

THE ANCIENT CHURCH (A.D. 100–600) Cont'd.

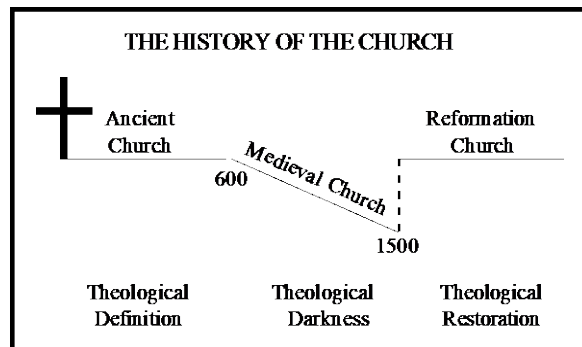
Lecture 1

Topic: The Age of the Apostles (A.D. 33–100)

Due: Gonzalez, 1:xiii–xviii, 1–39

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Overview of the course.



B. The Foundation of the Church (1?BC- AD 33)

1. Bibliography for the history of the Apostolic Age

a. General references

F.F. Bruce, *New Testament History*

Merrill Tenney, *New Testament Times*

Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*

Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *Yeshua, the Life of the Jewish Messiah*

b. Source for the Apostolic Age

a. Jewish Sources

1) Josephus

a) The Man -

Josephus lived from A.D. 37 - AD 100. Caligula was the Emperor when Josephus was born. He was learned concerning the Essenes, Sadducees and Pharisees. Very brilliant man. He was a Pharisee. During the great Jewish wars in the late 60's he was a General in the Jewish army, then he surrendered to Vespasian and fled to the Roman army as a translator. However, Josephus

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was still a loyal Jew as a citizen of Rome. His writings were very biased for the Jews.

b) His writings -

The Wars of the Jews 6 Books. He writes about the period 175 B.C. - AD 75 from Antiochus Epiphanes to the Destruction of Jerusalem by Titus.

The Antiquities of the Jews - 20 Books. The history of Jews from their origins to AD. 66. Written as an apology for the Jewish people. Book XVIII contains the famous reference to Jesus.

c) The Problem -

He is the best nonbiblical source of the NT era. However, he quotes sources that no one knows and cannot be checked.

2) I & II Maccabees -

These are apocryphal OT Intertestamental history. They deal with the Maccabean revolt. 170 - 103 B.C.

3) Dead Sea Scrolls -

They were produced by the Essene community living in the

Dead Sea area known as Qumran. The Isaiah and Habbakuk MSS are the best. They also found good scrolls of Nahum and Ps 31. The Scrolls contained the records of the Essene community and much valuable information on Jewish life and culture at the time of Jesus. They were very ascetic, apocalyptic and looking for the Messiah.

b. Biblical Sources *Acts* and the Epistles

c. Apostolic Fathers Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Polycarp, Papias, Hermas, Epistle of Barnabas, 2 Clement and the Didactic.

d. Apologists - AD 150 ff - Hippolytus, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Origen.

e. Greek historians

1) Plutarch - AD 50- 120 Lives A biography of Roman and Greek statesmen.

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- 2) Strabo Geography
- 3) Polybius - 40 vols. *History of Rome* He is the authority on the intertestamental period.
- 4) Diocassius - 80 vols. *History of Rome*
- 5) Diodorus - *Antiochus Epiphanes* biography on the Syrian leader.
- f. Roman historians
 - 1) Tacitus - *Annals History of Rome from Tiberius to Nero; History* Nero to Domitian
 - 2) Suetonius - *Lives of the Twelve Caesars* Julius Caesar to Domitian
 - 3) Cicero - *History of Syria*
 - 4) Livy - *History of Rome* A history of era of the Maccabean revolt.
2. Christ: The foundation of the church.

Matt. 16:18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.¹
Eph. 2:20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone,
3. Setting for the Birth of the Messiah, Gal. 4:4

Gal. 4:4 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,

 - a) The political influence of Rome. Map of Roman Empire
 - (1) A sense of a unity and community of man under universal law.

No previous empire had developed such a sense of unity in the human race. This set the stage for a message that all humanity was united in Adam and under the penalty of sin.

Also set the stage for understanding the body of Christ as an international unity.
 - (2) A measure of political peace. *Pax Romana*

¹ All Scripture references are from the NKJV translation, unless otherwise noted.

