

NOTES

~ History of the Church ~

- **Introduction:** Why learn about the Church's history? It's good to know where we've been so we can avoid past mistakes and stay focused on serving God and man appropriately. Let's talk about the evolution of the Church as we explore time periods and practices from its beginning until the end when our bridegroom, Jesus, will return for His faithful.
- Followers **from Jesus to Constantine:** 26 - 325 AD
 - The **earliest** Church
 - **Focus:** Caring for others and spreading the Gospel
 - **Challenges:** Pride, greed, sensuality, sexual immorality, and gluttony; martyrdom
 - **Location:** The Church remained in the same area for 1600 years until it began traveling to spread the Gospel in the 16th century and expanded to the Americas in the 17th century
 - Local to the Mediterranean - Scotland (west) to Asia (east) and Southern Russia (north) to Egypt/Northern Africa (south)
- The Roman Catholic & Orthodox East to reformation and the creation of denominations: ~ 325 – 1600's AD
 - Mid-east challenges
 - Birth of Islam (7th century)
 - Crusades (11th – 14th centuries)
 - Split of the Catholic Latin West and Orthodox East churches
 - Reformation of the Catholic Church and creation of denominations
- Flourishing of the denominations (1600's until present)
 - Brief history of the Bible (Wycliffe in 1380, King James in 1611, etc.)
 - The move from doctrine to experience, benevolence to self-centering
 - Mid-east challenges (continued): Arab/Israeli conflicts (1948 onward)
- What's next?
 - **Focus on** the important things of our **faith:** honor our God and Christ through right living and repentance, care for our others, and spread the good news of a choice that brings life and saves us from God's wrath to come in the end-days.
 - The **end** when the bridegroom, Jesus, will return for His 'Bride', the Church. Judgment and God's wrath (hell) will follow.
- **Summary:** Now that you know where we've come from, focus on the things we do that lend themselves to obedience out of faith and correct anything else in your pursuit of righteousness. Work with our brothers and sisters in Christ to unite in our faith and reverse the segregation that exists today. How do we learn what needs to be corrected and how? Or how to be obedient out of faith? Rely on God's Spirit, study of God's words, and discipleship by the spiritually mature.

~ *History of the Church* ~

Introduction: Why?

Introduction: Why learn about the Church's history? It's good to know where we've been so we can avoid past mistakes and stay focused on serving God and man appropriately. Let's talk about the evolution of the Church as we explore time periods and practices from its beginning until the end when our bridegroom, Jesus, will return for His faithful.

Set the stage from 26-325

Section I: 300 years of followers **from Jesus to Constantine:** 26 – 325 AD

Heavy initial persecution & poverty

The model of the **earliest** Church

Focus of the early Church = benevolence:

- **Focus:** Caring for others and spreading the Gospel

- For the poor and persecuted

The earliest Church had to care for its members as if their lives depended on it – because they did! For instance, Roman siege of Jerusalem for several years caused widespread starvation. Paul collected funds from Gentile churches around the Mediterranean to care for those Jewish Christians.

- For evangelists

The other major use of personal resources within the Church was to help take care of those who traveled all the time to spread the good news of salvation and couldn't provide for themselves. Some took care of their own needs while spreading the Gospel. Paul was a great example!

Training the early Church

The apostles not only traveled to spread the Gospel message and start new geographical groups of followers (not just believers!) of Jesus, but also help the early Church mature.

Sinful behaviors to be 'unlearned'

Greed, gluttony, sensuality, and sexual immorality were significant behaviors of the day – not unlike today! So, new converts needed to be taught, in many cases, that these actions were sinful rebellion against God's ways. The training also included many, many examples of how to apply the Old Testament Torah (the Scriptures) and New Testament Gospel truths in daily living.

Fellowship & discipleship are **CRITICAL**

This is why fellowship and discipleship are so critical to living in Christ!!

[**Examples of the Apostles' letters and instructions**]

Challenges facing the early Church

Ananias/Sapphira & Simon

Communion gluttony

Sexual immorality

The cost early Christians paid for following

Paul's trials . . .

