



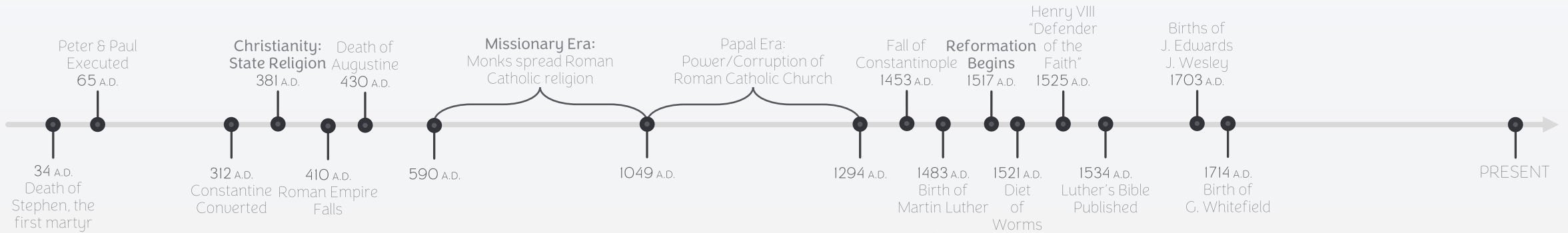
CHURCH HISTORY

Early Persecution, Church Growth and
Denominationalism, and Christian Revivals

Presentation by
Chino Eze



Basic Timeline of Church History





PART 1

The death of Stephen, the first martyr (34 AD), to the cessation of Christian persecution (314 AD).



PART 2

The end of Christian persecution (314 AD) to the period of Reformation (1517 AD).



PART 3

The Reformation (1517 AD) to Present.

Parts of the Study

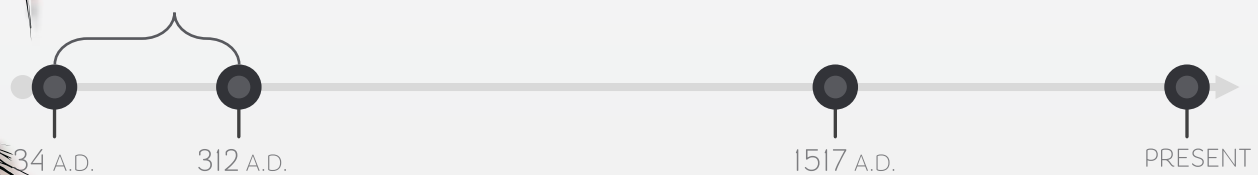
Church History will be divided into 3 main parts for better understanding.

- Persecution of the Early Church
- Church Growth and Denominationalism
- Revivals Across the World



Part 1

PERSECUTION OF THE EARLY CHURCH



CONTENT

Under Part 1, “Persecution of the Early Church”, the following topics will be discussed.

