

HOW DID WE GET HERE?

A Short Course on Church History

The Church Gathered: Scripture, Leadership, and Worship

Hebrews 10:23-25 (ESV)

²³ Let us **hold fast the confession** of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider how to **stir up one another to love and good works**, ²⁵ not neglecting to **meet together**, as is the habit of some, but **encouraging one another**, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

“They were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang an anthem to Christ as God, and bound themselves by a solemn oath not to commit any wicked deed, but to abstain from all fraud, theft and adultery, never to break their word, or deny a trust when called upon to honor it.”

–Pliny the Younger, Letter to Trajan

I. TWO CHALLENGES OF THE EARLY CHURCH

- A. How do we ...
- B. How can we ...

II. THE WORSHIP PRACTICES OF THE EARLY CHURCH

- 1. Temple and synagogues ...
- 2. Homes ...

Acts 1:13-15 (ESV)

¹³ And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. ¹⁴ All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers. ¹⁵ In those days Peter stood up among the brothers (the company of persons was in all about 120) and said ...

Romans 16:3-5 (ESV)

³ Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, ⁴ who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well. ⁵ Greet also the church in their house. Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in Asia.

- 3. “First day of the week”

Revelation 1:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet

Why?

A. Baptism

1 Corinthians 12:12-14 (ESV)

¹² For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. ¹⁴ For the body does not consist of one member but of many.

“This is how to baptize. Give public instruction on all these points, and then ‘baptize’ in running water, ‘in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.’ If you do not have running water, baptize in some other. If you cannot in cold, then in warm. If you have neither, then pour water on the head three times ‘in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.’ Before the baptism, moreover, the one who baptizes and the one being baptized must fast, and any others who can.”

- The Didache

Two issues re: baptism divided the early church:

- a) _____ baptism
- b) _____ baptism

B. The Lord’s Supper

1 Corinthians 12:12-14 (ESV)

¹² For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. ¹⁴ For the body does not consist of one member but of many.

“At the end of our prayers, we greet one another with a kiss. Then the president of the brethren is brought a bread and a cup of wine mixed with water; and he takes them, and offers up praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and the Holy Ghost, and gives thanks at considerable length for our being counted worthy to receive these things at his hands. When he has concluded the prayers and thanksgivings, all the people present express their joyful assent by saying Amen. . . . Then those whom we call deacons give to each of those present the bread and wine mixed with water over which the thanksgiving was pronounced, and carry away a portion to those who are absent. We call this food “Eucharist.”” - Justin Martyr, A.D. 150

C. Preaching

2 Timothy 4:2 (ESV)

² preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.

“And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the pastor verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things.” - Justin Martyr, A.D. 150

D. Prayer

1 Timothy 2:1 (ESV)

¹ First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people ...

Colossians 4:2 (ESV)

² Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.

III. **SCRIPTURE AND THE EARLY CHURCH**

A. “**canon**” =

Because of their roots in Judaism, Christians already affirmed _____ ...

Their only question was ...

Christians immediately accepted the writings of the _____ ...

2 Peter 3:15-16 (ESV)

¹⁵ And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, ¹⁶ as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.

Early Christians also recognized the _____

The standard? 3 main criteria:

- 1) Written by ...
- 2) Agrees with ...
- 3) Already functioning as ...

B. Early challenges and heresies

Marcion ...

Pseudepigrapha ...

Hebrews ...

Revelation ...

Other books ...

The first written document we have that list all 27 books of the New Testament is Athanasius' *Easter Letter 39*, written in 367 A.D.

IV. LEADERSHIP AND THE EARLY CHURCH

Two offices – deacons and elders

“You must, then, elect for yourselves bishops and deacons who are a credit to the Lord; men who are gentle, generous, faithful, and well-trying. For their ministry to you is identical to that of the prophets and teachers”

- *Didache*

All the churches of a city were under the care of a “bishop” ...

In theory, all bishops were equal, but in practice ...

Very early in church history, _____ became the preeminent city (and thus had the preeminent “bishop”).

V. THE CHURCH FATHERS

1. **Apostolic** Fathers – taught by the Apostles

- a. Ignatius of Antioch
- b. Polycarp of Smyrna (*Letter to the Philippians, Martyrdom of Polycarp*)

2. **Apologetic** Fathers

- a. Justin Martyr (*Dialogue with Trypho, First and Second Apologies*)
- b. Athenagoras of Athens
- c. Irenaeus of Lyons (*Against Heresies*)
- d. Tertullian (*Apology, On Patience, On Prayer, To the Martyrs, On the Spectacles, etc.*)
- e. Clement of Alexandria
- f. Origen

John 14:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.