LESSON 1

THE CHURCH'S ORIGIN AND EARLY GROWTH

Introduction

The scope of church history

Christianity has touched and penetrated every phase of human life. Hence, church history is concerned with the record of the influence of Christianity upon the religious, social, intellectual, cultural, economic, and political life of the people with whom it has come in contact. It is concerned with Christian influence upon the world of art, letters, government, and science, as well as the influence of these upon the Church. The Church is in the world but not of the world. Yet, at times, the Church has been sadly secularized and paganized. In order to understand these exchanges between the Church and society, the student of church history is brought frequently in contact with individuals and movements outside the Church.

Church history is concerned with the record of the influence of Christianity upon the

r_____, s_____, i_____,

c_____, e_____, and p_____

life of the people.

(religious, social, intellectual, cultural, economic, political)

Definition

Church history might very well be defined as the history of God's Kingdom on the earth. As such, it records the creation of the Kingdom, describes the King and the Kingdom people, states their relationship to the present and expresses their expectations for the future.

It is correct then to view church history as extending from creation, as recorded in Genesis, to today. The overshadowing event in all this history is the advent of Jesus into the world to fulfil the plan of God in becoming the Saviour of all mankind. In better understanding His mission in the world we must remember His place in the creation:

> All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. (John 1:3—RSV)
>
> For in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, . . . all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church. (Col. 1:16—18—RSV)

The term "church history" is now used in a more restricted sense, designating merely the history of God's Kingdom upon earth from the time of Jesus Christ and the appearance of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost down to the present age.

The main event in all church history is the _____ of_____ into the world.

(advent, Jesus)

In a more restricted sense, "church history" designates the history of God's Kingdom upon earth from the time of

_____ and the appearance of the _____ _____to the _____ age.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Preparation for the Church

The time was right

Serious consideration must be given to the unique position of Jesus Christ in history. God sent John the Baptizer to prepare the immediate way for Jesus' coming. John's message to the people of his day was, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand" (Mark 1:15). Paul, the messenger whom God used more than any other individual to extend His Kingdom, wrote these remarkable words, "But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman" (Gal. 4:4—RSV). God did not send His Son until the world was properly prepared for His coming.

Is this statement true or false?

Paul stated that God sent His Son when the world was prepared for His coming.

_____

(true)

A time of political unity.— For generations the world had been fragmented politically. Each attempt by a developing nation to conquer and bring other nations under its rule was only a preview of that which would become a fact under Alexander the Great and the Roman caesars. Each attempt marked a necessary stage in the gradual advancement of civilization as preparation for Christianity. The warring nations were subdued by Alexander the Great before his death at the early age of 33 in 323 B.C. After his death his empire was divided among his generals; therefore, it did not survive politically. Nevertheless, its influence was impressed upon the cultures of the world.

The Romans were the ones who brought the pieces together into a political whole. Rome moulded the divergent masses into a heterogeneous body with one emperor, one government, one military force, a common body of laws, a universal coinage, a central mail and transportation system, a common alphabet, and a similar culture.

A time of common language and culture.— Alexander set in motion the spread of Greek civilization with it matchless language, literature, art, philosophy, and science. The civilized world was given a universal language. A renewed use of the sea route from India to Europe greatly stimulated trade and commerce. A new interest in learning caused the development of several universities and libraries which were to become world famous later.

A time of spiritual hunger.— While it is not likely that the masses could see a foreshadowing of the universal Kingdom of God in the Roman world empire, it did create an atmosphere in which God could act and work in accomplishing the "fullness of time." The Graeco-Roman world had had sufficient time to display what the human mind could produce in its own strength and without a direct divine revelation. Great things had been accomplished along various lines. However, in matters of religion and morality, the pagan world was becoming increasingly conscious of its inability to satisfy the religious cravings of the soul and of its incompetency to effect a moral regeneration in a morally corrupt society. These concrete object lessons prepared the Gentile mind for the reception of Christianity.

The Jewish nation prepared the way

God's covenant with the Jews.— God's covenant with Abraham (Gen. 12:1–3) set forth the unique role that was to be played by the Jews: "For salvation is from the Jews" (John 4:22—RSV). Such was the general belief of the pagans as well as the Jews. This salvation, as expressed in the Christian gospel, constitutes one of the corner-stones of modern Western civilization.

The "election" of Abraham and his descendants carried with it the burden of responsible obedience to God's will. They enjoyed unusual privileges through direct, divine guidance and revelation. God spoke to them through the Law and the Prophets. He provided them a strategically located country, special institutions, and unique ordinances so that they, as a nation, could develop according to the divine plan (cf. Eph. 1). How well did Israel respond to these special privileges extended to her by God?

