

Twenty Centuries A Survey of Church History



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THE FIRST CENTURY

Twenty Centuries



- **Bibliography:**

- *History of the Christian Church*, 8 vols., Philip Schaff
- *Heroes & Heretics: Pivotal Moments in 20 Centuries of the Church*, Iain D. Campbell
- *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity*, Mark A. Noll
- *2000 Years of Christ's Power*, 3 vols., N.R. Needham
- *In the Year of Our Lord: Reflections on Twenty Centuries of Church History*: Sinclair B. Ferguson
- *5 Minutes in Church History*, Stephen J. Nichols
- *Sketches from Church History*, S. M. Houghton

The First Century



- Life and Ministry of Jesus Christ (4 BC – 28/30 AD)
- Church founded in Jerusalem/Scattered by Persecution (30 – AD)
- Paul's Missionary Journeys/ Founding of Gentile Church (49-64 AD)
- Fall of Jerusalem (70 AD)
- Writing of New Testament (50-95 AD)
- Onset of Roman Persecution (63, 95 AD)

1. Life and Ministry of Jesus Christ (4 BC-28/30 AD)



- God's Son Born as Man (4-6 BC)

“She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins” (Mt. 1:21).

- Redeeming Work of God Accomplished

“Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve” (1 Cor. 15:3-5).

- Calling/Training of First Disciples

“He said to them, ‘Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men’ (Mt. 4:19).

Life and Ministry of Jesus Christ (4 BC-28/30

AD)


- Teaching of the Kingdom of God

“He went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people” (Mt. 4:23).

- Ascension into Heaven / Outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight” (Acts 1:7-9).

Result: Original church founded, with apostles, in Jerusalem (appr. 30 AD).

Church Founded and Scattered (30-48 AD)



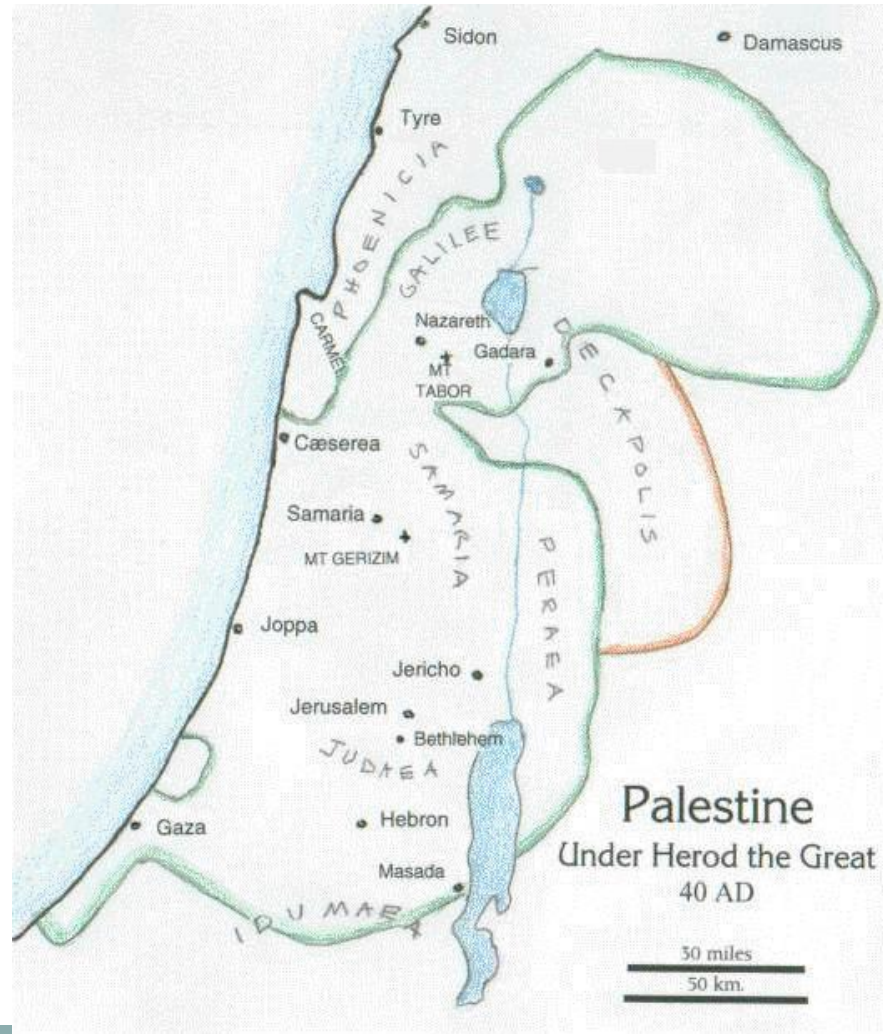
- **Original Context of the Church**
 - Jewish foundation
 - Roman Political World
 - Greek Thought Life
- **Early Growth / Initial Pattern**
 - Worship centered on Teaching & Prayer
 - ✦ “And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42).
 - Apostolic Miracles and Authority (Heb. 2:3-4).
 - Church Organization: Originally apostles and deacons (Acts 6).

