The First Century
History: The Early Church
September 15, 2021

"But when the fullness of time had come,
God sent forth his Son, born of woman."
Galatians 4:4

Theme: Six Highlights of the First Century of Church History

The Fullness of Time
After centuries of waiting for the Messiah, at least three historical circumstances marked the arrival of "the fullness of time" (Gal. 4:4):

1. The Fullness of Time Came **Politically**

- **Instability** of the **Intertestamental Period**

- **Stability** of the ***Pax Romana***

2. The Fullness of Time Came **Culturally**

- A Common **Language**: *Koine Greek*

- Common **Culture**: *Hellenism*

3.The Fullness of Time Came **Religiously**

- The Rise of **Messianic Hope**

- The Rise of **Parties in Palestinian Judaism**
  - **Sadducees**: *Elitists*
  - **Pharisees**: *Separatists*
  - **Zealots**: *Revolutionaries*
  - **Essenes**: *Isolationists*

- The Rise of **Diaspora Judaism**
  - Creation of **Synagogues**
  - Publication of **Greek OT**: *Septuagint (LXX)*

The Coming of Christ
Four miraculous events in the early first century concerning Jesus of Nazareth serve as the hinge of all history:

1. Miraculous **Foretelling**

2. Miraculous **Incarnation**

3. Miraculous **Ministry**

4. Miraculous **Death, Resurrection, and Ascension**

The Birth of the Church
As detailed in Acts and the New Testament Epistles, the early church was born at Pentecost and quickly distinguished itself from Judaism with distinctive habits:

1. Early Church **Beginnings**

    - **Pentecost** (Acts 2)

2. Early Church **Worship**

    - Initially in **Homes** (Acts 2:46; 16:40)

- On **Sundays** (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2)

- Included **Singing** (Eph. 5:19)

- Included **Preaching** (Acts 20:7, 2 Tim. 4:2-4; Titus 1:9)

- Included the **Ordinances** (1 Cor. 11:24-25)

3. Early Church **Leadership**
    - The Office of **Apostle** (Luke 6:13)

    - The Office of **Deacon** (Acts 6)

    - The Office of **Pastor/Elder/Overseer** (Acts 14; 20)

The Spread of the Gospel
Five factors contributed to the rapid spread of the gospel throughout the Roman Empire and beyond:

1. The **Mission** of the **Apostles**

2. The **Conviction** of the **Church**

3. The **Transformation** of **Believers**

4. The **Offer** of the **Gospel**

5. The **Martyrdom** of **Christians**

The Rise of Persecution
The otherwise tolerant Roman Empire quickly grew intolerant to Christianity for at least three reasons:

1. Romans Intolerant of Christian **Morality**
    - Christians Rejected **Roman Infanticide**
    - Christians Rejected **Roman Slavery**
    - Christians Rejected **Roman Misogyny**
    - Christians Rejected **Roman Games**
    - Christians Rejected **Roman Sexual Immorality**

2. Romans Intolerant of Christian's **Exclusive Gospel**

    - Christians Rejected **Emperor Worship**

    - Christians Rejected **Pagan Worship**

3. Romans Intolerant of Christian **Worship**

    - **Lord's Supper** Slandered as **Cannibalism**

    - **Christianity** Slandered as **Atheism**

The Split from Judaism
Two emerging differences between Judaism and Christianity throughout the first century led to a decisive split:

1. **Theological Differences:** *The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15)*

2. **Political Differences**: *The First Jewish Revolt and Fall of Jerusalem*