The Old Testament is a sad commentary of Israel's failure to obey willingly God's instructions. General apostasy brought the divine hand of punishment. In 722 B.C., ten tribes were taken into Assyrian captivity. The two southern tribes, Judah and Benjamin, were subdued by the Babylonians and taken into captivity in 587 B.C. Only a small remnant of these, fifty to sixty thousand, returned to their homeland in 536 B.C. under the leadership of Zerubbabel. The Temple in Jerusalem was rebuilt (520–516 B.C.). Ezra and Nehemiah were permitted to return with their people,

Preparation for the coming of Christ was aided by political unity brought by the

_____.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

The Greek Empire gave the world a universal

_____.

(language)

The pagan Graeco–Roman world was unable to satisfy_____ hunger.

(spiritual)

The first stage in Israel's history which affected her preparation for the coming of Christ was God's covenant with_____.

(Abraham)

Unscramble the letters below to make three words which describe another stage in Israel's history:

bidesonicede _____

tapiciytv _____

sertoraniot _____

(disobedience, captivity, restoration)

and they led in the reconstruction efforts (465–400 B.C.). Nehemiah strengthened the nation by rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem and by fortifying the city. Ezra built up the nation from within by establishing a religious and social system (theocracy) that held the nation together for centuries. His work planted the seeds of narrow nationalism which, in itself, defeated the call of "election" and nullified the Covenant given to Abraham. When this finally took place, God then chose a new Israel to be His covenant people.

The Jews under Greek (Hellenistic) influence.— Alexander the Great (336–323 B.C.) brought Israel under Hellenistic influence. From 323 B.C. (the death of Alexander the Great) until 203 B.C., Palestine was controlled by the Ptolemies of Egypt. Then the Egyptians gave way to Syrian control under Antiochus III. His successor Antiochus IV (Epiphanes—175—164 B.C.) corrupted the Jewish priesthood, introduced heathen rites, and profaned the Jewish Temple (170–168 B.C.), which led to the Maccabean Revolt (167–141 B.C.). Simon Maccabeus finally established an independent Jewish government which lasted from 141 to 63 B.C. Pompey the Great made Syria a Roman province in 63 B.C., with Palestine an integral part.

The Jews under Roman rule.— Herod the Great was governor of Galilee and king of Judaea from 37 to 4 B.C. Jesus Christ was born during the last few months of his reign. After the death of Herod, his kingdom was divided among his three sons. Archelaus (4 B.C.–A.D. 6) received Judaea, Idumaea and Samaria. Herod Antipas (4 B.C.–A.D. 37) received Galilee and Peraea.[1] Philip (4 B.C.–A.D. 34) got possession of the Transjordan territory. Archelaus was exiled by Augustus (A.D. 6), and his territory became a procuratorial province, subject to census. Pontius Pilate, who passed sentence upon Jesus Christ, was the fifth procurator of Judaea, Idumaea, and Samaria. He held office from A.D. 26 to A.D. 36.

The importance of the Dispersion.— One facet of the Jewish influence which must always be considered is that of the Dispersion. This took place as Jews were taken captive into foreign countries or were driven by political pressure out of their homeland to settle in an adopted country. The presence of a large segment of dispersed Jews in Egypt led to the translation of the Old Testament into the Greek language. This translation, the Septuagint, provided the background for attentive ears to the Christian gospel as the new members of the young church were also scattered abroad. Many of the first Christian sermons were preached in the Jewish synagogues which had been established by dispersed Jews. At a time that suited his plan, "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman . . ." (Gal. 4:4).

Political Developments before the Jewish War

Since Christianity originated and developed in the Roman Empire, its history is necessarily affected by Roman political conditions. Much of the opposition to Christianity arose as a result of its identification with the Jewish nation. Conflict occurred periodically between the Jewish people and their Roman governors.

Greek influence on Israel brought about the _____ Revolt.

(Maccabean)

At the time of Jesus' birth, the Jews were under _____ rule.

(Roman)

The Dispersion aided the spread of the Church through translation of the Old Testament into _____ and preaching by _____ in Jewish synagogues.

(Greek, Christians)

[1] Herod Antipas beheaded John the Baptist.

Augustus (27 B.C.–A.D. 14) was emperor at the time of Jesus' birth (cf. Luke 2). He recognized Herod as king of the client kingdoms of Judaea and Samaria. Client kingdoms were given internal autonomy and exemption from taxation, but Rome controlled their foreign relations and could require military aid. Herod (37–4 B.C.) and his successor Archelaus (4 B.C.–A.D. 6) acknowledged Roman overlordship and on occasions called upon Roman military support. They depended on Rome for support in maintaining their positions as rulers of the Jews. Riots between the people and the Roman soldiers broke out in the temple area during the reign of Archelaus. Judah of Galilee, the son of Hezekiah who had been executed by Herod the Great, led a band of patriots to rebel in Galilee. His forces were dispersed by two legions under Varus. This Syrian legate set the city of Sepphoris on fire, sold the population as slaves, and then marched into Judaea where he captured groups of patriots and had as many as two thousand of them nailed to crosses. Conflict between Jews and Romans was intensified by the Romans' plundering the Temple and the Jews' revolting under self-appointed messianic leaders.

