The First Century
History: The Early Church

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

Theme: Five Highlights of the First Century

1. **The Fullness of Time**
   At least three historical circumstances in the first century ushered in the "fullness of time."

   - The "Fullness of Time" Came _____

     - **Previous Instability** in the Promised Land: *Occupations*

     - **Present Stability** in the Promised Land: *Pax Romana*

   - The "Fullness of Time" Came _____

     - The Rise of a Common **Language:** *Koine Greek*

     - The Rise of a Common **Culture:** *Hellenism*

- The "Fullness of Time" Came _____
  - The Rise of Jewish **Messianic Hope**: *Roman Occupation*
  - The Rise of Jewish **Dispersion**: *Diaspora Judaism*
  - The Rise of Jewish **Division**: *Palestinian Judaism Parties*
    - The **Sadducees**: *Elitists*
    - The **Pharisees**: *Separatists*
    - The **Zealots**: *Revolutionaries*
    - The **Essenes**: *Isolationists*

2. The Coming of Christ

Four miraculous events of the first century serve as the hinge of all history:

- The Miraculous _____ **of Christ**
  - **Matthew 1:23**, *"'Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel' (which means, God with us)."*

- The Miraculous _____ **of Christ**
  - **Mark 1:34,** *"And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons."*

- The Miraculous _____ **of Christ**
  - **Matthew 27:51-53,** "*And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many."*

- The Miraculous _____ **of Christ**
  - **Acts 3:15**, *"You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead."*

3. The Birth of the Church

The Christian Church was born at Pentecost (Acts 2) and quickly distinguished itself from Judaism with distinctive habits:

- The Birth of Distinctive _____
  - In **Homes** (Acts 2:46; 16:40)
  - On **Sundays** (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2)
  - With **Singing** (Eph. 5:19)
  - With **Preaching** (Acts 20:7; 2 Tim. 4:2-4; Titus 1:9)
  - With **the Ordinances** (1 Cor. 11:24-25)

- The Birth of Distinctive _____
  - The Short-Term Role of **Apostles** (Luke 6:13)
  - The Long-Term Role of **Pastors** (Acts 14; 20)
  - The Long-Term Role of **Deacons** (Acts 6)

4. The Spread of the Gospel

Five factors contributed to the rapid spread of the gospel throughout the Roman Empire:

- **Christianity Is** _____
  Acts 1:8, *"You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

- **Christianity Is _____**
  - **Acts 4:20,** *"...we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard."*

- **Christianity Is _____**
  - **Julian the Apostate,** *"Atheism [Christianity] has been specifically advanced through the loving treatment rendered to strangers and through their care to the burial of the dead. It's a scandal that they take better care of their own than we do."*

- **Christianity Is _____**
  - **Celsus,** *"[Christians] manifestly show that they desire and are able to gain over only the silly, and the mean, and the stupid, and the women and children."*

- **Christianity Is _____**
  - **Polycarp,** *"Eighty-six years have I served him, and he has never done my injury; how then can I blaspheme my King and Savior?...You threaten me with fire which burns for an hour, and is then extinguished, but you know nothing of the fire of the coming judgment and eternal punishment, reserved for the ungodly. Why are you waiting? Bring on whatever you want."*

5. **The Rise of Persecution**
   The otherwise tolerant Roman Empire quickly grew intolerant of Christianity for at least two reasons:

   - The Romans Grew Intolerant of Christian _____
     - Christians Rejected Roman **Infanticide**
     - Christians Rejected Roman **Slavery**
     - Christians Rejected Roman **Misogyny**
     - Christians Rejected Roman **Games**
     - Christians Rejected Roman **Sexuality**

   - The Romans Grew Intolerant of Christian _____
     - Christians Rejected **Emperor Worship**
     - Christians Rejected **Pagan Worship**

Answer Key:
- The "Fullness of Time" Came **Politically**
- The "Fullness of Time" Came **Culturally**
- The "Fullness of Time" Came **Religiously**
- The Miraculous **Birth** of Christ
- The Miraculous **Ministry** of Christ
- The Miraculous **Death** of Christ
- The Miraculous **Resurrection** of Christ
- The Birth of Distinctive **Worship**
- The Birth of Distinctive **Leadership**
- Christianity is **Compelling**
- Christianity is **Convicting**
- Christianity is **Converting**
- Christianity is **Comprehensible**
- Christianity Is **Costly**
- The Romans Grew Intolerant of Christian **Morality**
- The Romans Grew Intolerant of Christian **Worship**