

1.
Def: The Church is the Body of Christ - it is the way God planned to reveal Him + His Plan to the World. It is also the way in which God has planned for us to relate + grow in Christ -

That's why we are going to study church history - our brothers + sisters in the Body of Christ for the past 2000 yrs. can speak to us - the same problems confronted them that confront us - the same heresies - the same

30 A.D. - 500 A.D.

1. Apostolic Age 70 yrs. 30-100 A.D.
2. Post-apostolic Age 100-312 A.D.
3. Church-State Combination 312-500 A.D.

1. Apostolic Age - the apostles set about fulfilling the Great Commission. These were just common ordinary men, like Peter - just like you + I. In their lifetimes they went out + started fulfilling the Great Commission - they, in the Power of the H.S., undertook the task of reaching the World for Christ. What faith that took - they were only a handful - but how God used them.

They established a beach head

1. The first thing they had to do was break away from Judaism. God had to convince the Jews that

2. Christianity spread to the Gentiles - by 80 A.D. the Gentiles were being evangelized at a fantastic rate - thanks to Paul primarily

3. The Apostles were the 'authorities'. If someone came by preaching something a little weird the church would either send for an apostle or write a letter to one of them & check out the preacher's message

It was mainly a lower class movement - God usually works that way - He works through the common people & not from the top down. That is ~~is~~ very easily explained - those on top are usually too selfish - too rich - too dictatorial because they have their own kingdom & are their own god - they don't care about bowing down & worshipping the real God - or following Him anywhere in the world

There was some persecution - Nero lighted his night parties using Christians as torches - he blamed them for burning Rome

Then something happened: the apostles died. It's very clear that they believed Christ would return in their lifetime - and there's nothing wrong with that - Paul called it a living hope 'maranatha' - all Christians should live as though Christ is coming back today!

In AD 62-64 Paul & Peter were killed. The others were scattered over the world - John died in AD 95

Now there were no more apostles - no living authorities.

The key word for this era is Pressure — Persecution + Heresy were the 2 things that confronted the church - It is a miracle that it survived

Emperors - Trajan - Maximinus Marcus Aurelius made it their business to stamp out Christianity. They felt that if they could restore the state religion the Roman empire might survive - it was on its way down. Christianity was growing so fast that emperor-worship was not popular - & emperors couldn't command the undying devotion they had when they were worshipped. So they made it mandatory to go & worship in pagan temples - got stamps & if you didn't they killed you. This is the great period of Christian martyrdom - there was constant persecution for 250 yrs. in some part of the Roman empire

People really knew which side they were on - there were no lukewarm Christians - people paid for their faith with their blood. There are accounts of Roman colosseums 6" deep in Christian blood - they used every means available to kill them - gladiators, lions, crucifixion - it was horrible. 10,000 ^{killed} at one afternoon's entertainment

4 Those Christians really had to look to the Lord for their food, their jobs, their very lives
Christianity became the scape-goat for every problem the Roman empire had

Tertullian, a great Christian 200 A.D.

"If the Tiber reaches the walls, if the Nile does not rise, if there is a plague, or if there is famine the cry is at once Christians to the lions" - they were the scape-goats

There is an account of a fellowship in Leon, France - where every single Christian in the city was killed; the last one being a 15 yr. old boy who was tortured to make him deny Christ - and he would not.

What was the result of all this Persecution? Growth - fantastic growth

This is the Principle down through all of Church History: -

The more it is Persecuted + Crushed the more it Grows through

One of the main ~~ways~~ ~~to~~ which it spread was - guess what - the Roman Army. It was sent to crush Christianity + instead the soldiers became convinced that Jesus was Lord - probably as they arrested the Christians + saw their loving reaction to persecution. So Christianity spread from Britain to India - all around the Mediterranean.

