

Christian Church History from the End of the Apostolic Era to the End of the “Ancient” Era 100 AD – 500 AD

Summer, 2016

Lessons



- Introduction and Overview

- Spread of Christianity

- Church and State – Persecution and Adoption

- Doctrine – Orthodoxy vs. Heresy Part I

- Doctrine – Orthodoxy vs. Heresy Part II

Introduction and Overview

Why Study Church History?

- “The Third Testament” – The Record of God’s Work in the Midst of His People
 - Faithful and Unfaithful People
- Intriguing / Interesting – Real People facing real problems
 - Some Similar, Some Different than what we face today
- Connection with an Extended Church Family (**Hebrews 11, 12:1**)

Bounding the Scope

- Geography – Discussion will focus on Europe, Middle East, North Africa
- Time – Discussion will focus on 100 AD to ~500 AD
- This is a survey level discussion
 - Condensing an 18 lecture curriculum (which was already an overview) to 4-5 discussions
 - Your favorite persecution, church father, or doctrinal dispute may not be covered in detail (or, unfortunately, at all)!

Introduction and Overview

Quick Overview of the 1st Century After the New Testament Narrative

- The Gospel of Christ has converted Greeks (Gentiles) as well as Jews
- Death of the Apostles (Traditions exist regarding when/where/how)
 - Peter (crucified upside down), Paul (beheaded) in Rome ~64AD during Nero's persecution of Christians
 - John lives longest to end of 1st Century
- Jews Revolt, Romans Destroy Jerusalem – 66-70 AD
- Linus – 2nd Bishop of Rome? (Linus mentioned in passing in **2 Timothy 4:21**)



Group Exercise

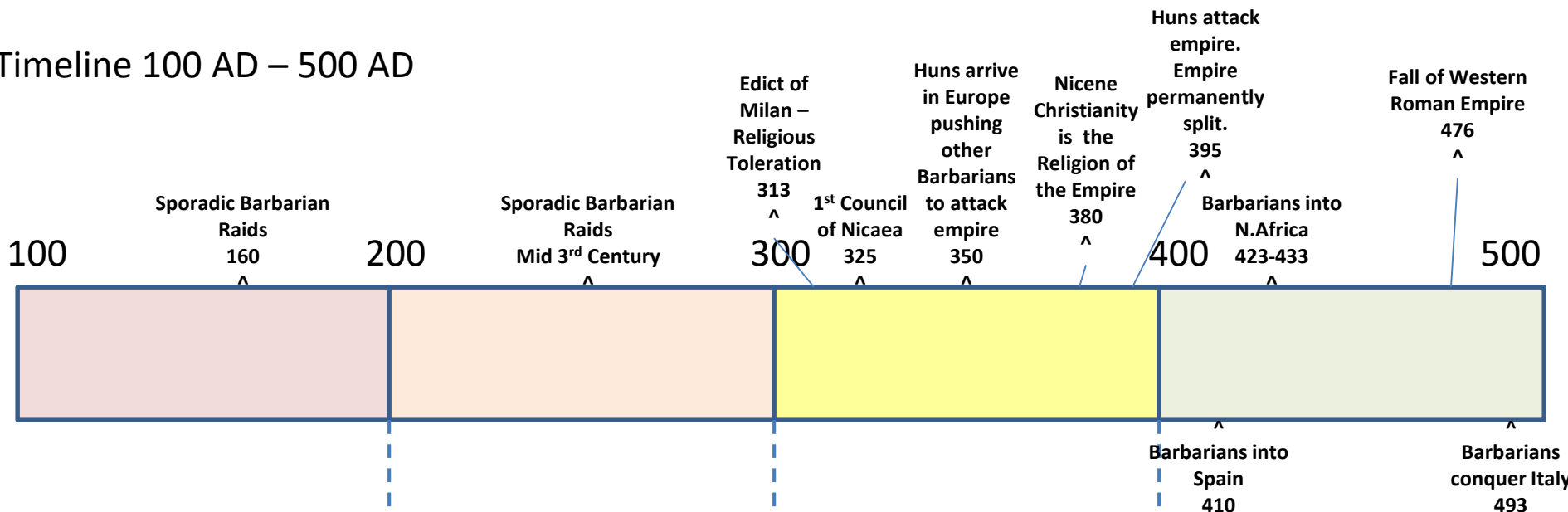
10 Minutes – As a group, without consulting the Internet, the church library, or any other reference source, let's make a list of the following from the period between 100 AD and 500 AD:

- People
- Places
- Things
- Events
- Ideas

Items may be secular, religious or both. Please restrict items to ones applicable to Europe, Northern Africa, and / or the Middle East.