1. What is Church History?

- Meaning of “Church” in Church History

2. Christianity in the Roman Empire

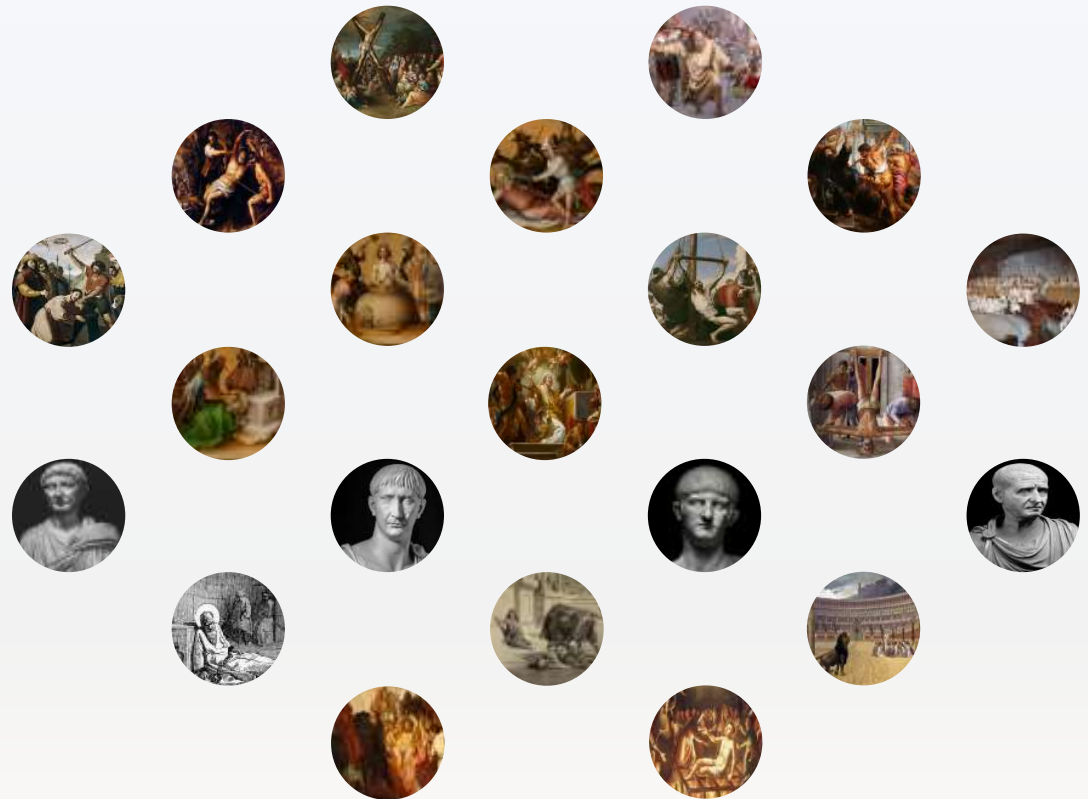
- Judaism vs. Christianity

3. Governing Structure of the Roman Empire

- Principate & Dominate
- Persecution under the Principate Structure
- Persecution under the Dominate Structure

4. Notable Martyrs of the Early Church.

- Martyrdom of the Apostles
- Polycarp—the Bishop of Smyrna
- The Passion of Saints—Perpetua & Felicity
- Honourable Mentions



PART 1a – What is Church History?

Meaning of “Church” in Church History

- What the Church is not:
 - It is not a building or a man-made structure.
 - It is not a denomination.
- The word translated “church” in the Bible is *ekklesia* (which means “the called-out ones”). However, the word (*kuriakon*) from which the English word “church” comes from means “dedicated to the Lord”.
- So, the Church refers to those that (through the salvation experience) have been **called out of the world** and (by sanctification and the seal of the Holy Spirit) are **dedicated to God**.
- The church existed as far back as the period of Israel’s exodus from Egypt:
 - “This is he, that was in the **church in the wilderness** with the angel which spake unto him in the mount Sinai, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us:” (Acts 7:38)
- It is the universal congregation of members of the body of Christ.
- Thus, Church History is the record of significant events that took place with relation to the Church.

PART 1b – Christianity in the Roman Empire

Judaism vs. Christianity

JUDAISM

- By the time of Christ, the Jews made up 8-10% (a substantial presence) of the Roman Population.
- *Tense relationship with Rome.* Although by Roman virtues, Rome respected the Jews for their resilience and ancient traditions.
- *Incredibly intellectual.* They made up a third of Alexandria, a city which was regarded as the intellectual capital of the world.

CHRISTIANITY

- In contrast, Christianity only kicks off after the death of Christ.
- Christians, on the other hand, were pacifists. So, to Romans (who spoke language of power), Christians were new and strange.
- Christianity was borne on the backs of those who were regarded as unlearned and classically untrained men.

PART 1c – Governing Structure of the Roman Empire

Principate & Dominate

- The persecution of Christians varied based on the type of government existing in the Roman Empire.
- Historians divide the type of governing structure during the period of the Roman Empire between two major categories:
 - The Principate – 31 BC to 284 AD
 - The Dominate – 284 AD to 476 AD



THE PRINCIPATE

- From the time of Julius Caesar.
- The Emperor ruled but was regarded *the first among equals*.
- Emperors weren't full autocrats and needed the support of the senate.
- Thus, Emperors were more focused on global politics.

THE DOMINATE

- From Augustus Octavius, Emperors became increasingly autocratic.
- The Emperor no longer engaged with the senatorial class.
- Emperors started being referred to as *dominus* (lord), having **no equals**.

