



MAJOR PERIODS OF EARLY CHURCH HISTORY

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1. EMERGING CHURCH (AD 30-41)

A. From Pentecost to the martyrdom of James by Herod Agrippa I & the assassination of Emperor Caligula.

B. Pattern of preaching: the kerygma (*evangelistic preaching for making converts*). This is the church's earliest characteristic.

- Peter's Pentecost sermon: good example of C.H. Dodd's definition of *kerygma*.



“The Kerygma”

1. The prophecies are fulfilled; Jesus’ coming has inaugurated a new age.
2. Jesus was born of the seed of David.
3. He died accord. to the Scriptures to deliver us out of this evil age.
4. He was buried.
5. He rose on the 3rd day according to the Scriptures.
6. He has been exalted at God’s right hand.
7. He will come again as Judge & Savior of mankind.



C. Sevens Elements of “the Way” (Acts 2:1-5, 38-47) (Acts 9:2)

1. Baptism (immersion): outward sign the church used to symbolize saving faith in Christ

2. Receiving the Holy Spirit: inward sign and confirmations

3. The apostles performed many signs and wonders.

4. Church members shared their possessions with each other.

5. They shared their faith daily in the Temple.



6. They ate meals together (a table fellowship).

7. They gathered for worship (as seen in the Greek term ekklesia: a gathered assembly).

D. There Three Crises to deal with.

1. Martyrdom of Stephen & resulting persecution. (Acts 7:60)

a. From now on the Jews openly opposed Christians

2. Caligula: emperor AD 37-41 (assassinated). Temple statue!

3. After the death of James Acts is silent on the events in Jerusalem. (Acts 12:2)



2. EXPANDING CHURCH (AD 41-54)

A. From Peter's escape (Acts 12) to the assassination of Claudius (AD 54).

B. Period of *pax Romana* - church has its biggest growth & greatest expansion

C. The Gentile mission call (Acts 16:6-10 is the Macedonian Call).

D. Three Expansion Evidences during Claudius' time:

1. edict to Alexandria (city) which forbade any foreign Jews from entering it (AD 46-47).



2. Nazareth inscription - forbade the robbing of tombs

3. Claudius' edict banning Jews from Rome (AD 49), due to tumult over "Chrestus" (Seutonius wrote)

3. ENDANGERED CHURCH (AD 54-70)

A. Persecution & war in the Empire.

1. Time: from Nero's accession as Caesar to the fall of Jerusalem.

2. Period of social ostracism & increasing persecution.

B. Three Dangers to the Church

1. Angry, unbelieving Jews



2. For the first time: from the Roman state (under Nero)

3. False teachers in the church

C. “Christians Under Fire” (Ben Witherington III) describes Christians in the mid-to-late 60s.

1. Anti-Semites linked Christianity with Judaism, persecuting both

2. Romans now saw Christianity as a new, upstart religion

3. Romans considered Christians & Jews unsocial & unfriendly

4. Romans considered Christians & Jews atheistic



D. Disintegration under Nero (AD 60-68)

1. AD 64 - 1st open persecution of Christians

a. limited to Rome & its environs.

b. Christians blamed for the great Jewish fire (in Circus Maximus), burning most of Rome

2. After AD 64 the persecutions were scattered.

3. Nero committed suicide.

E. First Jewish Revolt (AD 66-73)

1. Hard times, yet 75% of the NT was written then.



2. AD 66-70 - siege & fall of Jerus.

a. Vespasian began the military campaign. 1st fought Josephus

b. Left Titus in charge, who razed the Temple; killed 500 K Jews.

3. 2-year siege at Masada. In AD 73 they committed suicide.

4. EVOLVING CHURCH (AD 70-135)

A. From Flavian dynasty (Vespasian, Titus, Domitian) to the end of the 2nd Jewish Revolt.

1. Simon bar Cochba claimed to be the Messiah. He led this revolt.
(guerilla warfare)

2. Hadrian ended the revolt



B. under Domitian was the 2nd worst persecution of Christians to date

1. 1st Roman emp. to claim title: *dominus et deus* (“Lord & God”)

C. Three Major Changes:

1. The final break occurred between the church & synagogue

2. The church desired to canonize their sacred writings.

3. The church grew in its organized structure. 2 offices or functions:

a. bishop = elder = presbyter = overseer = pastor = shepherd

b. deacon - the other office