Introduction and Overview

Timeline 100 AD – 500 AD



Emperors

- Trajan
- Hadrian
- Antoninus Pius
- Marcus Aurelius
- Commodus
- Pertinax
- Didius Julianus

- Septimius Severus
- Caracalla
- Macrinus
- Elagabalus
- Alexander Severus
- Maximinus Thrax
- Gordian III
- Phillipus Arabs
- Decius
- Trebonianus Gallus
- Aemilius Aemilianus
- Valerian
- Gallienus
- Claudius II
- Quintillus
- Aurelian
- Tacitus
- Florianus
- Probus
- Carus
- Numerian
- Carinus
- Diocletian

- Maximian (W)
- Constantius I (W)
- Severus II (W)
- Maxentius (W)
- Constantine (W) †
- Diocletian (E)
- Galerius (E)
- Maximinus Daia (E)
- Licinius (E)
- Constantine II
- Constans
- Constantius II
- Julian
- Jovian
- Valentinian (W)
- Gratian (W)
- Valentinian II (W)
- Eugenius (W)
- Valens (E)
- Theodosius (E) †

- Honorius (W)
- John (W)
- Valentinian III (W)
- Petronius Maximus (W)
- Avitus (W)
- Majorian (W)
- Severus III (W)
- Anthemius (W)
- Alybrius (W)
- Glycerius (W)
- Julius Nepos (W)
- Romulus Augustus (W)
- Arcadius (E)
- Theodosius II (E)
- Marcian (E)
- Leo (E)
- Zeno (E)

Popes

- Evaristus
- Alexander I
- Sixtus I
- Telesphorus
- Hyginus
- Pius I
- Anicetus
- Soter
- Eleutherius
- Victor I

- Zephyrinus
- Callistus I
- Urban I
- Pontain
- Anterus
- Fabian
- Cornelius
- Lucius I
- Stephen I
- Sixtus II
- Dionysius
- Felix I
- Eutychian
- Caius
- Marcellinus

- Marcellus I
- Eusebius
- Miltiades
- Sylvester I
- Marcus
- Julius I
- Liberius
- Damasus I
- Siricius
- Anastasius I

- Innocent I
- Zosimus
- Boniface I
- Celestine I
- Sixtus III
- Leo I (Great)
- Hilarius
- Simplicius
- Felix II
- Gelasius I
- Anastasius II

Lessons

- Introduction and Overview



- Spread of Christianity

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- Doctrine – Orthodoxy vs. Heresy Part I

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Spread of Christianity

The Roman World

- The Empire

- Raison D'être – Civilize the world; build and beautify cities similar to Rome



- Geography – Political unity surrounding the entire Mediterranean (North to northern England, east to Syria, south to Egypt, west to Spain/Portugal)



- Religion – Generally tolerant of local gods and customs but ...



- ❖ Although gods are named differently by region, they are really the same gods



- ❖ The Emperor is to be worshipped (This shows loyalty and instills unity)