Persecution under the Principate Structure

31 BC - 284 AD

- During the Principate period of the Roman Empire, Christianity was very much a minority religion, so there wasn't much interest cast on it.
- Christians did not rebel or turn to violence when persecuted or marginalized in the society.
- Therefore, the Roman government didn't see Christians or Christianity as a sufficient threat to launch widescale persecution against the movement.
- Under the Principate government, there wasn't widespread persecution of Christians.
- Rather, Christian persecution at that time could be described as *sporadic* and *local*.
 - At times, only a handful would be persecuted not thousands and thousands as we are led to believe.
 - There weren't attempts wipe out Christians during this period.
- Christians were treated as scapegoats for any calamity that befell the Empire.

- The Dominate began as a pagan entity, but with the conversion of Emperor Constantine to Christianity, and ascension to power (312 AD), the Dominate became Christian.
- The worst persecution of Christians occurred during the Dominate.
- In most cases, the Emperor came from the army, which was a bastion of traditional paganism.
 - Thus, the leaders that emerged from the army didn't take denial of the role of the gods lightly.
- It is under the Dominate period that there was the most systemic and widespread persecution against Christians.

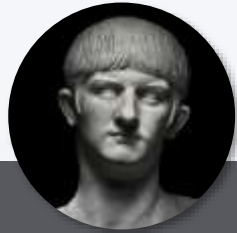
Persecution under the Dominate Structure

284 - 476 AD

Roman Emperors – Notorious Persecutors of Christians



NERO



54 - 68 AD

- Domitius Nero, the fifth Emperor.
- Sporadic persecutions in Rome.
- Responsible for the burning of Rome (blamed Christians).
- Committed suicide.

TRAJAN



98 - 117 AD

- Provincial persecution of Christians.
- Suggested the suspects be put on trial and executed if found out to be Christians.
- Persecution wasn't yet empire-wide

DECIUS



249 - 251 AD

- Launched the first truly empire-wide persecution.
- Christians forced into hiding.
- First emperor to die in combat against the Goths in modern-day Bulgaria.

DIOCLETIAN



300 - 310 AD

- The most complete and calculated persecutor (targeted pastors, burnt churches and destroyed Bibles).
- As a result, no complete manuscript of the Bible predates his time.

PART 1d – Notable Martyrs of the Early Church

Martyrdom of the Apostles



James (*brother of John*) – **36 AD**

[Beheaded]

His accuser, moved by the verdict, was converted and beheaded alongside James.



Andrew – **60 AD**

[Crucified]

He was crucified on an x-shaped cross in the city of Patras in Achaea (Greece).



Simon (*the Zealot*) – **61 AD**

[Crucified]

Simon was martyred during his missionary journey in Persia.



Paul (*Saul*) – **64/65 AD**

[Beheaded]

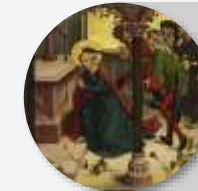
Paul was beheaded under the reign of Emperor Domitian Nero.



Peter – between **64 & 68 AD**

[Crucified]

Requested to be crucified upside down because he felt unworthy to die like his Lord.



Jude (*Thaddeus*) – **65 AD**

[Clubbed]

He suffered martyrdom in Beirut. He was clubbed to death, his head shattered with a broad axe.



Bartholomew – **69/71 AD**

[Speared]

Beaten with staves, crucified, excoriated (tear or wear off the skin) and beheaded.



Thomas – **72 AD**

[Speared]

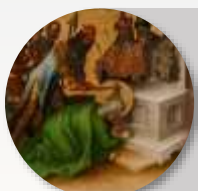
He was killed with a dart in India (on the 21st of December).



Philip – **80 AD**

[Stoned]

He was crucified and then stoned to death.



Matthias – **80 AD**

[Stoned]

He was stoned at Jerusalem and died at Sebastopolis.



John (*the beloved*) – **99 AD**

[Old Age]

He was thrown into a vat of boiling oil and after a miraculous escape, exiled to Patmos. He died at Ephesus.



