

## CHURCH HISTORY

### OUTLINE

This evening I would like to explore

Is church history important?

The unique perspective of a Christian view of history

Periods of Church History

A closer look at the first three centuries what lessons can we learn from how they lived.

An outline of Church History century by century

What about the future?

### IS CHURCH HISTORY IMPORTANT?

Definition: History is the “branch of knowledge that records and explains past events.”<sup>1</sup>

Do you think that it is important to have an understanding of Church History? -----

State several reasons for your answer -----

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Possible answers include

- 1) Church history can help put our own -----, ----- and practice into proper perspective
- 2) Church History ----- us that actions and ideas have consequences not only in our own generation but future generations
- 3) Church History ----- the past with the present, and provides a basis to guide present ----- making.
- 4) As we gain an appreciation of Church History we gain a greater appreciation of the Lord and how he has chosen to reveal Himself to mankind throughout the ages this increases our thankfulness to Him for not being a God who is absent and unconcerned with our lives but a God who has revealed Himself as the one who is always present and willing to act on the behalf of those who call upon Him.

Church History can be thought of as the study of how God has intervened in the events of mankind in order that he might redeem mankind and establish His kingdom purposes.

### THE CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDING OF HISTORY IS UNIQUE.

A Christian understanding of history is unique for the Bible declares that in history God is working out His redemptive purposes.

Please turn to Romans 8:28-30

Can you identify from those verses what God’s purpose in History might be?

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<sup>1</sup>Inc Merriam-Webster, *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary.*, Includes Index., 10th ed. (Springfield, Mass., U.S.A.: Merriam-Webster, 1996, c1993).

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Who does the verse apply to?

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Can you identify the process that might be involved?

Now turn to 1 Peter 2:2-10: Does that verse give us any additional insights to what God's purposes in history might be?

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### **DIVISIONS OF CHURCH HISTORY**

Broadly speaking for discussion purposes we can divide history into the three broad categories

Years	Period	Emphasis
0-590	The Early Church	Establishment
591-1517	The Middle Ages	Decay
1517-Present	The Modern Era	Reformation and Revival

Each of these three periods can be subdivided into further eras

Period	Years	Eras
The Patristic Period	01-100	Apostolic Christianity
	101-312	The struggle of the early church to survive
	312-590	The age of the Christian Roman Empire
The Middle Ages	590-1054	Byzantine Christianity
	1054-1305	The Supremacy of the Papacy
Modern Era	1305-1517	The dawn
	1517-1648	The age of the Reformation
	1648-1789	The age of reason and revival
	1789-1914	Revivals and missions
	1914-Present	The Age of Ideologies

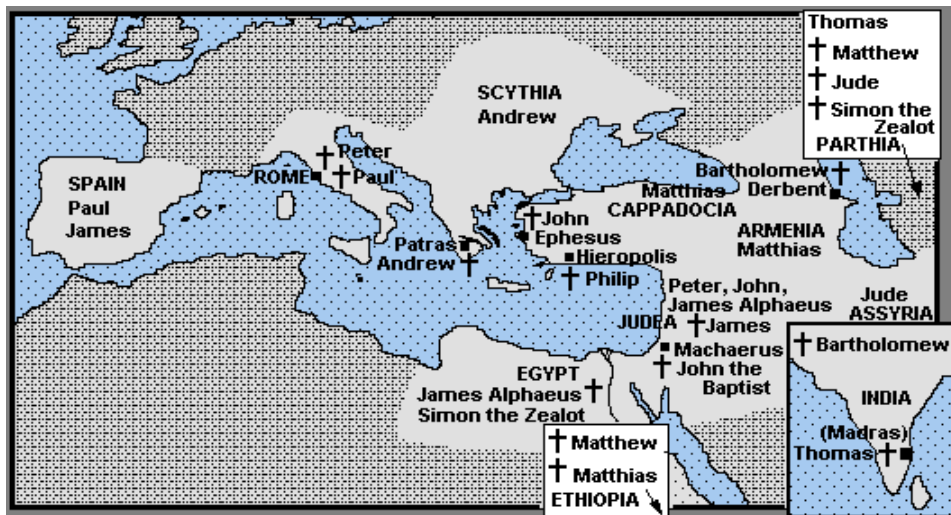
### **KEY EVENTS FROM THE FIRST THREE HUNDRED YEARS**

C 32 A.D Jesus is Crucified and three days later rises from the dead, an event attested to by over five hundred witnesses who personally saw the resurrected Christ.

