

Summary for Church History 100 – 500 AD Class

Lesson 1: Introduction and spread of Christianity

Key Points	Bible Verses
<p>Why study church history?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It continues the story of God’s people - We can learn from how problems similar to ones we face were addressed in the past - Connection to the “great cloud of [Christian] witnesses” across time 	Hebrews 11, 12:1
<p>Quick summary of 1st Century post New Testament</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gospel spreads from Jews to Gentiles - The apostles die (Paul and most likely Peter during Nero’s cruel persecution) - Jews revolt and Jerusalem destroyed by Romans 66-70 AD 	
<p>High Level Timeline Overview</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Roman Empire is reasonably stable through the second century but is torn by internal strife and external invasion from the 3rd to the 5th centuries. The western empire falls in 476 AD 	
<p>Some attributes of the Roman Empire favored the spread of Christianity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Political unity (early in period) - Infrastructure, transportation, trade - Toleration of “local gods” <p>Some were obstacles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The emperor is to be worshiped, which promotes <u>unity</u> and <u>loyalty</u> across the empire 	
<p>Greek influence was prominent in the empire and some of the concepts could make one receptive to Christianity</p> <p>Philosophy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Plato (Supreme Being, Immortal Soul, Higher World of Abiding Truth) - Stoics (Irresistible Laws of Nature rule events and should be yielded to) <p>“God-fearers” – gentiles who observed temple services but were not circumcised Jews became familiar with Old Testament</p>	Acts 17:16-34
<p>The spread of Christianity – Culturally</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Spreading beyond the Jewish state (Israel) was very important because that state ceased to exist between 66 and 135 AD 	Romans 1:16
<p>The spread of Christianity – Socially</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Early Christianity spread to and was spread by the “lower” echelons of society (poor, women, slaves, soldiers) - However, there is ample evidence that Christianity made inroads up the social ladder (relatives of Domitian (1st C), Clement of Alexandria sermon (2nd C) 	I Corinthians 1:26 Philippians 4:22 Luke 18:18-27
<p>The spread of Christianity – Geographically (map provided in class)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1st C – Asia Minor (Turkey), Greece, Italy - 2nd C – Gaul (France), Germania, Spain, North Africa, Syria, Edessa, Armenia, and more widely into 1st C areas - 3rd C – Expansion within 1st and 2nd C areas, Britain?, first Church buildings appear <p>By end of 3rd C estimate ~10% of empire’s population is Christian</p>	

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<p>Why did Christianity spread so successfully?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Holy Spirit and the power of the gospel of Christ - Christianity appealed to some more than the numerous gods, sacrifices, and observances required by the religions of the time - The witness of the Christians (the love they showed, the courage they showed under persecution) 	<p>Acts 1:8, Matthew 28:19,20 I John 4:11 Mark 8:35</p>

Lesson 2: Church and State – Persecution and Adoption

Key Points	Bible Verses
<p>Why didn't people at the time like the Christians?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - They don't worship the emperor - They are atheists (don't worship "the gods" and their idols) - They are unpatriotic (don't participate in civic events) - They disrupt business (idol sales down!) - They were good scapegoats for famine, disease, invasions, etc. - They are cannibals (rumor based on communion) - They practice incest (rumor based on "brother", "sister", holy kiss) - They are anti-family (willing to leave relatives for their cause) - Just another new near-eastern mystery religion - They are odd and secretive 	<p>I Thessalonians 1:9</p>
<p>How widespread were the persecutions of Christians?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Generally localized and limited - Trajan's advice to Pliny on dealing with Christians - But, as we'll see subsequently there were some widespread and severe persecutions 	
<p>Characterizing the major persecutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The martyrdom of Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna - Marcus Aurelius – an "enlightened" emperor? - Septimius Severus – Perpetua and four friends - Decius – Turn back to the traditional gods, get a card to prove it - Diocletian & Galerius – The cruelest of the persecutions <p>Results of persecution – purification and extension of the church (~10% of empire's population by the end of the 3rd century)</p>	<p>Luke 21:11-19 Hebrews 13:5,6 Revelation 2:10 Revelation 17:5,6</p>
<p>The end of the Persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Constantine fights his way to emperor of the western empire under the sign of Christ at Milvian Bridge (In Hoc Signo Vincas) - Constantine and Licinius issue the Edict of Milan allowing the practice of Christianity - Constantine defeats Licinius at Chrysopolis and becomes emperor of a united empire - Constantine practices and promotes Christianity - Theodosius succeeds Julian "the Apostate" and designates Christianity as the religion of the empire 	<p>Psalm 2</p>

Lesson 3: Doctrine – Orthodoxy vs. Heresy (Apologists, Heresies, and Canon)

