

Snapshot of AD 100 & Apostolic Fathers

A.D. 100-140

Introduction

- This lesson is a snapshot of AD 100.
 - Snapshots show change.
 - Other lessons were like video – show movement.
- We will do two snapshots in this course.
 - In 100.
 - In 325.
- It will help us to see the difference between the early apostolic church and what came later.
 - Sources are mainly the NT.
- We will also take a quick look at the Apostolic Fathers.



Snapshots Make Change Obvious!



What the Church was Called

- By AD 100, the most common name was Ekklesia.
 - Appears 114 times in NT. Two broad uses – secular assembly or Christian assembly. 109 times it is used in Christian sense.
 - There are two usages in Christian sense – local assemblies or the church in general. 95 times refers to local churches and 14 times refers to “the whole church.”
 - Example of the general/universal sense is Matt 16:18 – I will build my church,” or Ephesians 5’s church as a bride.
- The names commonly used today were not used then.
 - RCC, EO, Lutheran, Baptist, etc. are not in the Bible.
 - Church of God, Church of Christ, & Christian Church are grammatical descriptors. They are not used as titles.
 - Certain churches use this to say they are the only true Christians and only their name is legitimate.
- The Bible gives no official title to the church. Can’t go wrong with “body of Christ.”
 - Descriptions used are the Way, Bride, Body, Church, Building, Believers.

Church Membership

- In AD 100, there were 3 relationships necessary to be part of the church.
- The first and most important is a relationship with Christ.
 - As Lord, He must be your Lord. It is an inner relationship that makes us adopted sons to the Father – Rom 8:14-17.
 - This relationship is not visible other than through baptism.
 - You will not see my relationship with Christ externally, but you will see the RESULTS externally by my works.
- The second relationship is with other believers.
 - Responsibility to meet together in fellowship and build each other up. Not an option, but obligation – Hebrews 10:24-25. Even though NT doesn't call it membership, this is what it is.
 - Church attendance is assumed by NT writers – excommunication, letter greetings, etc.
- The third relationship is us ministering to the world.
 - We have an obligation to preach the gospel and influence spouses, children, neighbors, employers, and all lost people they knew.
 - To be viewed as a Christian, even this third one was necessary.

Church Government

- It was not complicated in AD 100. There were two types of leaders – Elders and Deacons
 - Those chosen by God; those chosen by men.
- Those chosen by God are spoken of in Eph 4:11.
 - These men get an inward call by Holy Spirit. Today this only applies to pastors/bishops/elders.
 - Not decided by HS counselor, but God lays it heavy on heart.
 - If God did lay it on the heart, the Holy Spirit gifts him for the job. In Acts 13:2 the Holy Spirit chose Paul and Barnabas.
 - Also, as a confirmation, the church also recognizes this calling in the person. This is the outward call of the church. In Acts 13, the church laid hands on Paul and Barnabas.



Church Leaders

- By AD 100, there were no more Apostles. This left only the pastor/teacher, and possibly prophets.
- 1 Tim 3 and Titus 1 standards applied in AD 100.
 - They also were called bishops and elders.
- All three terms are Biblical and they were interchangeably used of the one office.
 - More than just titles, they were descriptive of what the person does.
 - Bishop, (ἐπίσκοπος) = administration ; elder (πρεσβύτερος) = spiritual maturity ; pastor/teacher (ποιμαίνω) = shepherding in teaching.
- Later on, the church will separate the titles into different offices and created a hierarchy.
- Acts 20:17,28 make it clear they are interchangeable of one office.
 - Acts 20:17: Now from Miletus, he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders (πρεσβύτερος) of the church.
 - Acts 20:28: Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among whom the Holy Spirit has appointed you as overseers (ἐπίσκοπος), to shepherd (ποιμαίνω) the church of God, which He purchased with His own blood.

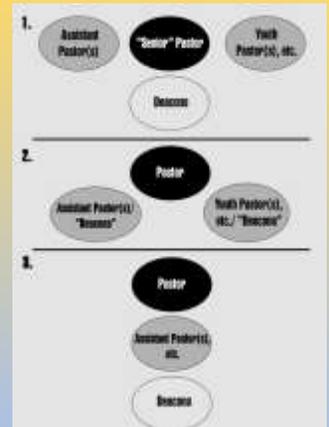
Chosen Church Leaders

- Deacons are appointed by the church itself.
- A distinction can be made between leaders chosen by God, and "servants" chosen by the church.
- The servants were the "deacons." Acts 6 showed basis of their selection.
 - Ministry got too big for leaders, they asked the church to appoint 7 servants for specific tasks, and the leaders then laid hands on them.
 - 1 Tim 3 shows deacons must meet the same qualifications of elders.
 - There is no indication that deacons are selected by the Holy Spirit, but instead are selected by the church.
- It is up to each local church as to whether or not they have deacons.
- Prior to Acts 6, the church had no deacons because there was no need. Elders were there from the beginning (1 Pet 5:1)
- Small churches sometimes do not need them if pastors can handle all tasks without neglecting the Word and prayer.