C 35 A.D Paul after initially persecuting the church converts to Christianity and becomes the church's most prominent missionary and theologian.

64 A.D Nero sets fire to Rome and blames the Christians for starting the fire, this results in the first persecution of Christians by the Romans.

## MAP SHOWING WHERE THE APOSTLES MINISTERED



70 A.D The Romans under Titus sack and destroy Jerusalem. Christianity now becomes distinct from all the religions of the world.

C 95 A.D The Apostle John dies – this event marks a transition point from the leadership of apostles and an emphasis on team ministry to a greater emphasis on one man ministry.

C 130 ?? The Death of Ignatius and Polycarp shows their total commitment to Christ even if it meant dying a horrible death

C 150 the Apologists begin to write apologies both defending and explaining Christianity, in other words they gave a reasoned defense of the Christian Faith.

C 200 A.D Two new centers of Christianity emerge - Alexandria and Carthage. Alexandria adopts an allegorical approach to interpreting the bible, which essentially means that there are many ways to interpret a biblical passage, Alexandria argues that Christianity is compatible with the philosophies of the world. Carthage insists on a literal interpretation of the Bible and that Christianity and this worlds thinking are not compatible.

C 250 A.D widespread violent universal persecution of Christianity by the Romans intensifies. The reason for the persecutions was mainly that the Roman Empire was beginning to crumble and the emperor was calling for absolute submission to his authority. Christians could not give them this submission because Jesus was Lord and they owed their allegiance to Him.

312 A.D Constantine accepts Christianity as an official Roman Religion after seeing a vision of the cross and hearing the words “Go forth and conquer”

## PLACE OF MINISTRY AND MEANS OF DEATH OF PRINCIPAL APOSTLES

Name	Place of Traditional Ministry	Means and Place of Death
Simon Peter	Tradition states he may have visited Britain and Gaul	Crucified upside down in Rome during persecution of Nero (64-68 AD) he felt unworthy to die on a cross in the same manner as Jesus. This explanation of his death can be traced back to the third century writer Origen.
Andrew	Preached in Scythia(Ukraine and Southern Russia) Asia Minor and Greece	Crucified on an X shaped cross at Patras in Achaia, before being crucified he was severely whipped, after being laid on the cross he continued to preach to his Executioners till he expired two days later. Later tradition suggests the cross was in spread eagle position (hence St Andrews Cross)
James, Son of Zebedee		Executed by Herod Agrippa I in 44AD (Acts 12:2)
John	Ministered at Ephesus, said to have rebuked early Gnostic Ceronthus	Died natural death c 100A.D, after early in life being boiled in a huge bowl of oil, and sentenced to mine prison on Patmos Later freed at served as Bishop of Edessa in modern turkey.
Phillip	Conflicting traditions place him in Ethiopia,	Crucified in Hierapolis in Asia Minor
Matthew	Possibly Ethiopia	Suffered Martyrdom in Ethiopia died by sword wound (Legendary explanation)
Thomas	Preached in Babylon, Strong early tradition tells of his founding churches in India	Martyred in India by being stabbed with a sphere/lance. C 72AD
Bartholomew	Armenia (eastern Turkey, northern Iraq, north western Iran) may also have gone to Egypt and Ethiopia	Martyred after ministry in Armenia flayed to Death by whip. (high degree of uncertainty)
James, Son of Alphaeus	Possibly ministered in Egypt and Syria	Thrown over a hundred foot drop from the southeast pinnacle of the temple when he refused to deny his faith in Christ. When his body was found he was still alive so his persecutors beat him to death by a fullers club c62 AD
Thaddeus	Tradition associates his ministry with Assyria (eastern Iraq) and Persia (Iran)	Beaten to death with club then beheaded in Persia towards end of first century
Simon the Zealot	Variouly (and dubiously) associated with Persia, Egypt, Carthage and Britain	No explanation
Judas Iscariot		Hanged Himself after betraying Jesus
Other Apostles		
Mattias	Possibly Ethiopia, Judea and Eastern Turkey	Stoned and then beheaded at Cochis c 80AD
Paul	Traveled Widely throughout Asia Minor	Beheaded under the orders of Nero in 64- 67A.D (as Roman citizen exempt crucifixion)
Barnabas		Martyred at Salamis in c61 AD

## A BRIEF OUTLINE OF CHURCH HISTORY CENTURY BY CENTURY

**First Century**      0-100 A.D  
 Century of Jesus and the Apostles (Beginnings)  
 Key Event: Jesus crucifixion and resurrection  
**Key Thought: Jesus died for our sins, He rose again and He is Lord.**

**Second Century**      101-200 A.D

Century of the Church Fathers - Expansion

Christianity was mainly an urban movement meeting in homes for worship, fellowship and teaching. Expanding in Southern Europe and reaching Britain.

