

CLOUD OF WITNESSES
Church History
WEEK 1

5 REASONS TO STUDY CHURCH HISTORY

CULTIVATE GROWTH IN CHRIST



UNDERSTAND TOMORROW



PROVIDE AN APOLOGETIC



*"CHURCH HISTORY IS THE RECORD OF
GOD'S GRACIOUS, WONDERFUL AND
MIGHTY DEEDS, SHOWING HOW BY HIS
SPIRIT AND WORD HE RULES
HIS CHURCH AND CONQUERS THE WORLD."*

CURB OUR ARROGANCE

WE DON'T
KNOW
EVERYTHING

PREVENT ERROR



**Are there any other reasons to study
church history?**

THE EARLY SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL

Alexander the Great conquers a large area of Europe and Asia and unifies it under the Greek language and customs

This becomes the Roman Empire that is unified with safe roads & trade

Hebrew communities live throughout the Empire because of the Babylonian exile, years before Alexander the Great

Hebrew scholars translate the Old Testament into Greek

Safe roads allow early Christians to travel with a ready-made Greek text to existing Hebrew communities

The Gospel is spread far and wide

The Roman Empire in 1st Century



EARLY CHURCHES

Small communities

**Small islands amidst a sea of Roman
culture**

**Relied on each other to prevent
deception**

What sort of deceptions or cultural practices is the church susceptible to today?

⁷ For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist. ⁸ Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward.

2 John 7–11

ESV

⁹ Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.

¹⁰ If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting, ¹¹ for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works.

APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION

**Jesus>Apostles>their
successors>their successors...**

**Preserves the truth of the apostolic
message**

**Clement of Rome writes on the
importance of unity in the church and
submission to leaders**

In light of the cultural practices the church may be susceptible to that we spoke of earlier, do you think new members should go through a catechizing process? What would it involve? How long should it be?

⁵⁴ Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him. ⁵⁵ But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.

Acts 7:54–60

ESV

⁵⁶ And he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." ⁵⁷ But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him.

Acts 7:54–60

ESV

⁵⁸ Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. ⁵⁹ And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

Acts 7:54–60

ESV

⁶⁰ And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Acts 7:54–60

ESV

DEATH OF THE APOSTLES

1. James - Killed with a sword. 45 A.D.
2. Peter - Hung on a cross "head downward."
A.D. 64
3. Andrew - Hung from an olive tree. A.D. 70
4. Thomas - Burned alive. A.D. 70
5. Phillip - Crucified. A.D. 54
6. Matthew - Beheaded. A.D. 65
7. Nathanael - Crucified. A.D. 70
8. James - Thrown from the temple. A.D. 63
9. Simon - Crucified. A.D. 74
10. Judas Thaddeus - Beaten with sticks. A.D. 72
11. Matthias - Stoned on a cross. A.D. 70
12. Paul - Beheaded. A.D. 69
13. John - Natural death. A.D. 95

"...an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind. Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired."

"...even for criminals who deserved extreme and exemplary punishment, there arose a feeling of compassion; for it was not, as it seemed, for the public good, but to glut one man's cruelty, that they were being destroyed."

**What does it mean that all truth is
God's truth? How can we practically
apply this concept today?**

MARTYRS

Honored above all other Christians

Stayed true to the faith

Imitated Christ unto death

The “seed of the Church.”

***“The blood of the martyrs is the seed
of the Church.”***

***Do you think this is an accurate
statement?***



POLYCARP

Bishop of Smyrna

Disciple of the Apostle John

Martyred in 155 AD

**"Martyrdom of Polycarp" written to
other churches to tell about
Polycarp's death & encourage them**

And being about evening [to the place where he was], they found him lying down in the upper room of a certain little house, from which he might have escaped into another place; but he refused, saying, "The will of God be done."

So when he heard that they were come, he went down and spake with them. And as those that were present marvelled at his age and constancy, some of them said "Was so much effort₁₀ made to capture such a venerable man?"

Immediately then, in that very hour, he ordered that something to eat and drink should be set before them, as much indeed as they cared for, while he besought them to allow him an hour to pray without disturbance.

And on their giving him leave, he stood and prayed, being full of the grace of God, so that he could not cease¹² for two full hours, to the astonishment of them that heard him, insomuch that many began to repent that they had come forth against so godly and venerable an old man.

ACTIONS OF POLYCARP DURING ARREST

- 1. Polycarp is about to be arrested and he has a chance to flee and does not.**
- 2. He offers the soldiers who come to arrest him food and drink!**
- 3. He prays! For two hours! (The next chapter says he prayed for anyone he ever met, and he prayed for the church worldwide.)**
- 4. The soldiers began to repent, or be remorseful they had to arrest an old man because of the kindness he showed to them.**

What do you think about Polycarp's actions? Think you could do that if the cops came to your door?

"[the proconsul] sought to persuade him to deny [Christ], saying, "Have respect to thy old age," and other similar things, according to their custom, [such as], "Swear by the fortune of Cæsar; repent, and say, Away with the Atheists."

But Polycarp, gazing with a stern countenance on all the multitude of the wicked heathen then in the stadium, and waving his hand towards them, while with groans he looked up to heaven, said, "Away with the Atheists."

***Polycarp declared, "Eighty and six years
have I served Him, and He never did me
any harm: how then can I blaspheme my
King and my Saviour? "***

***“Thou threaten me with fire which
burneth for an hour, and after a little is
extinguished, but you are ignorant of the
fire of the coming judgment and of
eternal punishment, reserved for the
ungodly. But why tarriest thou? Bring
forth what thou wilt.”***

***“Leave me as I am; for He that giveth me
strength to endure the fire, will also
enable me; without
your securing me by nails,
to remain without moving in the pile.”***

**Let us pray that we, like Polycarp, will
stand firm in the face of persecution**