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The ability to freely move around the Mediterranean world made it easier for the spread of the gospel.

- (a) unhindered travel. Good roads, few robbers
 - (b) repression of piracy.
 - (c) Army kept an armed peace..
 - (d) No trade barriers.
- (3) An elite empire-wide road system, many roads of which survive to this day. The roads went to every part of the Empire.
- (4) An army that brought both repression and the gospel.

The Romans adopted the custom of using provincials in the army as the supply of Roman citizens declined because of war and easy living. These provincials were brought into contact with Roman culture and helped to spread its ideas throughout the ancient world. Moreover, some of these men became converts to Christianity and spread the gospel to areas where they were assigned for military duty. It is probable that the earliest introduction of Christianity to Britain was a result of the efforts of Christian soldiers or merchants.²

b) The intellectual influence of Greece.

- (1) The almost universal use of *Koine* Greek in both the East and West.
- (2) The decline of the potency of religion leading to emperor worship.
- (3) The Mystery religions
- (4) Influence of Greek Philosophy; by this time it was showing its bankruptcy;
 - a) Philosophy by Christ's time had declined into petty thought so as not to answer epistemological questions of the day. Epicureanism - eat, drink and be merry, Stoicism - by reason
 - b) Called attention to meaning beyond the shadow of life.

c) The religious influence of Judaism.

- (1) The expectancy of Messiah.
They knew he was coming, but didn't appreciate the quality of his kingdom.

² Earle E. Cairns, *Christianity through the Centuries: A History of the Christian Church*, Third Edition, Revised and Expanded. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 41.

- a) Jews were suppressed by foreign powers and had expectancy of Messiah from "Daniel" - Babylon's rise to power allowed Jews to go back to Israel. They understood the 4 Kingdoms.
- b) Daniel 8; Medo-Persia rise to power.
- c) Greece - Alexander the Great conquered the world at 20, but couldn't conquer himself - he died of V.D. He came out of Macedonia and conquered the world in 3 years. When he died the Kingdom was split 4 ways.
 - (1) Seleucid - Syria vs. Ptolemy - Egypt didn't get along. They would each march through Jerusalem to get at each other.
 - (2) Antiochus 111, IV set up a DMZ by using the Jews as a buffer state.
 - (3) Antiochus Epiphanes desecrated the temple with pig on the altar. After ships of Kittim (Dan 11:30) (this refers to the Romans) ally with Egyptian the sixth Syro-Egyptian War began. This led to the Maccabean Revolt.
 - (4) Mattathias and 5 sons lead Maccabean revolt against Syria, 168 B.C.
 - (5) In 165 B.C., after Maccabean revolt the Jews win their political freedom and set up an independent state.
 - (6) 64 B.C. Romans came and made Israel a vassal. In 37 B.C. they subjugated them.

N.B.: The Jews expected the Messiah to come and bring back their *political* freedom.

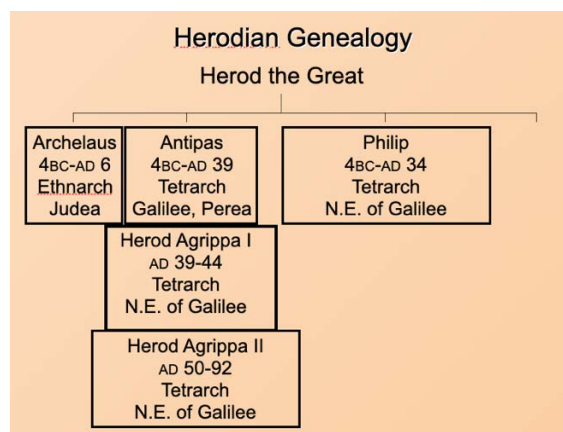
- (2) Jewish *Diaspora* (dispersion in the Mediterranean. world) provided the early church with pulpits for preaching.
- 3) In the *diaspora* Jews developed their synagogue system which became the womb of the church.

(4) The Septuagint (LXX)

4. Life and Times of Jesus, the Messiah Jesus was born 5 B.C.

a. The politics of Christ's Day

- 1) The reign of Herod the Great (37 - 4 B.C.) Herod was an Edomite, but appointed by Caesar. Two important resources are Harold Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978 ISBN-13 : 978-0310262114
Andrew Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*. St. Louis: Concordia, 2011.