**WHAT DOES
THE BIBLE
SAY ABOUT
PASTORS
AND
DEACONS?**

Pastors and Deacons

- Putting it all together – there was no hierarchy by AD 100. There was no ranking of believers.
 - The structure of the medieval church was unknown in AD 100.
 - Being a pastor was burden with more responsibilities, a stricter judgment, and no riches. It lacked the pomp of later times.
- There is no evidence for apostolic succession existing in AD 100.
- Clement of Rome around AD 96 writes of no hierarchy. It is the same with Polycarp after 100.
- Some appeal to Ignatius around 110 – bishop, elders, and deacons.
- But as we saw, Acts 20 makes elders and bishops the same.



Church Ordinances

- In AD 100, the church only practiced 2 ordinances – baptism and Lord's Supper.
- What is an ordinance? The word is not found in NT, but it is a good word that describes them.
 - Some attempt to use sacrament, but its definition does not match NT description. Sacrament also is not in NT.
 - An ordinance is something ordained by God for Christians to do.
- For something to be a church ordinance it had to first be commanded by Christ, and second it had to be practiced by NT church.
 - Jesus commanded Lord's Supper before His arrest and baptism after His resurrection.
 - Some try to claim foot washing is an ordinance too, but it's never found in Acts or the Epistles. We do see baptism and Lord's Supper.
 - Baptism and Lord's Supper present the gospel, foot washing does not.

Ordinances: How?

- Three simple questions help: who, how, and why?
- Who should be baptized? Acts and Epistles make it clear that only believers get baptized.
 - There are no clear examples of a non-faith-professing person being baptized in NT. It is never passively done on a person who does not believe – rules out infant baptism.
 - Infant baptism was not practiced in 1st century, or early 2nd (no evidence exists to say otherwise).
 - Belief was the condition placed on the Ethiopian (Acts 8:36-37).
 - Households being baptized is not a good argument. In Acts 16, it does not say how many kids, how old, or the total number of the jailor's household. People assume infants are there. The text does not comply (Acts 16:30-34).
- How (what method) was it done? The word means immersion. Sprinkling came later.



Baptism

- It was the first step for the believer.
- The NT has no such concept of unbaptized Christians. People immediately were baptized after belief.
 - No baptism classes or instruction (not necessarily wrong).
 - Once a person became a church member, they were able to fellowship, receive doctrinal instruction, and partake of the other ordinance, Communion.
- Sacramentalists believe baptism bestows grace (forgiveness) and is necessary for salvation.
- Evangelicals see it as believers baptism. The NT teaches we are saved by grace through faith.
 - Indwelling of the Holy Spirit occurs prior to baptism (Eph 1:13). The sacramental view stems from a misreading of Acts 2:38.



The Lord's Supper

- Same three questions apply – who, how, and why?
- Only a disciple should partake of the Lord's Supper.
 - 1 Cor 11 promises judgment to those who partake in an unworthy manner. A person still in their sins cannot proclaim Christ's death for them.
- The method (how) depended its relation to Passover.
 - Christ used unleavened bread and fermented wine at Passover when it was instituted.
 - The symbolism in the 3rd Cup: no leaven, afikomen, redemption wine, etc., all indicate the symbolism was meant to be retained.
 - The early church did it every week. In fact, this was the practice until the Reformation. The earliest church may have done something with it every day.



Was the Lord's Supper seen as His body and blood?

- Sacramentalists believe that the elements of communion really become the flesh and blood.
 - This is unknown to the church of AD 100.
- Sacramentalists appeal to John 6.
 - John 6:63 rules this out.
- Most evangelicals see it as a memorial. So did the church in AD 100. In fact, 1 Cor 11: 24-25 says we do it in remembrance.
 - We do it to remember, hence a memorial.
 - But it is more than a memorial too, because it is participation in Christ and one another (1 Cor 10:16-18). Like baptism it is participation and union with Christ and each other.
- What about, "This is my body?" Jesus also said the following:
 - I am the door; I am the light ; I am the Way – Is he wood, or a torch, or a road made from stone?