After the reign of Archelaus, Judaea, Samaria, and Idumaea were placed under imperial governors or procurators who took up residence in Caesarea. Under the procurators, the Jews were required to pay taxes to Rome and were ruled by non-Jews; both experiences were repulsive to them. Also, Roman policy placed soldiers in areas of recurring rebellion, thus Roman soldiers were stationed in Jerusalem.

Augustus was succeeded by *Tiberius (A.D. 14–37)*, and Pilate served as procurator in Judaea under him. Pilate's reign (A.D. 26–36) was marked by ruthlessness and disregard of Jewish scruples. In addition to Jesus' condemnation to death by Pilate, Galilean patriots were executed without trials, an attempt was made to use temple funds for the construction of an aquaduct, and troops marching into Jerusalem brought imperial images which were opposed by the Jews. Pilate executed many of the Samaritans who had assembled on Mount Gerizim to witness the discovery of sacred vessels supposedly hidden by Moses. He was ordered to Rome and removed from office.

Upon the death of Tiberius, *Gaius Caligula (A.D. 37–41)* became emperor. The acknowledgement of his deification by all inhabitants of the Empire brought him into conflict with the Jews who had been exempted previously from this formal expression of loyalty.

A new religion that was to be symbolic of the unity of the Empire appeared in the cult of Roma and Augustus. The goddess Roma personified the State. Emperor Augustus accepted and fostered voluntary worship and veneration because he realized the political value of such an expression of reverence and devotion. At his death, he was deified, like Julius Caesar, and a priestly college was founded in Rome to maintain his worship. Tiberius encouraged the continued veneration of the emperor, but he was not honoured posthumously with deification. His successor Gaius Caligula was the first emperor in Rome to insist on being declared a god while he was alive. He claimed deification for his sisters and prescribed sacrifices to himself.

The Greeks of Alexandria willingly established statues of Caligula and demanded that the Jews likewise put up statues in their synagogues. When the Jews refused, their quarters were invaded, their shops and dwellings were looted and burnt. Many were clubbed to death, their corpses were mutilated, their synagogues were demolished or desecrated, and 38 members of the Jewish Communal Council were dragged in chains to the theatre and publicly scourged. In Palestine, the Jews of Jabneh tore down

Judaea under Herod was neither completely free nor controlled by Rome but was a c_____ k_____ with a king who recognized the o_____ of Rome.

(client kingdom, overlordship)

Two well known emperors referred to in Luke 2 and 3 are:

_____ (27 B.C.–A.D. 14)

_____ (A.D. 14–37)

(Augustus, Tiberius)

In addition to condemning Jesus, Pilate was guilty of:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Caligula, a weakling in body and mind and perhaps mentally deranged, had the distinction of being the first emperor to be declared a_____ while he was_____.

(god, alive)

an altar erected to the Emperor by the heathen residents. When the incident was reported to Caligula, he commanded that his image be set up in the Temple at Jerusalem. Fortunately for the Jews, Caligula was assassinated early in A.D. 41 before he could enforce his order.

When *Claudius (A.D. 41–54)* became emperor, he placed Judaea under Herod Agrippa as a gesture of reconcilation with the Jews after the excesses of Caligula. Upon the death of Herod in A.D. 44, he returned the country to provincial status with an imperial procurator. Unfortunately, the procurators who ruled for the next 22 years (A.D. 44–66) had no understanding of Jewish peculiarities as Agrippa had. Fadus demanded the custody of the high priest's robes. He cruelly suppressed an uprising led by the prophet Theudas by having the leader's head cut off and exhibited in Jerusalem. The next procurator, Tiberius Alexander, had the sons of Judah the Galilean, Jacob and Simon, crucified. Cumanus (A.D. 48–52) ordered his troops to disperse an infuriated Jewish mob during the time of the Passover, resulting in the trampling underfoot of numerous Jews. When a Roman servant was robbed, he looted several nearby villages in retaliation. Galilean Jews who were on their way to Jerusalem were slain by Samaritans. Two Zealots led an armed body of Jews into Samaria, slew old men, women, and children, and devastated the villages. Cumanus led his regiments against the Jews and had a number crucified or beheaded.

Felix was procurator from A. D. 52–60. He was a freedman, but his cruelty and intemperate wantonness betrayed his slave origin. His second wife was the Jewish princess Drusilla, daughter of Agrippa I and sister of Agrippa II. The marriage of a Jew to a Roman violated Jewish law. During his rule, the party of the Zealots continued to increase. They had an intense hatred for their Roman rulers and for the wealthy Jews who were friendly to the Romans. They formed outlaw bands, attacked their political opponents, and plundered their possessions. Some were secretly armed, and they mixed with the crowds and stealthily struck down Roman sympathizers.