Why Roman emperors persecuted Christians

Rome against Israel's rebellion

Rome's religion

- **Challenges:** Pride, greed, sensuality, sexual immorality, and gluttony; martyrdom

As I mentioned, new converts had to 'unlearn' many bad behaviors they would've considered OK before entering into a covenant with Jesus. After all, these were the lifestyles of the day. Let's talk about a few examples:

- **Greed:**
 - Sapphira and Ananias (Acts 5)
 - Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8:9-24)
- **Gluttony:**
 - At supper/communion (1Corinthians 11)
- **Sensuality and sexual immorality:**
 - With prostitutes (
 - With a family member

Jesus told us that we must 'consider the cost' of following. He also said that we must be prepared to give all – including our lives – for the spreading of the Gospel. Early *followers* of Jesus knew what they were buying into and gave of themselves willingly. They were beaten, starved, shipwrecked, jailed, and killed for their faith.

[Paul's trials]

In fact, many were heavily persecuted by early Roman emperors. Why? There are a couple of reasons:

1. Christians are the 'offspring' of Israel (spiritually-speaking & as referenced in Revelation 12:17); Rome had issues with Israel and her rebellion against the Empire.
2. The Jewish religion and Christianity were in direct opposition to Rome and its pagan religious practices that included:
 - a. Sun worship
 - b. Pagan god worship
 - c. Temple prostitution
 - d. Fortune-telling

Examples of emperors who persecuted Christians

Geographical location of the early Church

1st – to – 17th century:
Europe/Mediterranean

Where the Apostles evangelized

Notorious examples of Emperors who killed Jews and Christians:

- Vespasian (69-79 – mention the **dispersion of the Jews**)
- Nero (64-68 – martyrdom of **Peter** and **Paul**; **burning of Rome**)
- Domitian (95-96 – mention banishment of **John**)
- Trajan (104-117)
- Marcus Aurelius (161-180 – mention martyrdom of **Polycarp**).

Location of the Church: The Church remained in the same area for 1600 years until it began traveling to spread the Gospel in the 16th century and expanded to the Americas in the 17th century.

Contrary to what we may think, the location of the fractured Church and its non-Catholic or non-Orthodox denominations outside of Europe and Asia didn't happen until the 1600's AD.

- **Localized around the Mediterranean**

- Scotland (west) to Asia (east)
- Southern Russia (north) to Egypt/Northern Africa (south)

Peter: Founded Church in Antioch and ministered in Rome and Jerusalem

Andrew: Scythia (southern Russia, Asia, Turkey, etc.); ministered in Jerusalem

James the Greater: Jerusalem and perhaps Spain; first to be martyred

John the Revelator: Jerusalem, Samaria, and in Asia Minor

Phillip: Asia

Bartholomew: India and Armenia

Matthew: Jerusalem

Thomas: Parthians (northeastern Iran/Syria)

James the Lessor: Unknown

Simon & Jude: Persia

Paul: Jerusalem, Greece, Crete, Macedonia, Rome, and what's now the UK; Asia Minor

Catholic and Orthodox churches until the 1600's

Just followers . . .

Constantine and the Council of Nicaea

Doctrinal differences resulted in Latin West and Orthodox East

Decline of the Roman Empire

Middle-East challenges

Islam

Comparison of Islam through Ishmael and Judaism through Isaac

Crusades: 1095 – 14th centuries

Section II: The Roman Catholic & Orthodox East to reformation and the creation of denominations: ~ 325 – 1600's AD

Until Constantine aligned himself with, and gained the support of, Christians in Rome, there was only one Church: *followers of Jesus* throughout Europe, Asia, India, Africa, etc.

After 325 AD and the first Christian council at Nicaea, Christianity became the official religion of Rome and Constantine worked to unite Christians throughout the entire region from east to west, north to south.

But differences of opinion in doctrine caused divisions between Christians in the west in Rome and those in the east in Eastern Europe and Asia. As a result, we ended up with what we know today as the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church. Despite minor differences, they're very similar because they shared attempts at unification by Constantine in the 4th century.