Church Worship Service

- All indicators in AD 100 show that worship was simple rather than complex.
- They had preaching, meeting days (Acts 20:7), and meeting places (Acts 2:46).
 - At their meetings, they sang (Col 3:16), preached (2 Tim 4:1-5), read the Scriptures (1 Tim 4:13), observed the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:17-31), and fellowshiped (Acts 2:42). They also took offerings (1 Cor 16:2).
- It was not ornate, there was not the stately robes and pomp luxury.
- Central to the church meeting was kerygma, which is the word for preaching, but it is more than just preaching, but included the gospel presentation.
 - It had to preach the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ – Christians need to hear it often.
 - Preaching doctrine is good, but if it lacks a gospel presentation, it is not kerygma. Peter's sermon at Pentecost was kerygma.
- Where did they meet? Early it was in the Temple, synagogues, and homes.
 - The Temple was destroyed and Christians expelled from the Synagogue before AD 100. So they met in homes.
- They met on Sundays (and throughout the week). Rev 1:10.

Apostolic Fathers

- This is the period in Church history immediately after the death of the Apostles.
- We call the writings that first came after the NT the Apostolic Fathers.
 - The term was coined in the 17th century, and it was believed these writers personally knew the apostles. In reality, only a few of them probably actually knew them personally.
 - It is important to understand the distinction between the Church Fathers and the Apostolic Fathers.
 - The former refers to the writings from the mid 2nd century up through the 6th. The latter refers only to the first generation of church fathers. Their writings stretch from AD 95-140.



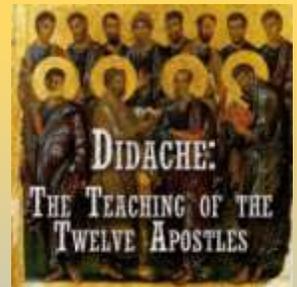
The Main Men & Writings

- Clement of Rome.
 - He wrote a letter to the Corinthian Church in AD 96 to settle a dispute.
 - The younger generation defrocked its presbyters, and Clement used Scripture to argue that they should restore those leaders. The Father sent Christ, Christ sent the Apostles, the Apostles appointed presbyters/bishops and deacons, and these folks should then appoint their successors.
- Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch.
 - He was arrested as a Christian and taken to Rome by a military escort where he was executed in AD 110. On the way there, he wrote seven letters—six to churches and one personal to Polycarp.
 - In the letters, he emphasized local church unity centered around a single bishop as the ruler of the church. He was the first to argue presbyters and bishops are different offices.
 - He argued each church will have multiple presbyters, but they all work for one bishop who literally runs the church. This was the beginning of hierarchy in the church.



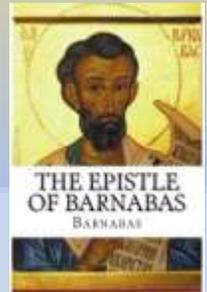
The Main Men & Writings

- The Didache.
 - Written from Syria around AD 100, it is the oldest surviving handbook of church practices. It purports to be a summary of the teachings of the 12 Apostles for Gentile congregations.
 - It has two parts: Part 1 is all doctrine, contrasting the Way of Life with the Way of Death; Part 2 offers detailed instructions about baptism, prayer, fasting, the Lord's Supper, church leadership, and how to handle visiting prophets.
- Papias of Hierapolis in Phrygia, Asia Minor.
 - His fragments date from AD 110-130. He tries to preserve oral traditions about Christ that were not in the Gospels. He claimed to receive them from Jewish Christians dispersed from Jerusalem after its destruction.
 - Many of the sayings were strange, and the church rightly dismissed them.



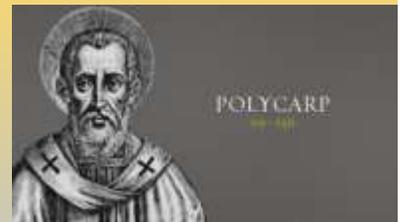
The Main Men & Writings

- The Epistle of Barnabas.
 - It is a pseudepigraphal work that claims to be from Barnabas. It was written around AD 120. It claims to offer a Christian way to read the OT. It is likely from Alexandria (home of allegory).
 - It is very anti-Jewish, claiming the Jews were ignorant and rejected and replaced as God's people.
 - His attitude morphed into a church-wide animus toward Jews. They were seen as Christ killers and were now turned over to be a lost and blind people.
- The Shepherd of Hermas (AD 100-140).
 - Written in Rome by a Christian prophet named Hermas. He claimed to receive revelations from two heavenly figures: an old woman and an angel dressed like a shepherd.
 - He focused on Christian moral purity and asked and answered the question of whether one can be forgiven of serious sins after baptism. He said it could be forgiven only once.