Nero (A.D. 54–68) succeeded Claudius as emperor. He recalled Felix in A.D. 60 and sent Festus to Judaea as procurator (A.D. 60–62). The Jewish situation had deteriorated under Felix to a point beyond recovery. Festus died after two years in office. Before the arrival of the new procurator Albinus (A.D. 62–64), Jerusalem was in a state of complete anarchy. Albinus added to the problems by plundering public and private treasures. The number of assassins increased, and they began to employ the tactics of securing the release of one of their men who was seized by taking one of their opponents and arranging for an exchange. The procurator Florus (A.D. 64–66) was no improvement over Albinus. He plundered whole cities, took seventeen talents from the temple treasury, and turned a detachment of soldiers upon the city of Jerusalem. Their looting and misdeeds brought retaliation from the Jews who scourged several Roman knights and nailed them to crosses. Upon the arrival of two cohorts of Roman soldiers from Caesarea, the Jews expressed their hatred of Florus. The soldiers turned on the Jews and drove them into Jerusalem. A battle was fought in the streets, and the Jewish hatred of the Romans was fanned into open rebellion and war which finally resulted in the destruction of the nation.

During Nero's reign, a great fire which lasted for six days devastated most of the city of Rome in A.D. 64. Popular opinion demanded a scapegoat for the disaster, and the Christians in Rome were blamed, probably because they were known to be unpopular with the masses. Thousands were put to death as a result of the persecution which followed. Tradition holds that Peter and Paul became victims of the persecution in A.D. 65 and 67.

Fadus served as procurator in Judaea from A.D. 44–46 and was succeeded by_____ whose two-year reign was A.D. 46–48.

The procurator who looted cities and had a number of Jews crucified was_____, A.D. ____ to ____.

(Alexander, Cumanus, 48, 52)

The last four procurators to serve in Judaea were:

_____ A.D. 52–60

_____ A.D. 60–62

_____ A.D. 62–64

_____ A.D. 64–66

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Actions by Florus which infuriated the Jews included:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

(1. plundered whole cities, 2. took 17 talents from the temple treasury, 3. turned a detachment of soldiers upon Jerusalem)

During the increasing hostilities between Jews and Gentiles in Judaea, Paul was carrying the Christian gospel of love to the Gentile world. He tried to bridge the gap between Jewish and Gentile Christians, and even risked his own life for his "brethren according to the flesh." Paul's imprisonment in Caesarea and his appeal for trial before the Emperor were the results of the hostilities of the Jews towards him for associating with Gentiles. Church expansion cannot be understood apart from Roman political and social events.

The Corner-Stone of Christianity

The earthly life of Christ

Our knowledge of the earthly life of Jesus Christ is based on the four canonical Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John), Luke's writings in Acts, the New Testament Epistles, and the Revelation of John. The Old Testament may be included also because it predicts the coming of the Messiah and His mission on earth. The earthly life of Jesus Christ was a fulfilment of that which was written about Him in the Law and the Prophets (Matt. 5:17). In John's Gospel the veil to the infinite past is parted and Jesus is seen His relation to the God-head and to the universe:

> In the beginning was the Word »Logos», and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . .All things were made by «through» him; and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. (John 1:1–4)

This is a unique (one of a kind) description of a unique personality. John further states that this same Word «Logos» became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14).

The genealogy in Matthew 1:1–17 connects Jesus with David and with Abraham. Luke records the genealogy of Jesus (Luke 3:23–38) previous to Abraham and relates the Christ with Adam and God. The miraculous conception, a point that would have embarrased a faithless Joseph, and the virgin birth, "conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary" (Apostles' Creed), are recorded by Matthew and Luke. The Saviour was born in Bethlehem in Judaea but grew up in Nazareth of Galilee after returning from Egypt where Joseph took Mary and the baby Jesus for safety.

Luke (2:40–52) writes that at the age of twelve Jesus travelled from Nazareth to Jerusalem for the Passover festival. Was He able at this tender age to comprehend the deeper meaning of the Passover and the sacrifice of the paschal lamb? He certainly astonished the Jewish theologians by His understanding, His questions, and His answers. It was on this occasion that Jesus became a "son of the law" according to the Jewish custom of tying a phylactery on the forehead and another on the arm to signify that henceforth this youth was willing to be guided in thought and action by the Word of God. In this one brief reference to the childhood of Jesus, Luke states that He grew and waxed strong, was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him. As a human, Jesus matured normally with regard to physical, mental, and spiritual development. He was tempted in all points like other men, yet He did not sin (Heb. 4:15). He was the only perfect man that ever lived (John 8:46). He was also true God (John 1:1; Rom. 1:4).

John the Baptist was the forerunner of Jesus and the prophet who called the Jews to repentance and righteousness in preparation for the return of God's blessing in the Messiah. His prophetic role also included the public ceremony of baptism which pointed out God's Chosen and consecrated Him to His mission. During

YOU HAVE READ ABOUT FIVE EMPERORS WHO SERVED DURING NEW TESTAMENT TIMES UNTIL THE JEWISH WAR. CAN YOU LIST THEM AND THEIR DATES?