Matthew (*Levi*) – **1st Century AD**

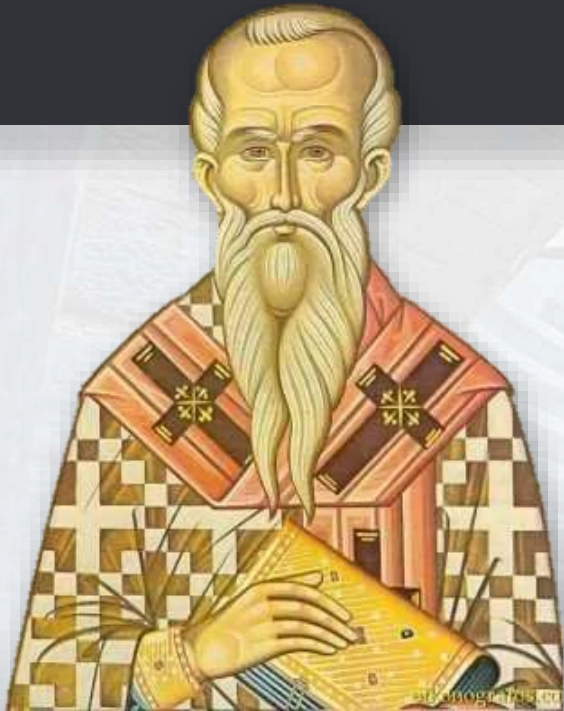
[Impaled]

He was impaled by spears in Ethiopia.

Polycarp—The Bishop of Smyrna

155 AD

"Eighty and six years have I served *Christ*, and he never once wronged me; how then shall blaspheme my King, Who hath saved me?" (Polycarp)



LIFE

- **Polycarp was the Bishop of Smyrna (modern-day Turkey).**
 - He was a disciple of Apostle John and an ordained presbyter of Smyrna.
 - He was an elder of an important congregation that contributed to the founding of the Christian Church.
- **As an essential link to the first apostles, he was invaluable in authenticating practices consistent with the apostles' doctrine.**
 - Known as a fighter for orthodoxy (adherence to accepted creeds).
 - Instrumental in the conversion of many Gnostics (believers in the doctrine that the world was created by lesser divinity, the demiurge).

MARTYRDOM

- **Polycarp was burnt alive and eventually gutted to death with a sword.**
 - He was calm and refused to flee even when he knew his life was in danger.
 - It is reported that he requested for an hour of prayer before his arrest.
 - Having received a vision about his death (3 days earlier), he asked not to be nailed to the burning post; that God would give him strength to endure the fire.

The Passion of Saints—Perpetua & Felicity

March 7, 203 AD

“...I cannot be called anything other than what I am, a Christian.” (Perpetua)

“Another will be within me, who will suffer on my behalf, seeing that it is for Him that I am to suffer.” (Felicitas)

LIFE

- Perpetua (a young noblewoman) and her slave (Felicity) were martyred for their faith in 203 AD, under Emperor Severus.
 - Perpetua lived in the prosperous city of Carthage (modern-day Tunisia).
 - She was converted along with two of her slaves (Felicity and Revocatus).
 - At the time of their arrest and imprisonment, Felicity was pregnant.
 - Out of love and devotion, Saturus requested the authorities that he'd be allowed to join his disciples in their fate.

MARTYRDOM

- In celebration of his son's birthday, Emperor Severus organizes “games” where Perpetua and her companions would be executed.
 - The believers pray for Felicity to deliver her baby before the day of their execution.
 - Perpetua is blessed with a vision before her death in the arena.
 - Through the vision, she believes that she would be confronting the devil in the arena and not wild beasts, however, she would be victorious.



Conclusion – Honourable Mentions



“And what shall I more say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah, of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets:

Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouth of lions,

...Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were **tortured**, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:

And others had **trials of cruel mockings and scourgings**, yea, moreover of **bonds and imprisonments**:

They were **stoned**, they were **sawn asunder**, were tempted, were **slain with the sword**: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; **being destitute, afflicted, tormented**;

(Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:

God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.”

“Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,”

HEBREWS
ch. 11:32 to ch. 12:1

Blandina



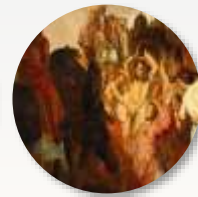
Sanctus



Alban



Romanus



Ignatius





Stay Tuned for Part 2