The Main Men & Writings

- Polycarp of Smyrna (AD 70-160).
 - He wrote an epistle to the Philippian church around AD 110. He becomes one of the most famous early martyrs.
 - His letter is a goldmine for showing what mainline Christianity was like around AD 110. It quotes the NT very often.
 - He battles against the heresy of Docetism.
 - Unlike his contemporary, Ignatius, he sees no difference in bishops and presbyters.
- Letter to Diognetus (AD 100-150).
 - We don't know who wrote it, and we don't know who Diognetus is.
 - It was written to show how both Paganism and Judaism are false. It makes an argument for the superiority of Christianity.
 - It is well written by the standards of the time.



Snapshot 150

- When we put together the data from the aforementioned sources, there was some change and development from the Apostolic Era to the first generation after them.
 - This shows that change happens quickly.
- The apostolic age was one of expansion, and so the age of apostolic fathers was one of consolidation and preserving the Apostles' teaching.
- Church Government.
 - Paul's twofold structure of elders/overseers and deacons now was opened to Ignatius' threefold structure of bishop, elders, and deacons.
 - The bishop is meant to fill the vacuum left by the apostles. No Lord's Supper or Baptism could be done in his absence. He could delegate to elders. Obedience to him was absolute.
 - Ignatius' model was not accepted everywhere. The Didache warns against looking down on your elders in favor of traveling apostles or prophets.
 - Likewise, Clement used bishop and elder interchangeable, reflecting the twofold structure.
 - Around AD 180, Ignatius's threefold model was standard everywhere. Bishops, however, were not seen as having equal status to the original apostles.

Threefold Church Government

- There are theories as to how the change from two to three occurred.
- The best one is as follows:
 - The presbyters were a counsel of equals, but it was common for a first among equals. This was based on the Jewish synagogue where a body of elders was led by one senior elder called the president or ruler of the synagogue.
 - Though bishop and elder were originally used interchangeably, eventually the title bishop was reserved for only the first among equals. This position and status gradually increased in importance over the course of the 2nd century.
 - Once bishops were their own class, only bishops could ordain bishops, and so ordination came from outside the local church, which laid the foundations of the later idea of apostolic succession.
 - In contrast, presbyters were elected from within the church.
 - The 4th century Church Father Jerome argues for this very process in his letter to Evangelus.

Church Worship

- A very early pagan description comes from Pliny when he wrote to Emperor Trajan in AD 112.
 - Met on a fixed day before dawn; sang responsive hymns to Christ as God; were exhorted to moral living (no fraud, theft, adultery, lying, etc.); they would then come back later in the day to take the Lord's Supper, which he describes as ordinary food.
- In the latter part of the 2nd Century, Justin Martyr in *First Apology* describes a more formal set-up.
 - Met on Sunday; read the OT Prophets and NT Apostles for as long as time will permit; president then preaches a sermon; while congregation stands up for prayers; then they distribute the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper held an extremely high place in each worship service.
 - It is interesting that singing was not even mentioned by Justin in his description, though he mentions it elsewhere. Other sources show that Christian singing was without instruments and was responsive chanting of a Psalm, or poetic parts of the NT.

Church Worship

- The posture of worship was always standing. In fact, only the preacher sat.
 - If people were tired, they could sit against the wall, but had to rise for prayers. This was the common from the earliest times until the 1300s when pews were introduced.
- Based on early 3rd century writings, we can ascertain practices of the late 2nd century.
 - It was simple, but fixed in two parts. The first part was the "Service of the Word," and it was open to all. It contained singing, reading of biblical text, and the sermon.
 - The second part was the "Prayers and Eucharist." All non-baptized people were dismissed. Many topics were prayed about silently by the congregation, and then vocally by the bishop. For communion, each member brought a loaf and flask of wine. Deacons put it all on a table, it is prayed over by the bishop, then distributed. Leftovers were taken home and used to celebrate it at home throughout the week.

Church Worship

- Worship services in the era of the Apostolic Fathers probably lies somewhere between the simple NT descriptions and the more fixed form seen in the late 2nd century.
- It also seems as if the agape feast was gone by the late 2nd century.
- The change that took place from end of Apostolic Era to the end of the Apostolic Fathers era shows how fast things develop.
 - That being said, church practice in AD 140 was not radically different than what it was in the AD 100 snapshot.
- We will do a snapshot again for AD 325. The changes will be huge and obvious.



Conclusion

- By AD 100 the church was simple in terms of names, government, ordinances, and worship.
 - It was a little more developed by AD 140, but still simple.
- By AD 325 it will be far different, so remember what you can from this lesson.