TRY IT.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Is this statement true or false?

The work of Christians was unaffected by the hostilities between Jews and Gentiles.

_____

(false)

Match the authors and their genealogies.

_____1. Matthew

_____2. Luke

a. Traces Jesus' ancestry to Adam and God.

b. Connects Jesus with David and Abraham.

(b–1, a–2)

On the occasion of Jesus' attendance at the Passover when he was twelve, He signified willingness to be guided by the

_____ of _____.

(Word, God)

Luke emphasized that Jesus matured normally with regard to p_____, m_____, and s_____ development.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

the Jewish sabbatical year, great crowds gathered around John and listened to his announcement that the Lamb of God was coming. Jesus heard of John's success and evidently concluded that His own public ministry must soon begin. This concrete situation, coupled with an inner conviction by the Spirit, caused Jesus to launch His public ministry when He was about thirty years of age.

The baptism of Jesus Christ marked the transition from private to public life and His positive identification with the task of His Father. On this occasion three remarkable things happened: (1) the heaven was opened; (2) the Holy Spirit descended like a dove and came upon Him; (3) the voice of God from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17). Immediately after His baptism He was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness, where He was tempted for forty days and forty nights (Matt. 4:1-11). A few days later He began to teach, to preach, and to perform miracles. The public ministry of Jesus can be divided into six general periods:

1. An early Judaean ministry
2. The great Galilean ministry
3. The north Galilean ministry
4. The Peraean and later Judaean ministry
5. The Passion week
6. The post-resurrection appearances

Jesus had a developing conviction of the certainty of His death. He knew that God. His Father, had sent Him to accomplish a mission that had been foreordained before the foundation of the world. He was disturbed by the people's rejection of God and their disobedience to His Will. He was convinced that the only solution to the enmity in the hearts of men would be God's love for all mankind expressed in the death of His Son as an atonement for sin. God's will meant that His earthly ministry would come to an early end; therefore, He would no longer be able personally to preach, teach, and perform miracles in order to inform mankind of His mission and purpose. It was mandatory that the message be delivered to every individual of all future generations until the end of the Age. This need prompted the selection of a few close followers whom He could teach and train for this ministry.

Jesus' disciples failed to understand the full impact of His impeding death. Enlightenment came only after His resurrection from the dead sealed His victory over death and proved Him to be the Son of God with power. His was the power to overcome sin and its consequences—death. He sent His disciples into all the world with this glorious message.

Luke, the author of Acts, recorded the words of Jesus, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost «Spirit» is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Then Jesus was taken up into heaven. The disciples returned to Jerusalem and assembled in a house where they remained steadfastly in prayer, waiting for the Holy Spirit whom the Lord had promised to send to them. During the days of waiting, there were about 120 persons who identified themselves as followers of Jesus.

Power from the ascended Lord

It was expedient that the disciples wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus had told His followers that it was necessary for Him to go away. Otherwise, the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, could not be sent to empower them for their appointed task. Jesus had promised that the Father would send the

John the Baptist called the Jews to

_____ and _____ in preparation for the Messiah's coming.

John also publicly _____ the Messiah and _____ Him to His mission.

(repentance, righteousness, identified, consecrated)

Identify the six general periods of Jesus' ministry–the first four by location and the other two by occurrences.

1. An early _____ ministry
2. The great _____ ministry
3. The North _____ ministry
4. The _____ and later _____ ministry
5. The _____ Week
6. The _____ appearances

(Compare your answers with the text.)

The need that the message of God's love be delivered to all caused Jesus to select a few close

_____.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

During the days of waiting after Jesus' ascension to heaven, how many persons identified themselves as His followers?

_____

(120)

Holy Spirit in His name. The Spirit would enable them to understand the things which Jesus had taught (John 14:26). Also, the Spirit would be indispensable to the disciples' work: "And when he is come, he will reprove «convict» the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8).

On the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ, the 120 were together in Jerusalem. It was the third hour of the day (9 a.m.), designated as the "hour of prayer."

> "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost «Spirit», and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." (Acts 2:2-4)

The Spirit came upon the disciples, men and women alike—there was no distinction among persons. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit caused a tremendous stir among those present in Jerusalem. They came together and listened to those who were speaking about the mighty works of God. There were devout Jews in the audience "our of every nation under heaven." Yet they heard these Spirit-filled disciples speak of the mighty works of God in the language of their native countries. All were amazed; some were perplexed; and others mocked. Then the disciples stood up, and Peter acted as the spokesman. Taking his text from Joel 2:28, he explained what had happened in the light of Old Testament prophecy. He connected this extraordinary event, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, with the life and work of the crucified and risen Saviour. The people were "pricked in their heart" when they heard these things and asked Peter and the other apostles what they should do. The answer was "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38). About three thousand persons received the Word and were baptized that day.

The disciples' immediate success was due to the coming of the_____.