- a) Period of Consolation – 38 (37?) - 27 BC – suppresses Pharisees, executed 45 aristocrats in one day. (Saducees)
 - b) Period of Prosperity - 27-13 BC - Rebuilt temple, Antonia, enlarged the Kingdom, built amphitheater section.
 - c) Period of Domestic Troubles - 14-4 BC He feared someone would take his throne from him. He killed his wife and sons - 3 survived. He fell into trouble with Rome. Apparently he had a brain disease and great paranoia.
- 2) The rule of Archelaus (4 B BC - AD 6) Ethnarch in Judea (Matt 2:22)
 - a) Son of Herod the Great and Malthace.
 - b) Not liked by people - worst of rulers
 - c) Because of his mismanagement he was banished to

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- Gaul by Rome in AD 6
 - d) Ruled Judea from 4 BC to AD 6.
 - e) Deposed, exiled and replaced by procurators (Rufus, Gratus, Pilate)
- 3) The rule of Philip Herod (4 BC - AD 34) (Matt 14:3; Mark 6:17; Luke 3:1)
 - a) Son of Herod and Cleopatra of Jerusalem; half-brother to Herod Antipas and Herod Archelaus.
 - b) He was a good ruler and well liked, not involved in the usual family intrigues.
 - c) Ruled in Syria
 - d) His subjects were Syrians and Greeks
 - e) He was liked and ruled justly
 - f) He built Caesarea Philippi and Bethesda
 - g) After his death his dominion came under Syria, he was murdered.
- 4) The rule of Herod Antipas (4 B.C. - AD 39)
 - a) Son of Herod the Great and Malthace, Brother of Herod Antipas.
 - b) Tetrarch, ruled in Galilee and Perea. He was called "the fox", responsible for beheading John the Baptist.
 - c) His building program (Siphrus, Tiberius were built by him.)
 - d) Deposed and exiled by the Romans because he was always plotting against them.
- 5) The Procurators
 - a) They were under no one but the Emperor of Rome.
 - b) They resided in Caesarea because Jerusalem was too hot. They only visited Jerusalem once a year for Passover.
- 6) The Caesars: Tiberius and Caligula ruled
- 7) The Sects of Christ's day
 - a) The Pharisees: popular sect. They were not the sect in power although they were gaining on the Saducees. Working class party, all Pharisees had a trade.
 - (1) Term means "to separate". They were not

isolated, but were a popular party. They were purest of the day. Very meticulous in their obedience! they held to strict views on ritual purity and tithing. They were Synagogue oriented, rather than Temple oriented. They attempted to interpret the Law with the needs of the poor in mind, this made them popular. A good job from bad motives. Extremely moral.

- (2) Their spiritual leaders were the Scribes, later called Rabbis. There were about 6,000 at the time of Herod. Their emphasis was on conformity.
 - (3) They analyzed the OT and memorized it. They systemized -various interpretations on each passage and put them in the Talmud. Their Scriptures were the Talmud - scriptures and interpretation, oral written tradition.
 - (4) Mt. 5:20 Jesus gave His opinion of them, Pharisees didn't like Jesus after that.
- b) The Essenes - Monastic communities, isolationists, separatists, prolific copiers of Scripture, lived at Qumran waiting for the King or Prince of Light.
- c) The Sadducees - People of Power, aristocracy, minority.
- (1) Etymology from "Zadok" High Priest under Solomon, this line became priestly leaders.
 - (2) Origin - Post-Exilic emerged during intertestamental period.
 - (3) Status in the Lord's Day
 - (a) Herod tried to liquidate the Sadducees by killing 42 in one day.
 - (b) Under Archelaus they revived.
 - (c) In the Lord's time they were the

primary power. They were Temple oriented.

(4) Theology Liberal - OT theology not binding

C. The expansion of the church.

1. The record in Acts

THE BEGINNING OF THE CHURCH		
(April 3rd)	33 A.D.	Death of Christ
(April 5th)		Resurrection of Christ
(May 24th)		Day of Pentecost
	48-49 A.D.	1st Missionary Journey
	50-52 A.D.	2nd Missionary Journey
	53-57 A.D.	3rd Missionary Journey
	60-62 A.D.	1st Roman Imprisonment
	67-68 A.D.	2nd Roman Imprisonment
	70 A.D.	Destruction of Jerusalem

N.B. See handout on the “Chronology of the Apostolic Age.”