The 5th century saw the decline of the Roman Empire as a corrupt and immoral nation that imploded while also suffering military defeat from barbarians.

- The 7th century marked the beginning of challenges in the Middle East that continue to this day.
 - Birth of **Islam** (7th century). This religion has been in contention with Jews and Christians – those Islam refers to as the 'people of the book' – nearly from its inception in the early 600's AD. This should come as no surprise, though, considering the word of God given us in Genesis (16:10-12). Ishmael's descendants would become a great number through 12 'princes' as would Isaac's through the 12 tribes of Israel.
 - **Crusades** (11th – 14th centuries). The Holy Crusades began with Pope Urban II in 1095 and ended with defeat at Acre. This time was marked with great corruption and rebellion against God from "God wills it!" by Pope Urban to the unethical collection of funds for the Crusades with the promise of being able to buy forgiveness for sinful behavior or redemption for dead relatives.

Split of Latin West and Orthodox East

Reformation (not just related to Protestantism!)

Formal reformation beginning with Luther

Communion outside the Catholic Church and ‘rebaptism’

Family tree of the Anabaptists

Calvin and predestination

- **Split** of the **Catholic** Latin West and **Orthodox** East churches. Doctrinal differences between Catholic and Orthodox divisions won out and, in 1053, Pope Leo IX issued a sentence of excommunication and the Great Schism – split – was created. While there’ve been multiple attempts at reconciliation (i.e. 1274 at the Council of Lyons and in 1439 at the Council of Florence, the two groups remain divided.

- **Reformation** of the Catholic Church and creation of denominations. Although we tend to think of ‘reformation’ in terms of Protestantism, it also applies to the Catholic Church. Corruption, doctrinal challenges, and a lack of discipleship prompted a call for reformation within the Catholic Church.

Reformers *before* the formal reformers included monks in the 11th century, English reformer John Wyclif in the 14th century, and Czech reformer John Hus in the 15th century.

THE AGE OF THE REFORMATION 1517–1648

Let’s talk about the *formal* reformations. What was the spark that ignited the actual reformation? Luther drew up 95 propositions and posted them on the church door at Wittenberg, Germany on 31 October 1517. In them, he addressed indulgences, claiming they cannot remove guilt, do not apply to purgatory, and are harmful because they induce a false sense of security in the donor.

Soon after, common folk began to be able to take communion in public and many were re-baptized as an expression of their faith. This was called ‘Anabaptism’. Direct descendants are the Mennonites (who have a shared set of beliefs in values in common) and the Hutterites.

“So the distant relatives of the Anabaptists today include the Baptists . . . In fact, in their belief in the separation of church and state the Anabaptists proved to be forerunners of practically all modern Protestants.” (Shelley, Bruce (1996-05-07). Church History in Plain Language (Plain Language Series) (p. 185).) Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition. One very strong conviction of Anabaptists was discipleship . . .

Calvin reformed in Geneva. His doctrine differed slightly from that of Luther in that it introduced the idea of ‘predestination’.

Catholic reform . . .

Short life of denominations [born of the Catholic Church]

The move away from religious anarchy and toward freedom

Focus on obedience and doctrine initially

History of the Bible

Wycliffe

Guttenberg

Geneva

KJV

NASV & NIV

Doctrine to experience . . .

Age of Reason

By 1545, Rome was also in the process of reform. Papal immoralities were no longer acceptable behavior.

Section III: Flourishing of the denominations (1600's until present). Do you realize that the lifespan of the Protestant denominations is only about 400 years – roughly one-fifth of the total lifespan of the Church? Or that Protestant denominations were born of the Catholic Church?

The Anabaptists, Methodists, and others took advantage of the ability to move away from Catholic domination and pursue God in their own ways. This paved the way for many fractures of the Catholic Church – denominations, which quickly spread to North America

In the beginning, the focus was on doctrine and obedience out of faith. One side-effect of this was the translation of the Torah (Old Testament) and Greek (New Testament) into languages used outside the Catholic Church, which primarily read ancient Latin texts during Mass.

Let's take a brief look at the history of the Bible from the time John Wycliffe translated it in 1380 until the 20th century, which saw the proliferation of many Bible translations including the NIV.