(Holy Spirit)

Early Church Expansion

Church expansion among Jews

The principle "first-hand" information concerning the Church during the years A.D. 30–68 is the Book of Acts which carries the narrative up to the year A.D. 60 or perhaps 62. The Epistles of Paul, Peter, and James give additional and supplementary information. Among the secular writers, the historical works of Josephus are particularly valuable.

During the first fourteen years, A.D. 30–44, the grain of mustard seed (Matt. 13:31-33) developed into a tree of considerable proportions. Its branches reached out to communities of God's chosen people, Israel, in many parts of the world. The initial Jewish response in Judaea was heartening—3,000, then 5,000 believed, "multitudes both of men and women," "the number of disciples multiplied . . .and a great company of priests were obedient to the faith." (See Acts 2:41, 4:4, 5:14, 6:7.)

Christ had asserted frequently the universality of His Kingdom on earth, but it is evident that the vision of the early Jewish Christians was clouded by Jewish particularism. For some time they spoke the Word "to none but unto the Jews only" (Acts 11:19). Yet, as the River Nile in due season overflows its banks and brings great fertility to the adjoining lands, so also the Lord arranged for the spread of the gospel to the Gentile lands.

Early Jewish response to the gospel is evident in that–

1. Three thousand believers soon increased to_____.
2. The number of_____ multiplied.
3. A great company of_____ were obedient to the faith.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

The extension of the Church to include Samaritans and proselytes

Attention is again called to the gradual preparation of the Church for its great mission among the Gentiles: (1) The persecution that arose in connexion with the martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 8:1) scattered the Jewish Christians among their traditional enemies, the Samaritans, who were a mixed race. These Samaritans accepted the gospel (Acts 8:4-8) as some had already done during the ministry of Jesus. (2) The evangelist Philip baptized the Egyptian eunuch (Acts 8:26-39). Henceforth the Church and a representative among the Hamites in the South. (3) Cornelius, a representative of the Graeco-Roman world, a descendant of Japheth, was baptized as well as his entire household (Acts 10). (4) Many Greeks in Antioch "turned unto the Lord" (Acts 11:21).

The spread of the Church to the Gentiles

The church in Jerusalem sent one of its charter members, Barnabas (Acts 11:22), who was a Levite from Cyprus (Acts 4:36), to strengthen the Jewish-Gentile church in Antioch of Syria. He soon secured the able assistance of his friend Saul of Tarsus. These two worked together in Antioch "a whole year," A.D. 43–44, before they were delegated to go with gifts to the famine-stricken Christians in Jerusalem (Acts 11:25–30).

Henceforth the centre of interest in the narrative in Acts shifted from Jerusalem to Antioch and from the Apostle Peter to the Apostle Paul. From A.D. 44, Antioch in Syria became the centre of Gentile Christianity. The mother church of Gentile Christianity possessed prominent prophets and teachers (Acts 13:1). Among those mentioned is Manaen, a foster brother of King Herod Antipas. While the prophets and teachers of Antioch "ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away" (Acts 13:2-3). Thus the first missionary journey was launched.

The first missionary journey (Acts 13:4–14:28)

This journey marked a new era of great importance for the Christian Church. The Lord had called Paul to be an "apostle to the Gentiles," and he began in earnest to preach the gospel among the Gentiles; however, he did not exclude the Jews. He and Barnabas went to the island of Cyprus, the native land of Barnabas. Then they travelled to the cities of Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. From these centres, the gospel spread to the surrounding territory. The Jews that refused the gospel proved to be the worst enemies of the two missionaries, persecuting them wherever they could. The churches founded on this journey were carefully organized by Paul and Barnabas. Duly elected and consecrated "elders" succeeded them as the spiritual leaders of the local congregations (Acts 14:22–23).

The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15)

A door of faith had been opened to the Gentiles, and many turned to the Lord. This brought about a severe clash between the leaders of Jewish particularism and of Christian universalism. On what conditions should these Gentile Christians be admitted to membership in the Church? Was the transition to be made by way of Jewish Christianity, that is by circumcision and observance of the ceremonial law? Or, was justification by faith in Jesus Christ alone, without circumcision and Mosaism, sufficient for church membership? The issue was settled at the Apostolic Council in Jerusalem. Acts 15 gives a vivid account of the proceedings. James, the recognized leader of the Jerusalem church, argued in favour of the Gentiles' exemption from Jewish

The gospel was extended beyond Judaea because_____ caused the Christians to scatter.

(persecution)

From A.D. 44, _____ became the centre of Christianity.

Which response to the gospel was greater–Gentile or Jewish? _____

(Antioch, Gentile)

On their first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas were "apostles to the_____."

They took the gospel to C_____,

A_____ in Pisidia, I_____,

L_____, and D_____.

(Gentiles, Cyprus, Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe)

The worst enemies of the two missionaries were the_____ who refused the gospel.