- Transportation Infrastructure – Well Developed and Safe from Marauders



- ❖ Good road system



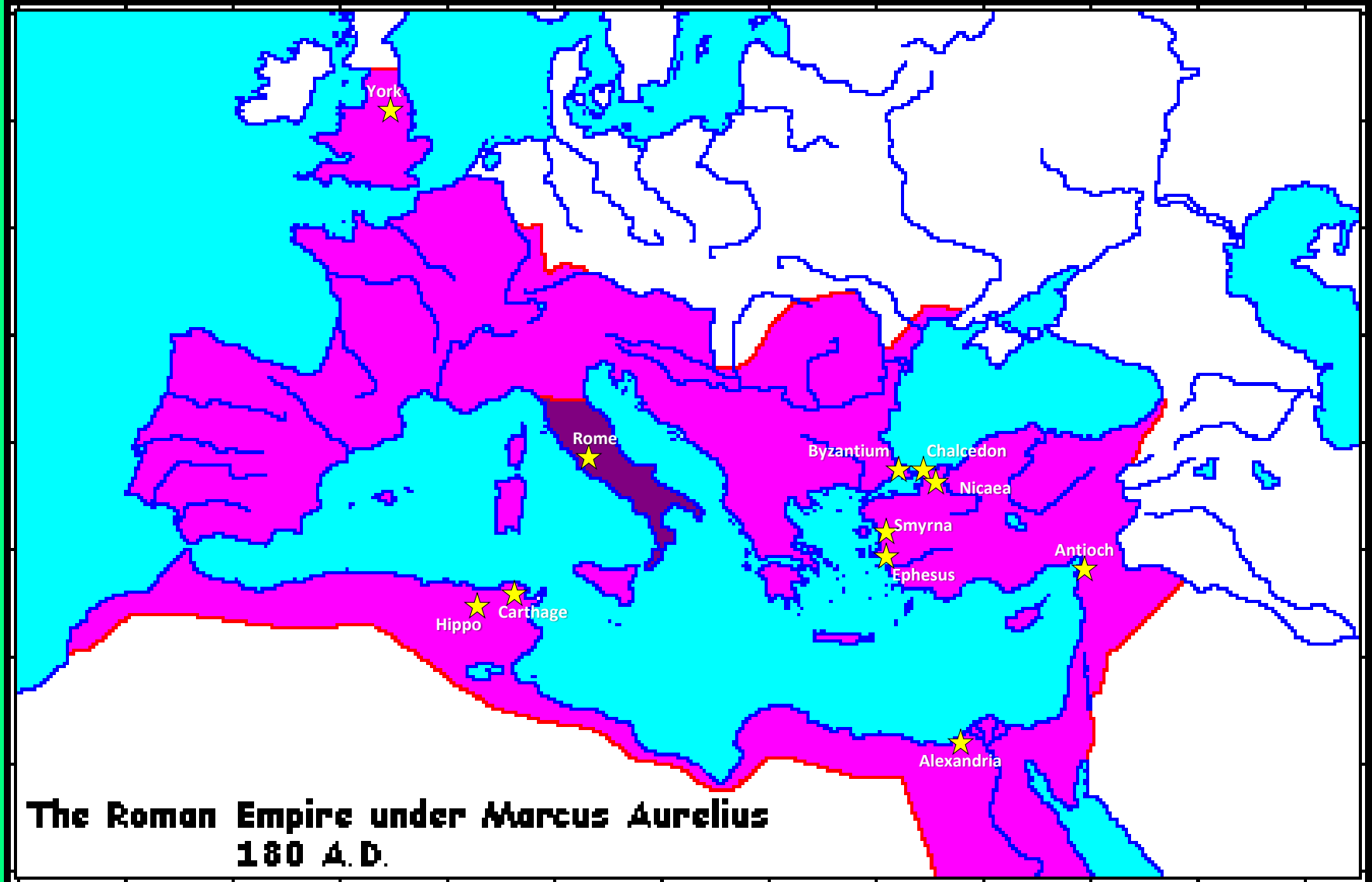
- ❖ Most trade and long distance travel is by sea and safe

- Greatly Influenced by Greeks especially Eastern portion of Empire

Monty Python, *Life of Brian* (1979), "apart from the sanitation, the medicine, education, wine, public order, irrigation, roads, the fresh water system, and public health what have the Romans done for us?"

Gibbon (1737-1794), *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* – "The various modes of worship which prevailed in the Roman world were all considered by the people as equally true; by the philosopher as equally false; and by the magistrate as equally useful"

Roman Empire



**The Roman Empire under Marcus Aurelius
180 A.D.**

Spread of Christianity

The Roman World – Greek Influence

👍 / 😞 • Influence of Greek Philosophy (see **Acts 17:16-34**)

👍 ➤ Critical of the ancient gods and religions

👍 / 😞 ➤ Platonism

❖ Perfect and Immutable Supreme Being

❖ Immortality of the Soul

❖ Higher World of Abiding Truth

👍 / 😞 ➤ Stoicism

❖ Contemplate and agree with Irresistible Laws of Nature that Rule Events

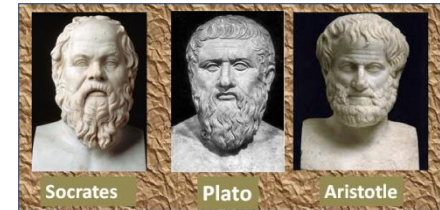
❖ Understand, Obey, and possibly Adjust to these Laws Of Nature

