, the arts, culture and literacy (the *Carolingian Renaissance*).
2. What were the Crusades (1095-1291)?
   * The Crusades were the response from Christian Western Europe to pleas from Eastern Emperor in Constantinople for help against Muslims; it meant a decision to go to war to battle Islam and free the Holy Land from Muslim control.