**Key Thought: Christianity is Authentic**

**Third Century**

201-300 A.D

Century of Great Persecutions - Embrace the world or be distinguished

Monasteries begin as Church suffers severe persecution

**Key Thought - The Blood of the Martyrs is the seed of the church** *Tertullian*

**Fourth Century**

301-400 A.D

Political Acceptance - Debate

Constantine accepts Christianity in 313 A.D and Christianity became the official Roman religion in 380.

The Council of Nicaea maintained that Christ is both divine and human. In him divinity became man in order that we might become like Him

**Fifth Century**

401-500 A.D

Defining Councils – Clarification

Amidst the collapse of the Roman Empire Christianity clarifies its teaching on Jesus and the Holy Spirit

**Key Thought The heart is restless until it finds its home in God** *Augustine*

**Sixth Century**

501-600 A.D

Continued Expansion – Consolidation

The church grows rapidly in the Middle East, Asia and Ethiopia.

Benedict of Nursia builds monasteries all over Europe

Gregory the Great becomes Pope

**Key Thought: Life should be a balance of work and rest, study and recreation, public worship and private prayer** *Benedict of Nursia.*

**Seventh Century**

601-700 A.D

Islam begins - Challenge

Muhammad writes the Koran and Islam spreads rapidly in North Africa and Asia Minor.

Church in the East and West begin to separate over differences in emphasis and practice. The teaching of the church in the west had a more judicial focus while the teaching of the church in the east is more relationship focused.

**Key Thought Prayer is the means through which believers work out their own salvation as they learn to bring their wills, choices and deeds into harmony with the will of God. *Maximus the Confessor***

- Eighth Century** 701-800 A.D  
Beginnings of the Holy Roman Empire –Christendom  
Boniface takes the Gospel into central and Northern Germany.  
The Iconoclastic Controversy
- Ninth Century** 801-900 A.D  
The Carolingian Renaissance – Rediscovery  
In 800 Charlemagne came emperor and encouraged learning all over Europe including the classics  
**Key Thought: Make the monks familiar with language, culture and theology and enable the people through them to read and write.**
- Tenth Century** 901-1000 A.D  
Slavic Christianity – Instability  
At the end of this century 50% of former Christian areas were under Islam. Christianity expanded into Norway and Greenland and the Ukraine  
**The Christian life should be more than routine or habit but a personal experience of the Living Christ *Symeon the New Theologian***
- Eleventh Century** 1001-1100 A.D  
The Great Schism - Division  
The eastern and western churches formerly separated on 16 July 1054.  
Anselm became Archbishop of Canterbury and argued that Christ's death on the cross was in order to make atonement for sin.  
**Key Thought: I am not seeking to understand in order to believe, but I believe in order to understand. For this I believe, that unless I believe I shall not understand. *Anselm***
- Twelfth Century** 1101-1200 A.D  
The Crusades  
In this century two crusades were made to Jerusalem to dislodge the Muslims.  
Peter Abelard published his book of sentences which became the standard theological textbook for many centuries.  
**Key Thought: A human being is created with an emptiness that can only be filled with an intimate personal relationship with God. *Bernard of Clairvaux***
- Thirteenth Century** 1201-1300 A.D

Scholasticism

Francis of Assisi began his order emphasising simplicity and ministry to the poor. Dominic began an order that focused on learning, scholarship and the preaching of the gospel. Thomas Aquinas wrote *Summa Theologiae* which included the development of five philosophical arguments to prove the existence of God

**Key Thought: Prayer is communion with God in harmony with nature.**

**Preach the gospel and if necessary use words.**

*Francis of Assisi*

**Fourteenth Century** 1301-1400 A.D

The Babylonian Captivity

Rival popes claimed they were the pope at the same time.

John Wycliffe translated the Bible into English He emphasised the sole authority of the scriptures, the priesthood of believers. In this century the mystics wrote about the possibility of union with God and in the East the Jesus prayer was formulated.

**Key Thoughts: Approach the word of God simply, directly and from a sincere and devout heart.**

*John Wycliffe.*

**Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me a sinner.**

*The Jesus Prayer*

**Fifteenth Century** 1401-1500 A.D

Renaissance

Constantinople fell to the Turks 1453.

An age of discovery, printing was invented, and a fresh interest in the classics was born.