- 1380 A.D. The first English translation of the Bible by John Wycliffe
- Mid-1400's. The Guttenberg Bible
- 1560 A.D. Geneva Bible (used by the Pilgrims)
- 1611 A.D. King James Bible
- 1971 & 1983 A.D. The New American Standard Version (NASV) & The New International Version (NIV)

Unfortunately, the ability to choose what and how a person believed or followed Jesus introduced its own set of problems leading to our experience-based Church of today.

- The move **from doctrine to experience, benevolence to self-centering**.
 - The Age of **Reason** (18th century): “*Challenged institutionalized religion and the legitimacy of the Bible . . .*” Deism and Intellectual reasoning over religion began to take hold and gave birth to the manmade wisdom of David Hume and others and the likes of Charles Darwin.

The 'Great Awakening' of the Evangelical Church

Great Awakening #1: more doctrinal than experience

Great Awakening #2: more experience-based

Compare Charismatic and Pentecostal

Azusa Street mission - Pentecostalism

Doctrine – to – experience

Move toward “What does God have for me?”

Meanwhile, the Middle East roars on

- The Great **Awakening** (two times, actually!). “*The Age of Reason saw a dramatic spiritual renewal in Western Christianity called the Evangelical Awakening.*” (Shelley, Bruce (1996-05-07). Church History in Plain Language (Plain Language Series) (p. 185). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.)

- 1725 - 1760 **First Great Awakening**: Dutch Reformed, Presbyterian, and Congregational churches; Doctrinal preaching; Calvinism; negative in the future = Unitarianism
- 1790 - 1804 **Second Great Awakening**: Marked by camp meetings and revivals; Arminian; Experiential-based; Congregationalists, Anglican, Evangelical Methodists, and Baptists; Negative in the future = American cults

- **Charismatic and Pentecostal**: “*The evangelical awakening gained unexpected reinforcement in 1960 from another source of personal Christianity, Pentecostalism. The Pentecostal experience—“the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues”—was not new. The spark of twentieth-century Pentecostalism was a three-year-long revival, beginning in 1906, at the Azusa Street Mission in Los Angeles.*” (Chronological and background charts of Church History by Robert C. Walton, ISBN 978-0-310-25813-1).

The charismatic and Pentecostal movements have further moved us from a doctrine-based *obedience-out-of-faith mentality* (where legalism was a temptation, unfortunately!) to something of an experience-based culture.

Today, we're more “seeker-sensitive” and interested in “What does God have for me?” and how we ‘feel’ than we are in obedience out of faith . . . And, yet, we’ll be judged by our obedience to our God and Christ’s commandments. We must choose life. Failure to choose life results in death.

Meanwhile, challenges in the Middle East continue to threaten Israel’s safety and propel us toward an apocalyptic age.

Arab-Israeli wars

Contrast our Western Christianity with the persecution of those who truly are persecuted

Next: grow in faith and be obedient

The **very** end: Jesus will return for His bride

Summary:

- Focus obedience and faith out of belief
- Unite in faith
- Learn & grow

- **Mid-east challenges** (continued): Arab/Israeli conflicts (1948 onward). Immediately after becoming recognized by the United Nations as a nation, Israel began to encounter resistance from her Arab cousins.
 - The 1948 Arab–Israeli War (1948–49), known as the “*War of Independence*”
 - The 1956 Suez War
 - The 1967 Six-Day War. During this time, Israel again defended herself against all odds. She gained control of Jerusalem and the Temple Mount, but gave it back within hours.

Why do we care? Prophetic fulfillment, for one thing. Also, it helps us understand that, although we live in a comfortable Christian culture without persecution, others around the world are indeed killed for the Gospel of salvation!

Section IV: What’s next?

- **Focus on** the important things of our **faith**: honor our God and Christ through right living and repentance, care for our others, and spread the good news of a choice that brings life and saves us from God’s wrath to come in the end-days.
- The **end** when the bridegroom, Jesus, will return for His ‘Bride’, the Church. Judgment and God’s wrath (hell) will follow.

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