(Jews)

The great and far-reaching decision of the Apostolic Council was that–

_____ would not have to submit to _____ ceremonial law; and salvation is by _____ alone.

(Gentiles, Jewish, faith)

customs. His appeal was based on the witness of prophecy (Acts 15:13–21). His recommendations were sanctioned by the apostles and the elders and by the entire church. Gentile Christianity was emancipated from circumcision and the bondage of the Jewish ceremonial law, and Paul was officially recognized as an apostle to the Gentiles. It was a great and far-reaching decision. Justification by faith alone had been recognized as the universal condition for entering God's Kingdom. It was this principle Paul reasserted in his epistles to the Galatians and to the Romans. It was this same basic law that was re-emphasized in the Reformation. These four–the Apostolic Council in Jerusalem, the Epistle to the Galatians, the Epistle to the Romans, and the Luther Reformation–dealt with the same problem: man is separated from God by choosing to sin, and he is justified and saved by faith in Jesus Christ alone, not by human merit. Shortly after the Apostolic Council in Jerusalem, Paul started on his second missionary journey.

The second missionary journey (Acts 15:36–18:22)

Paul revisited the churches established during his first journey and then moved into the new territory of Macedonia and Achaia– Philippi, Thessalonica, Beroea, Athens, and Corinth– where he found a ready response. During a stay of two years in Corinth, he wrote 1 and 2 Thessalonians and probably Galatinas. After travelling by way of Ephesus to Jerusalem, Paul returned to Antioch.

The third missionary journey (Acts 18:23–21:14)

Paul's third missionary journey took him again on a visit to the young congregations of Galatia and Phrygia and then on to Ephesus where he stayed for three years (Acts 20:31). While there he wrote 1 Corinthians. Paul's long stay in Ephesus shows his keen insight as a Christian leader. He was conscious that the current history, commerce, and civilization were shifting westward, and Ephesus in the province of Asia would become a great centre for the Church. The young and gifted Timothy was selected as leader of this important church after Paul's departure.

Paul travelled from Ephesus to Macedonia where he wrote 2 Corinthians. From Macedonia he went to Corinth where he spent the three winter months and wrote his great masterpiece, the Epistle to the Romans. He felt that his main work in the East was finished, and he wanted to turn westward for new fields to conquer. Rome had been selected as the new base for the proposed missionary activities that he hoped would extend as far west as Spain (Rom. 15:24–28). However, before he could go to Rome, the Holy Spirit guided him first to make a trip to Jerusalem (Acts 20:22), and this trip terminated his third missionary journey.

Paul's imprisonment and further ministry

Paul's trip to Jerusalem was followed by a two-year imprisonment in Caesarea. He was then sent by ship to Rome, where he remained a prisoner for two years. During this Roman imprisonment, Paul wrote four epistles: Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, and Philippians.

There is strong tradition that Paul was set free from the Roman imprisonment, which was recorded by Luke in the final chapter of Acts. The following facts support this tradition: (1) The historical background and the facts implied in 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus do not fit with the earlier life of Paul as described in Acts. These Epistles probably were written after he was released from prison. (2) The Book of Acts and the Prison Letters (Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon and Philippians) do not in-

New territories to Paul on his second journey were

M_____ and A_____.

(Macedonia, Achaia)

On his third journey, Paul stayed in

E_____ of A_____ for three years.

(Ephesus, Asia)

During Paul's two-year imprisonment in Rome, he wrote E _____,

C _____, P _____, and

P_____.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

dicate that Paul expected an immediate death. (3) In The First Epistle of Clement of Rome, written around A.D. 96, the author says: "Paul preached both in the East and West . . . taught righteousness to the world, and came to the extreme limit of the West" (5:5f.). According to the usage of his day, "the extreme limit of the West" could mean only Spain. These words were written by a Roman Christian only thirty years after Paul's death. (4) The Muratorian Canon (1. 38) and Chapter 1 of The Acts of Peter mention Paul's visit to Spain. These two references are late and are of less value.

Assuming from statements Paul made in his last three epistles, he was released probably late in A.D. 62 and spent the winter in Nicopolis, where he probably wrote 1 Timothy and Titus. Early in the spring, he probably made a hurried trip to the East, including Ephesus and Crete, and then set sail for Spain. On the night of July 18–19, A.D. 64, Rome began to burn and kept on burning for six days. The Christians were blamed for the fire and persecution resulted. Peter was martyred, but Paul was evidently still in Spain and was martyred later than Peter.

According to tradition, Paul was imprisoned when he returned to Rome from Spain. He wrote 2 Timothy during this long imprisonment. From the tone of this Epistle, it is clear that Paul himself did not expect to be released: "For I am already on the point of being sacrificed; the time of my departure has come" (2 Tim. 4:6—RSV). He probably died a martyr's death in A.D. 66 or early 67 during the reign of Nero.