John Hus taught on the same lines as John Wycliffe

He was condemned to be burnt and saw a vision of the reformation.

Thomas A Kempis *The Imitation of Christ* was written

**Key Thought: Search for truth, hear the truth, love the truth, defend the truth until death *John Hus.***

**Sixteenth Century** 1501-1600 A.D

Reformation Justification by Faith

In 1516 Erasmus published a Greek Translation of the New Testament which led to a Reexamination of many of the churches teachings. In 1517 Martin Luther nailed his ninety five theses to the door of the church at Wittenberg. Luther was objecting to the selling of indulgences however his action sparked off the Protestant reformation. By 1519 he had denied papal primacy and the infallibility of church councils. By 1520 he published a further three books in which he opposed clergy celibacy and advocated

that baptism and communion are the only two sacraments of the church. Luther opposed the division between clergy and laity. In his final work he advocated the freedom of the believer from doing works to receive righteousness, and the sufficiency and authority of the Scriptures. Luther emphasized that salvation came through faith alone. Many parts of Europe - Germany, Scandinavia, The Netherlands, and England broke away from the Roman Catholic Church establishing national or regional churches where the pope primacy was denied. The Swiss reformers Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin went even further in their reforms to free the church from non biblical practices which included the practice of calling upon the saints, teaching about purgatory and the use of images. Both were strong advocates of lay participation in the church.

By 1525 the Anabaptists in Switzerland were teaching believer's baptism, separation between church and state and democracy in church leadership. The Anabaptists were seen as being radical and severely persecuted.

By 1529 the protestant reformation was gaining momentum and stressing the sole authority of the Scripture, justification by faith alone and the priesthood of all believers.

In 1534 King Henry VIII had his marriage annulled and declared himself the head of the church in England. Thus the Anglican Church separated itself from the Catholic Church.

Later in the century the Catholic Church itself also experienced reform that in time became known as the Counter Reformation. The council of Trent (1545- 1563) upheld traditional catholic theology but freed itself from the sale of indulgences and urged the need for sexual purity in the leadership. The Catholic Church continued to pursue expansion and in 1565 Francis Xavier began a mission that would reach into South India, China and Japan.

**Key Thought: Luther discovered the verse "The one who is righteous will live by faith " from Romans 1:17 he felt himself to be have been born again. For Luther this verse meant that we are made right with God by grace through faith, apart from the works of the Law.**

**One incomparable benefit of faith is that it unites the soul with Christ as a bride is united with her bridegroom...Accordingly, the believing soul can boast of and glory in whatever Christ has, as though it were its own, and whatever the soul has Christ claims as his own...Christ is full of grace, life and salvation. The soul is full of sins, death and damnation. Now let faith come between them and sins, death and damnation will be Christ's while grace, life and salvation will be the souls,  
*Martin Luther***

Seventeenth Century 1601-1700 A.D

The church expands by emphasizing personal encounter with the Living Christ.

In 1608 John Smith began to teach adult baptism in England this would in time lead to the formation of the Baptist churches.

In 1611 King James Version published

In 1620 the Pilgrim Fathers sailed to New England to establish a Christian community.

1618-1648 Thirty Year War.

In 1647 George Fox had a personal encounter with Christ and began the Quaker movement.

The puritans prepare the Westminster confession of Faith and John Bunyan writes *Pilgrims Progress*.

Phillip Spener brings revival to the Lutherans by teaching people to personally read the scriptures and meet together in small groups for prayer and fellowship.

**Key Thought: The word of God remains the seed from which all good in us may grow. If we succeed in getting the people to seek eagerly and diligently in the Book of Life for their joy, spiritual life will be wonderfully strengthened and they will become all together different people. Phillip Spener.**

#### **Eighteenth Century** 1701-1800 A.D

Protestant Revivals begin by emphasising Personal holiness and Devotion to Christ

John Wesley begins the group called the Methodist after their methodical pursuit of personal holiness. George Whitfield preached extensively in America upon the holiness of God, the sinfulness and helplessness of man and the righteousness of Christ available through his atoning sacrifice. Jonathan Edwards ignited a revival by *Preaching Sinners In The Hands Of An Angry God* Count Zinzendorf helps the Moravians to establish a hundred year prayer movement. The Sunday school movement begins in 1780 and William Carey sails for India in 1793.