Key Points	Bible Verses
<p>External challenges to Christianity (both crude and intellectually sophisticated) came from Jews and Pagans.</p> <p>The Apologists responded to these external challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Justin Martyr – the “Christian Philosopher”. Dialogue with Jewish Rabbi. - Tatian – Full frontal assault on Greeks - Athenagoras – Addresses defense directly to the emperor - Theophilus – Three books to an earnest pagan friend - Clement of Alexandria – Philosophy is to Greeks as OT is to Jews - Tertullian – Disputes pagan punishment of Christians - Origen – Refutes Celsus’ work, <u>To Reason</u> - Minucius Felix – Dialogue between Christian and pagan results in conversion of pagan. 	<p>I Peter 3:15 John 1:1, 14 II Corinthians 3:13-16</p>
<p>The Epistle to Diognetus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Addresses both paganism and Judaism - Discusses Christian behavior and place in the world 	
<p>Internal dispute - How much Greek philosophy should be incorporated into the gospel message to the Greeks?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clement of Alexandria – One must become a Hellene to win them all. Philosophy is a road map to the truth for the Greeks as the OT is to the Jews. - Tertullian – What has Athens to do with Jerusalem? We have no need of curiosity after we have Christianity. 	<p>I Corinthians 9:22, Colossians 2:8</p>
<p>Definitions: Orthodox Doctrine – Teaching in line with God’s truth. Heretical Doctrine – Teaching not in line with God’s truth.</p> <p>The emergence of heretical doctrine can contribute to the definition / refinement of orthodox doctrine.</p>	<p>I Corinthians 11:18-19</p>
<p>Three Heresies pertaining to the extent of God’s revealed word</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gnosticism – dualism (spirit good, material bad; good spiritual god, evil/simple god created material world); Docetism – Jesus was from spiritual world, did not have a body. Salvation by knowledge. Portions of Apostle’s Creed are likely counter statements to Gnosticism. - Marcionism – Example of “Christian” take on Gnosticism. Good God in NT, evil/simple God from OT. NT God wants to be loved and will see that everyone is saved. Only scripture is Pauline epistles + Luke with all references to OT and Judaism removed. OT not part of Christian canon. - Montanism – emphasis on new age of the Holy Spirit speaking through Montanus and two women prophets. Focus on imminent second coming. Words of Montanus and prophets are to be considered as scripture. Also emphasized rigorous moral life, some to point of celibacy. Tertullian converted to Montanism mid life. 	<p>I Timothy 6:20, II John 7</p>

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<p>The New Testament Canon</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - OT considered part of Christian canon from the beginning - NT canon definition evolved until the 4th century and was agreed to by consensus. There were many competing (and “useful”) writings determined non-canonical. - Factors in determining canon – 1) Written by apostle or acquaintance of apostle, 2) Consistent with other canon and stated in a graceful manner, 3) Used in early worship services - Letter from Athanasius in 367 considered first documented list of the final canon. 	<p>II Peter 3:2 II Timothy 3:16</p>
<p>Two Heresies pertaining to the nature of the church</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Novatianism - Donatism <p>Both pertained to re-admitting lapsed Christians into the church. Novatian subsequent to the Decian persecutions of mid 3rd C, Donatus subsequent to the Diocletian persecutions of the early 4th C. Novatian and Donatus took very strict positions against readmitting lapsed Christians on the thought that the holiness of the church was based on the members. Cyprian (contemporary with Novatian) agreed that lapsed clergy could not implement the sacraments but suggested a graded scheme of penance for readmitting the lapsed. Novatianism died out quickly after the end of the brief Decian persecutions. Donatism resulted in a separate church that lasted into the 7th C and Augustine (of Hippo) struggled with the Donatists. Augustine proclaimed sacraments useful on their own merit (not dependent on the holiness of who was administering them) and observed that the holiness of the church came from God not the members.</p>	<p>Mt 18:21-22 John 6:64-66</p>

Lesson 4: Doctrine – Orthodoxy vs. Heresy (The Ecumenical Councils)

Key Points	Bible Verses
<p>The Ecumenical Councils</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nicaea 325 AD <p>Relationship between Son and Father - Council resolved that the Son is eternal and of one substance (homoousios) with the Father. This triumphed over the hierarchical (Father over Son) approach of the Arians who also held that there was a time before the Son existed. For the next 50-60 years however there was a back and forth conflict between the Nicene position and the Arians conducted among politicians and clergy.</p>	<p>Matthew 18:20 John 10:30, Mt 26:39</p>

Key Points	Bible Verses
<p>The Ecumenical Councils (cont'd)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- I Constantinople 381 AD <p>Affirm Nicene conclusion on relationship between Father and Son. Formalize statement on divinity of the Holy Spirit - "And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Ephesus 431 AD <p>Pelagian position on sin and grace rejected. Augustine's orthodox position prevails for the most part. "Semi-pelagianism" survives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Chalcedon 451 AD <p>Within Roman Empire the nature of Christ as God and Man is settled – not a God soul/intellect within a man (Apollinaris), not two <i>separate</i> natures conjoined (Nestorius), not <i>one new nature</i> (Eutyches), but one person in two perfect natures without confusion or conversion, without division or separation. The two perfect natures of Christ come together in a real, basic, hypostatic union.</p>	<p>Matthew 18:20 Mt 3:16, 17</p> <p>Lk 1:30,31 Romans 7:14-25</p> <p>John 1:14</p>