"The history of primitive Christianity is related to the following datable events of general history. We can, therefore, determine from these a more or less accurate chronological sequence of events.

1. The death of Herod Agrippa I (Acts xii.): spring of A.D. 44.
2. The famine in Palestine (Acts 11:28): A.D. 46-48.
3. The expulsion of the Jews from Rome by Claudius (Acts 18:I f.): A.D. 49.
4. Gallio, Proconsul of Achaia (Acts xviii. 12): spring of 52-53 or, more probable, A.D. 51-52.

2. The organization of the church.

- a) The offices of the church.
 - (1) Apostles.
 - (2) Prophets.
 - (3) Evangelists.

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- (4) Pastor—Teachers (bishops/elders).
 - (a) The terms are interchangeable (Titus 1:5, 7; Acts 20:17, 28).
 - (b) There is a plurality in some passages (Acts 20:17; Hebrews 13:7; Titus 1:5); in others *episkopos* is in the singular with the article, “the overseer (bishop)”
 - (c) There is a parity.
- (5) Deacons (Acts 6, 1 Timothy 3). In 1 Tim 3:8 *diakonoi* is in the plural (with a plural pronoun in 1 Tim 3:10)
- (6) Deaconess (Romans 16:1; 1 Timothy 3:11) *diakonon* is a feminine noun, “servant, helper.” Probably not an office but a reference to her as a servant to Paul and to the Roman congregation in delivering the epistle.

N.B. While there were offices in the primitive church, was there a distinct ecclesiology in the church (e.g., Episcopal, Congregational, Presbyterian)? There are at least three opinions on the matter:

- 1. The N.T. has diverse and irreconcilable ecclesiologies.
- 2. There is no ecclesiology taught in N.T.
- 3. There is one basic ecclesiology taught in N.T.

b) The worship of the church.

- (1) The nature of the meetings.

C. K. Barrett has this to say on the early church’s meetings: “Those who were members of the church met from time to time in assembly. At these meetings, prophecy and speaking with tongues were practiced, and each member had some sort of contribution to make to the proceedings: a word of knowledge or of wisdom, a piece of teaching or revelation, given as prophecy or in a tongue (xii. 8; xiv. 26). Paul’s instructions suggest that the meetings were sometimes tumultuous, even chaotic; they were certainly not dull. They were not confined to members of the church; unbelieving outsiders might find their way in (xiv. 23). The extent to which women were permitted to take part is hard to assess because it is difficult to reconcile xi. 5 and xiv. 34; see the notes on these passages” in *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 25.

James Denney describes the meeting in his sermon on 1 Thessalonians 5:19 as follows: “The new birth in those days was a new birth; it kindled in the soul thoughts and feelings to which it had hitherto been strange; it brought

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with it the consciousness of new powers; a new vision of God; a new love of holiness; a new insight into the Holy Scriptures, and into the meaning of man's life; often a new power of ardent, passionate speech. In the first Epistle to the Corinthians Paul describes a primitive Christian congregation. There was not one silent among them. When they came together every one had a psalm, a revelation, a prophecy, an interpretation. The manifestation of the Spirit had been given to each one to profit withal; and on all hands the spiritual fire was ready to flame forth.

Conversion to the Christian faith, the acceptance of the apostolic gospel, was not a thing which made little difference to men: it convulsed their whole nature to its depths; they were never the same again; they were new creatures, with a new life in them, all fervor and flame.” (Denny, James, “The Epistles to the Thessalonians” in *The Expositor's Bible*, ed. W. R. Nicoll [London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1903], 234).

- (2) The elements of worship.
 - (a) Reading of O.T.
 - (b) Reading of letters/epistles.
 - (c) Prayers.
 - Thanksgiving.
 - Intercession.
 - Praise.
 - Requests.
 - (d) Psalms.
 - (e) Exhortations.
 - (f) Teaching/Preaching.
 - (g) Giving.
 - (h) Lord's Supper.
 - (i) Baptism.
- (3) The day of worship—only an early non-uniform practice of Sunday.
- (4) The places of worship—homes, public buildings.

The oldest known house church is in Dura-Europas.

<https://www.wondermondo.com/dura-europos-house-church/>

- (5) The observances of the church—baptism and the eucharist.