**Key Thought:” O Lord, give me souls or take my soul” George Whitfield**

**Walking with God not only implies, that the prevailing power of the enmity of a man’s heart be taken away, but also that a person is actually reconciled to God the Father, in and through the all-sufficient righteousness and atonement of his dear Son” George Whitfield**

#### **Nineteenth Century** 1801-1900 A.D

Century of Missionary Endeavour

Revival, missions and holiness.

The church faces the advent of new ideas in the form of deism, humanism and scientific rationalism.

Many national Bible Societies were formed to translate and publish Bibles.

D L Moody, Charles Finney and Spurgeon were all leaders of revivals. Each had a different style and different emphasis. Moody stressed evangelism, holiness and living the Spirit filled life. Finney was dramatically converted and his ministry featured revival campaigns which included the use of altar calls, his campaigns were backed up by extensive prayer.

Many new denominations were formed in this century including the Plymouth Brethren (1830) the Salvation Army (1865) Considerable attention was given to Missions- David Livingstone went to Africa (1840) and Hudson Taylor to China (1853) Parachurch organizations began their missions including YMCA (1844), the World Evangelical Alliance (1846) and Scripture Union (1879).

**Key Thoughts**            **Salvation only comes through the active acceptance of God's grace. *Charles Finney***

**The paramount importance of receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit is to lead others to Christ        *Charles Finney***

**Faith is the link that binds every promise of God *Dwight Moody***

**Our life is found in looking to Jesus not in looking to our own faith *Charles Spurgeon***

## **Twentieth Century**    1901-2000 A.D

The Holy Spirit comes afresh to the church bringing expectancy and empowerment

During 1901-1906 Pentecostal groups began to teach that the evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit was speaking in Tongues. Charles Parham and William Seymour were significant people restoring this truth to the church.

In 1934 Cameron Townsend founded the Wycliffe Bible Translators with the purpose of translating the Bible into every language group in the world.

In 1948 Billy Graham began his evangelistic ministry.

In the 1960s the Charismatic renewal movement occurred which began to cross denominations bringing a greater sense of unity between churches.

In the 1960s and the 1970s a movement known as the Jesus movement saw many young people been won to Christ.

People began to be able to communicate over vast distances through radio and television and people such as Oral Roberts, C S Lewis and Mother Teresa began to live the Christian life in front of a worldwide audience.

**Key Thoughts: It is essential that each individual should himself possess the baptism of the Holy Spirit *John G Lake***

**The essential Characteristic of God is holiness...The purpose of God in Mankind is to produce a kindred holiness. *John G Lake***

**We shall never truly know the truth until we are taught directly by the Holy Spirit** *RA Torrey*  
**If the Holy Spirit is a Divine Person and we know it not, we are robbing a divine being of the love and adoration which are His due. It is of the highest practical importance whether the Holy Spirit is a power that we, in our ignorance and weakness, are somehow to get hold of and use, or whether the Holy Spirit is a personal Being ... who is to get hold of us and use us. It is of the highest experimental importance.... Many can testify to the blessing that came into their lives when they came to know the Holy Spirit, not merely as a gracious influence ... but as an ever-present, loving friend and helper**  
*R A Torrey*

## **CONCLUSION**

History teaches us that a person who has a deep devotional life before the Lord is characterized by

- 1) An intense love towards the Lord, people and themselves.
- 2) A life that is lived out in dependence upon God, this dependence upon God results in a joyful heartfelt freedom.
- 3) A desire to reflect Jesus
- 4) Openness to the agape love of God which enables them to reach out and minister to those in need.
- 5) A realization that Christianity is not academic but practical
- 6) An assurance that the kingdom of God can be realized in history and are committed to allow the Lord to work in them to bring about His purposes in the way that He desires.
- 7) Humility
- 8) They see every person they encounter as a potential brother or sister in Christ.
- 9) Devotion is not a matter of escaping the world but rather through worship of the Lord they are motivated to serve by bettering the world.
- 10) They are salt and light to the world.

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## WEBSITES

Got Questions <http://www.gotquestions.org/apostles-die.html> 17 February 2006 7.30 Am

Amazing Bible World History Timeline [http://agards-bible-timeline.com/q6\\_apostles\\_die.html](http://agards-bible-timeline.com/q6_apostles_die.html) 17 February 2006 7.30 Am

The National Shrine of Saint Francis of Assisi <http://www.shrinesf.org/apostles.htm> 17 February 2006 7.30 Am

## **B PHILLIPS Translation of the NEW TESTAMENT**

<http://www.ccel.org/bible/phillips/CN500APOSTLES%20FATE.htm#intro> 17 February 2006 8.45 AM

## APPENDIX ONE GRAPHS