The ministries of the other apostles

Except for James, James the Just, and John the Beloved, no authentic information is available regarding the other apostles and leaders. James, the brother of John, was martyred in A.D. 44 (Acts 12:2). James the Just was killed by fanatic Jews in A.D. 66. John the Beloved died in extreme old age after the accession of Trajan (A.D. 98–117). "The later tradition which narrates the activities of various members of the original group of the Twelve Apostles in widely different parts of the world has not been proved to have any basis of fact."[2] Tradition assigns the following fields to various apostles and evangelists: Andrew is said to have laboured in Scythia, hence a segment of the Russian Church worships him as their apostle; Philip is reported to have spent his final years in Hierapolis in Phrygia; Bartholomew is said to have brought the Gospel according to Matthew into India; and Thomas is said to have been the apostle to Parthia and India. The tradition concerning Matthew is rather confused. He is said to have preached first to his own people and later in foreign lands. James Alphaeus is said to have worked in Egypt. Thaddaeus is reported to have been a missionary to Persia. Egypt and Britain were the fields of preaching for Simon the Zealot, while there are also reports of his being in Persia and Babylonia. The evangelist John Mark is said to have founded the church at Alexandria.

READ THE FIRST TWO PARAGRAPHS OF THE TEXT BEFORE DOING THE FOLLOWING EXERCISE.

Complete the following outline of events which happened to Paul between 62–66 A.D.

1. Late in A.D. 62 he was released from _____.
2. He spent the winter in- _____.
3. He made a hurried trip to _____ and _____.
4. He went to _____.
5. He returned to _____ in about A.D. 66.
6. He was imprisoned and died a _____ death.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

[2] Kenneth Scott Latourette, *The First Five Centuries,, Vol. I of A History of the Expansion of Christianity* (7 vols.; New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1937), pp. 82-83.

Home Study Exercise

Basic activity (Levels 1, 2, and 3). After reading the study guide text, answer the following questions.

1. What is the scope of church history? _____

2. Give a more restricted definition of church history. _____

3. List three ways the Greek and Roman Empires helped prepare for the coming of Christ and the establishment of the Church. _____

4. List four important stages in Israel's history which affected her preparation for the coming of Christ. _____

5. How did the Dispersion prepare for the spread of the Church? _____

6. Explain Judaea's relation to Rome during the time of Herod. _____

7. Name four misdeeds of Pilate while he was governor of Judaea. _____

8. List the Roman emperors to the time of the Jewish War and their dates. _____

9. What act of Caligula caused the Jews to rebel? _____

10. List the procurators who served in Judaea under Claudius and Nero. _____

11. List three misdeeds of Florus which precipitated the Jewish rebellion. _____

12. How did the Jewish–Roman tensions affect the Church? _____

13. How do the genealogies of Matthew and Luke differ? _____

14. What does Luke 2:40-53 emphasize about Jesus? _____

15. What was the role of John the Baptist? _____

16. List the six general periods of Jesus' ministry. _____

17. What factor accounted for the disciples' early success? _____

18. Give some indications of early Jewish response to the gospel. _____

19. Where did Paul and Barnabas carry the gospel on their first journey? _____

20. What was the importance of the Apostolic Council? _____

21. List the new territories to which Paul took the gospel on his second and third journeys. _____

22. What does tradition say happened to Paul after the close of the Acts account? _____

23. According to tradition, where did the other apostles go? _____

Supplementary Activities (Levels 2 and 3). Read pages 1–12 in *A Summary of Christian History* by Robert A. Baker and answer the following questions.

1. What cultural influences are evident in Paul's description recorded in Acts 21:37–40?

2. List the three Greek influences and three Roman influences which Baker mentions.

3. Name the Jewish parties at the time of Christ and give the dates and occasions of their origins.

4. List four reasons Christianity spread rapidly during the first century.

5. What gave impetus to the westward growth of Christianity during the latter part of the first century?

6. Describe the nature and organization of the New Testament Church at the end of the first century.

Advanced Activity (Level 3). Read "References to Christianity in Classical Authors," pages 1–5, *Documents of the Christian Church* by Henry Bettenson and answer the following.

1. Explain the foreign superstition of which Pomponia Graecina was accused.

2. What does the Roman historian Tacitus imply concerning the origin of the great fire of Rome in 64 A.D. and what was his attitude towards Christians?

3. Relate the reference of Suetonius concerning "the instigation of Chrestus" to an incident recorded in the New Testament.

4. Describe Pliny's justification for his condemnation of Christians. Give a brief description of what is known of Christianity at the end of the first century by implication from Pliny's letter.

Seminar Discussion

1. What contribution did the Jews, the Romans, and the Greeks make in preparing for the coming of Christ?

2. Was Roman rule under the emperors from Augustus to Nero detrimental or beneficial to Christians and Jews?

3. Name the six periods of the earthly ministry of Christ.

4. Give the divisions of the spread of Christianity in the first century.

5. What was the significance of the Jerusalem Council?

6. What happened to Paul after he was taken to Rome, and where did the other apostles serve?