Church Founded and Scattered (30-48 AD)



- **Persecution and Spread**
 - Early Evangelistic Outreach (Philip in Samaria)
 - Stoning of Stephen (32 AD?)
 - Conversion of Saul of Tarsus (33 AD)
 - Persecution by Herod and the Pharisees (33-44 AD)
 - Flight of Christians/ Spread of Gospel
 - Jesus' interventions & encouragement of evangelism (Acts 18:9)
- **Result: Church overseen by apostles, ruled by Christ; spread by persecution (new center in Antioch); power of the Holy Spirit experienced.**

Palestine in the First Century AD

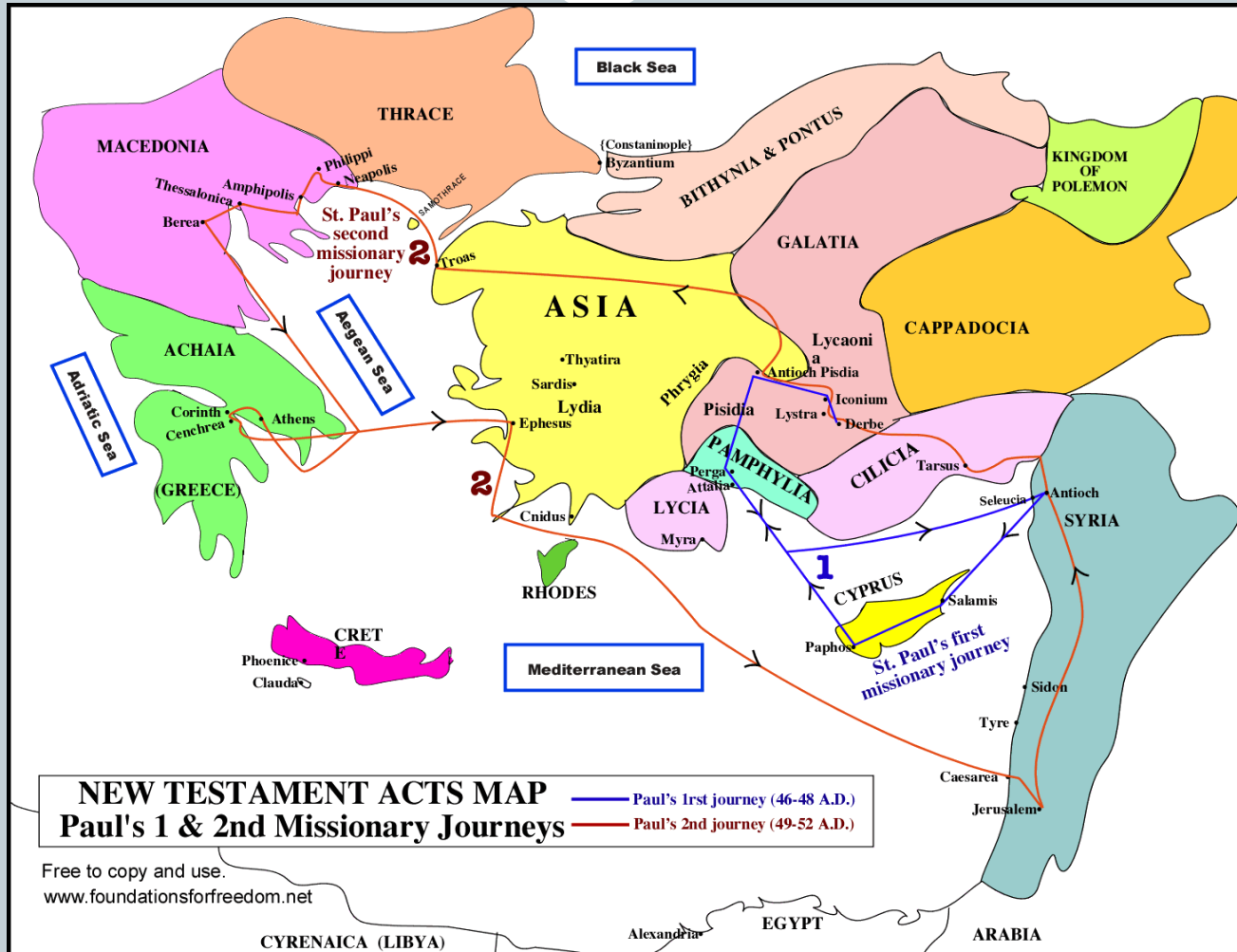


Paul's Missionary Journeys (33-64 AD)



