

Events:

Spread of the Gospel Outward from Jerusalem

- Estimated 7% of Roman Empire was Jewish or “God-Fearing”. Communication between the cities was excellent.
- Those present at Pentecost – “Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians” (Acts 2:9-11)
- Asia Minor and Greece and Rome by Peter and Paul before 64 (Nero).
- Alexandria by John Mark in mid 1st century.
- Samaria and Syria (Antioch) by Phillip and others by the mid 1st century.
- Carthage (North Africa) by the Phoenicians in 1st or 2nd centuries.
- France and Spain by the early to mid 2nd century (Irenaeus).
- Britain by early 3rd century if not before (record of bishops attending a council).
- Southern India by Thomas in 52. Ties to the church at Antioch.
- Established in Arabian Peninsula and Persia by the 4th century.
- China by Thomas or Bartholomew (?), but certainly before the 5th century.
- Destruction of Jerusalem under Diocletian in 70 meant it was no longer the center.
- Centers of Christianity by end of 1st century – Rome, Antioch and Alexandria.

Heroes:

Clement of Rome

- Born in the mid 1st century in Rome. Died around 100 or 101.
- Few real details are known. Mostly traditions and writings exist from Tertullian, Origen and Eusebius.
- The Apostle Peter himself ordained Clement as the third “Bishop of Rome”.
- Origen and Eusebius claim Clement to be the “yokefellow” (or “fellow laborer”) referred to by Paul in his letter to the church in Philippians 4:3.
- Origen and Eusebius claim that Paul wrote the Letter to the Hebrews in Hebrew and that it was Clement who translated the letter into Greek.
- The emperor Trajan (98 – 117) had Clement imprisoned for his Christian beliefs at the stone quarry at Chersonesus (Greek colony in southern Ukraine)
- Tradition has it that the men were suffering for lack of water so Clement prayed. He saw a lamb on the hillside and, taking that as a sign from God, dug with his pickaxe and discovered a well.
- The number of conversions he made while in prison got the ill attention of the Roman prefect, who sentenced Clement to death.
- Martyred around 100 by being tied to an anchor and thrown into the Black Sea.

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- In his single authenticated letter (to the Corinthian church), Clement reasserted the authority of church elders (presbyters) as being founded by the Apostles. He commanded the church to reinstate some elders that they had ousted and to repent of their sin.

Ignatius of Antioch

- Born around 35. Died around 108.
- According to Eusebius, Ignatius was installed as third Bishop of Antioch in 67, and according to historian Theodoret (4th and 5th century), Peter installed him.
- Tradition holds that Ignatius was one of the little children that Jesus took into his arms and blessed in Matthew 19:13-14; Mark 10:13-14; and Luke 18:15-16.
- Tradition also holds that Ignatius, along with Polycarp, was a student of John.
- He was arrested by Roman authorities and taken to Rome to be executed by lions in the Flavian Amphitheater (Colosseum). Eusebius gives the date as 2124 years after Adam – about 108 – during the reign of Emperor Trajan.
- On his way to Rome, he wrote seven rather hasty letters under rather adverse conditions to: (1) the Ephesians, (2) the Magnesians, (3) the Trallians, (4) the Romans, (5) the Philadelphians, (6) the Smyrnaeans, and (7) Bishop Polycarp.
- Some of Ignatius's teachings include:
 - Earliest writer to emphasize loyalty to a single bishop in each city.
 - First writer to use the word "catholic" in his letter to the Smyrnaeans, but its usage indicates that it was already a commonly used term.
 - Stressed the importance of the Lord's Supper in his letter to the Ephesians as a "medicine of immortality".
 - Some do not partake of the Lord's Supper because they do not confess the Lord's suffering (Docetism). Those who deny the gift will perish.
 - Perhaps his most famous quotation comes from his letter to the Romans. It indicates that he considered salvation the way to be free from fear and to bravely face martyrdom. It says:

"I am writing to all the Churches and I enjoin all, that I am dying willingly for God's sake, if only you do not prevent it. I beg you, do not do me an untimely kindness. Allow me to be eaten by the beasts, which are my way of reaching God. I am God's wheat, and I am to be ground by the teeth of wild beasts, so that I may become the pure bread of Christ."

Heresies:

Gnosticism

- The "grandfather" of other heresies – either by derivation or by opposition.
- Derives its name from the Greek word "gnosis" meaning "knowledge".
- Generally attributed to Simon Magus ("Simon the Magician") who wanted to buy the power of the Holy Spirit from Peter and the Apostles in Acts 8:19-20.

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- Gnostics are dualists. They believe that two powerful and opposite forces rule the universe: good and evil, light and darkness, yin and yang.
- They consider the intellectual “spirit” as good and the physical “body” as evil.
- The supreme god, whom they call the “Monad” or the “One”, cannot have created the earth since the earth, being physical, must be evil.
- From the “Monad” come “emanations” or “aeons”, which are lesser gods – each one being less than its predecessor. One Gnostic counts 365 aeons resulting in 365 separate heavens.
- God of the Hebrews and the Christians is the “Demiurge” or “skilled worker”. He created earth not because he was inherently evil – he just did not know better.
- Three types of people exist in the world:
 - A very small “top” group who are spiritual through “knowledge” imparted by secret (“esoteric”) or mystical means passed on from one teacher (or “guru”) to another
 - A small “middle” group who are spiritual through “faith”
 - A very large “bottom” group who are spiritual unbelievers.
- The “spiritual” person cannot be harmed by what he does in the “body”:
 - Stoicism and asceticism – deny and punish the body (insensitivity)
 - Epicureanism – satisfy the body (sensual)
- There is a humorous story of John and Polycarp visiting the baths at Ephesus. Upon seeing a famous Gnostic inside, John turned around and told Polycarp, “Let’s flee before the baths fall in. Cerinthus the enemy of truth is inside.”
- The Apostle’s creed adds explicit words to counter the claim that the physical is evil. We find, “I believe in God Almighty, the Maker of heaven and earth.” And also, “I believe in ... the resurrection of the flesh.”
- Argument by Pliny traveling from Jerusalem to Rome for Trajan: the message of the Gnostic is secret and available to only a select few, while the message of Christianity is public and open to everyone.
- One of the major post-apostolic early writers against heresy was Irenaeus.
- Gnosticism today includes: enlightenment, intellectualism, academism, scientific evolution, modern philosophies, eastern (mystical) religions, and on and on.
- What are a few of the passages Gnostics might use to defend their position?
 - Jesus spoke in parables (Mark 4:10-12)
 - Jesus only took three to the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1)
- How are some of the ways we can defend against Gnosticism?
 - When Paul speaks of the “flesh” (Gr. *sarx*), he is not speaking of the body (Gr. *soma*), but rather he is speaking of our lower or fleshly nature.
 - The introduction to John’s gospel (as does the entire book) emphasizes the divinity of Christ and the “goodness” he set forth
 - Teach salvation by grace instead of works (Ephesians 2:8-10)
 - God uses the foolish to shame the wise (1 Corinthians 1:26-31 esp. 27)