



SESSION 4: SIEGE OF JERUSALEM TO ST. IGNATIUS – CONTENT

1. Around 66AD Philo described a Christian ascetic community South of Alexandria. Although there were both men and women there, it shows that sacrifice of secular life was important. Within a century, this importance gave rise to monasticism, which first appeared in Egypt.
2. To recap the Siege of Jerusalem: Titus' Roman legions killed 1,100,000 Jews, sold 90,000 under the age of 17 into slavery, and sent the remaining over 17 in irons to hard labor in Egypt. He renamed Judea as "Palestina" and abolished the Sanhedrin's civil judicial power. (Until then they had, with the governor's approval, the power to execute.)
3. By 70AD the offices of bishop (episkopoi), presbyter (presbyteroi, priest) and deacon (diakonoi, servant) were established in the churches. The service of Divine Liturgy (Sunday, first day of the week) consisted of reading of letters and gospels, followed by the Eucharist. Converts were catechumen for 3 years (ref. Essene practice) and could only attend the first part of Liturgy (i.e. left at "the doors, the doors, let none of the catechumens remain"). Churches were present in every important city, and they began claiming apostolic origin. Bishops sent pieces of holy bread to the outlying churches (i.e. fragmentation) to stress unity.
4. Docetism's early origin is unknown, but it was a way of making Christian teachings more acceptable to pagan concepts of divinity. It said that Jesus' physical body and the crucifixion were illusions, that He was a phantom. Ignatius, Irenaeus and Tertullian wrote against this heresy; it died out in the first millenium.
5. Emperor Domitian, Titus' brother, said that since Jews worshipped an invisible god they were atheists. He expanded the Roman Empire into England and Scotland, rebuilt burned Rome, restored the temple of Jupiter, and gave special homage to the goddess Minerva. Prior to him, emperors had required homage (i.e. worship) to deceased emperors only; he required homage to himself and called himself lord. He persecuted Jews and Christians and confiscated their property.
6. By 90AD gnosticism in its various forms had become the major heretical threat to Christianity. It generally said that only some are capable of understanding the secret teachings about primordial reality, that those elect are spirit-selves from the hidden world of light and knowledge trapped in the material cosmos of darkness and ignorance, but destined to be restored. There are two parallel worlds; good and evil are two kinds of being; the spirit is good and flesh is evil.
7. Emperor Trajan (98-117AD) expanded the Roman Empire beyond the Danube, into Armenia and further through Egypt. He freed many imprisoned and returned confiscated property. Although he instructed others to 'leave Christians alone unless they are openly practicing Christianity', he did persecute Christians. He was know as 'the virtuous pagan' and liked gladiator demonstrations and animals killing criminals and Christians in the Colliseum.

8. Saint Clement (I) of Rome was one of the two most important early Apostolic Fathers. He was a student of the Apostle Peter, who consecrated him as the second bishop of Rome. Around 80AD he wrote one of the earliest surviving documents outside the Scriptures – a letter to the Corinthian Christians urging them to reinstate some priests they had deposed. He said the priests’ authority had been given them by the Apostles; this is the earliest known work affirming Apostolic authority. Clement I was banished by Trajan and sent to work in a stone quarry. As prisoners suffered from a lack of water, Clement prayed and struck the ground. A spring came forth; many prisoners and local people confessed Christ as a result. Because of this Clement was tied to an anchor and thrown into the sea from a boat.
9. By 100AD copies of the gospels and 10-13 Pauline letters were in wide circulation among the Christian churches, and they began to develop creeds (L. ‘credo’ = I believe). One of those early creeds was that of Saint Ignatius (see readings).
10. Ignatius Theophorus (God-bearer) of Antioch was born 30-35AD. Church tradition is that he was the youth described in Matthew 18:1-6. He was a disciple of Saint John, and must have had contact with Peter and Paul. He was called to Rome to account for openly practicing Christianity (during Trajan’s reign) and was martyred there in 107AD. During his journey there he wrote seven letters to churches; their main themes are affirmation of the apostolic institution and Church structure, affirmation of the Christian lifestyle, and his wish to suffer martyrdom for Christ. We shall examine excerpts of his letters that deal with bishops and clergy, Judaism, prayer and forbearance, the Church, the Eucharist, bishops’ duties, and martyrdom, as examples (see readings). Ignatius’ writings are especially important to the development of the concept of **Apostolic succession**.