❖ Passions Subside (apatheia) – Cultivate Moral Insight, Courage, Self Control, and Justice

👍 • Greek (and Roman) Gentile “God-fearers” familiar with Old Testament

Plato (ca. 425 BC to 347 BC)– “We ought to fly away from earth to heaven as quickly as we can; and to fly away is to become like God, as far as this is possible; and to become like him is to become holy, just, and wise”

Seneca, Stoic Philosopher (4 BC – 65 AD) – “The Fates guide those who go willingly. Those who do not, they drag.”



Spread of Christianity

Culturally

- Christianity expands from Jewish Culture to Greek Culture (**Romans 1:16**)
 - Before Jesus' time Jews had spread throughout the empire (Diaspora)
 - Greek eventually spoken by more Jews than Hebrew
 - ❖ OT Septuagint quoted most by NT authors to argue with Jews, communicate with Gentiles
 - Christianity began among the Jews in the Jewish State (Israel)
 - Jewish state disappears in war of 66-70 AD and events between then and 135 AD
 - Christianity already had gained foothold in Greco-Roman World through work of Paul, the apostles, and the early Christians

Romans 1:16 – For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek

Spread of Christianity

Socially

- Early Christians tended to be Common People (I Cor 1:26)
 - Poor People
 - Women (possibly greater percentage of early church than men)
 - Slaves (Callistus, a former slave, becomes Bishop of Rome 217-222)
 - Soldiers
- Post NT Spread of Christianity Accomplished by Merchants and Slaves at Least as much as by Preachers and Missionaries
- Evidence of Expansion up the Social Ladder
 - ~60 AD – **Philippians 4:22** (“... saints ... that are of Caesar’s household”)
 - 90’s AD – Some evidence Emperor Domitian’s cousin and wife were Christian
 - Late 2nd Century – Clement of Alexandria sermon “What kind of rich person can be saved?”
 - “**The person who does not set his heart on wealth and put it first like the rich young ruler did.” (Luke 18:18-27)**

Celsus, 2nd Century Greek Philosopher – “Let no one educated, no one wise, and no one sensible come near.”

Minucius Felix, early church apologist (somewhere between 150 and 270) – “That many of us are called poor is not our disgrace but our glory”

Spread of Christianity

Geographically

- New Testament (Acts) and 1st Century
 - Asia Minor, Greece, Italy
 - By end of the 1st Century Asia Minor was the Center of Christianity
- Second Century
 - More widely in Asia Minor, Greece, Italy
 - Gaul, Germania, Spain
 - North Africa (tradition that Mark established the church in Alexandria)
 - Syria, Edessa, Armenia
- Third Century
 - Mostly population growth in areas listed in 2nd Century
 - ❖ Christian church beginning to assume proportion of “empire within empire”
 - Britain?
 - First public church buildings appear (initially in Syria then elsewhere)

The Odes of Solomon Hymn Book (ca. 2nd Century AD) – For there went forth a stream, and it became a river great and broad; indeed it carried away everything, and it shattered and brought it to the Temple. And the barriers which were built by men were not able to restrain it, nor even the arts of them who habitually restrain water. For it spread over the surface of all the earth, and it filled everything. Then all the thirsty upon the earth drank, and thirst was relieved and quenched; For from the Most High the drink was given.

Spread of Christianity

Why did it Spread Successfully?

- The Power of the Gospel / Holy Ghost (**Acts 1:8, Matthew 28:19,20**)
- Exclusivity of Christianity vs. Contemporary Belief Systems
 - “Too many cults, too many mysteries, too many philosophies of life to choose from. You could pile one religious insurance on another and still not feel safe. Christianity made a clean sweep.” – anonymous historian
- Witness of the Christians – Love and Commitment (**I John 4:11, Mark 8:35**)
 - “It is mainly the deeds of a love so noble that lead many to put a brand on us” – Tertullian (ca. 160-240)
 - “The new spirit of self-denying love which Christianity breathed into the world awoke wonder from its very strangeness” – James Orr (Scottish Presbyterian Theologian 1845-1913)
 - “Blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church” - Tertullian

Acts 1:8 – But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you and ye and shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria and unto the uttermost parts of the earth