- **Initial Journeys: Arabia, Syria, and Cilicia (Acts 9, 22; Gal. 1; 33-43 AD).**
 - Converted in Damascus, preaching in synagogues (Acts 9:19-22)
 - Flees to Jerusalem; told by Jesus to flee to Tarsus (Acts 22:17-21)
 - Three Year Evangelistic ministry in Arabia (Gal. 1:17)
 - Brief return to Damascus? 15 day visit to Jerusalem, meets apostle James (Gal. 1:18-19).
 - Departure for northern Syria and Cilicia (Gal. 1:21).
 - Sought by Barnabus in Tarsus to join Antioch church (Acts 11:25-26).
- **“First” Journey: From Antioch to Crete (Acts 13-14; 44-46 AD)**
 - Paul & Barnabas set apart by the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:1-3).
 - Mission to Southern Galatia and Cyprus
 - Opposition from “magicians” and false prophets (Acts 13:6-12)
 - Preaching in synagogues and mass evangelism (Acts 13:13-14:23).
- **Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15; 49AD)**
 - “Problem” of Gentile Churches
 - Clarification of Justification through Faith Alone

Paul's Missionary Journeys



Paul's Missionary Journeys (33-64 AD)



- **Second Journey: Through Turkey & Greece (Acts 15-18; 49-52 AD)**
 - Visit to Galatian Churches
 - Founding of Philippian, Thessalonian, and Corinthian Churches (Acts 16-18)
 - First Pauline Letters (Galatians / Thessalonians)
- **Third Journey: Back through Churches/ To Rome (Acts 19-20; 53-59 AD)**
 - Founding of Ephesian Church (Acts 19); Visit to Macedonia and Greece (Acts 20)
 - Letters to Romans, Corinthians
 - Offering for Relief of Jerusalem Church / Arrest in Jerusalem / Witness to Rulers (Acts 21-22)
- **Paul in Rome (Acts 21-28; 60-64 AD)**
 - First Imprisonment / Prison Letters (60-61 AD)
 - Release and Re-Arrest / 1 Timothy & Titus (62-63 AD)
 - Second Imprisonment / Witness to Caesar / 2 Timothy (63-64 AD)
 - Death of Paul AD 64

Result: Church Spread throughout Mediterranean

- Jew and Gentile Church outside of Jerusalem
- Diffusion of Leadership
- Emphasis on Local Elder Rule, under Apostolic Authority
- Doctrinal Foundation

The Fall of Jerusalem (70 AD)



- **The End of Pharisaical Judaism**
 - Jerusalem political establishment destroyed
 - Second Temple destroyed
 - Jesus' prophecy of judgment fulfilled (Mt. 24:1-2; Lk. 21:5-9)
- **Flight of the Christians**
 - Jesus' warning heeded (Mt. 24:15-22; Lk. 21:20-24)
 - Jerusalem no longer capital / Jewish tie severed
- **End of Jewish protection in Roman Empire**

Writing of the New Testament



- **Apostolic Epistles written**
 - Situational focus
 - Provide doctrinal clarity
 - Ecclesiastical foundation
- **Gospels Recorded**
 - Oral tradition captured
 - Apostolic witness to life and ministry of Jesus (Matthew; Mark (Peter?); Luke (Paul?); John).
- **Conflict with Heresy**
 - Justification conflict with Judaisers (Paul)
 - Early struggle vs. Gnosticism (John / Paul)
 - Other doctrinal struggles (Hebrews; 2 Peter/Jude; 1 Cor. 15, etc.)
- **Result:**
 - Churches committed to known canon of NT Scripture
 - Finished apostolic witness as foundation for church

Roman Persecution



- **Christians initially protected by Jewish status**
 - Jews a favored people, this status lost in struggle with Jews
 - Claudian Persecution (49 AD)
 - Post-AD 70, no protection
- **Nero's persecution in Rome (64 AD)**
 - Scapegoat for great fire
 - Apostles Peter and Paul martyred?
 - Hundreds of Christians tortured and killed
- **Persecution by later Emperors**
 - Domitian (81-96 AD): Imperial cult / John exiled to Patmos / persecution ended with his death
 - Trajan (98-117 AD): Imperial cult / fear of secret societies / Christianity outlawed
- **Apocalyptic Vision of John (95 AD)**
- **Result: Organized church going underground**
 - Combination of persecution and heresy causing church to shift from presbyterianism to episcopalianism.
 - Threat to Christians and Scriptures
 - Full canon not received or recognized

Major Changes in the First Century



- **Judaism gives way to Christianity as New Covenant in Christ is inaugurated**
- **God's Covenant People expands:**
 - Ethnically: Jews and Gentiles
 - Geographically: throughout Mediterranean
 - Culturally: Jewish to Graeco-Roman context
- **Apostolic Witness to Jesus Christ**
 - New Testament fulfills Old Testament expectation
 - Biblical doctrine brought to completion
- **Church learning to cope with heresy and persecution**
 - Shifts in church structure: apostolate – presbyterianism – episcopacy
 - Response to heresies/ canonization of Scripture begun