

# Historical Theology: Pentecost-AD100, Part 3

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May 2, 2021

## INTRODUCTION:

In our first lesson, we charted the spread of the Gospel from Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria and the uttermost parts of the known world. Two weeks ago, we studied the life of the Apostle Paul. Today, I want to touch on the lives and legends of the rest of the Apostles and then discuss three circumstances that greatly affected the church in the latter part of the 1<sup>st</sup> century

## I. THE JOURNEYS OF THE TWELVE

There is little evidence to support any of the movements of the Apostles beyond the book of Acts. We do have church traditions and legends, but while we can't say that these have no basis in fact, we also must acknowledge that churches sought legitimacy as Christianity spread and grew in political importance. One of the ways they proved legitimacy was by claiming an Apostle as the founder of their church. This of course continued through the ages with the idea of patron saints and to this day with the naming of churches after an apostle.

The Apostles probably all stayed in Jerusalem for the first 12 years of the church until the persecution under Herod Agrippa, at which time it is supposed that many of them scattered with the dispersion of the other Christians.

The two apostles we know most about are James and John, the sons of Zebedee.

### A. JAMES

Acts 12:1, 2

### B. JOHN

John was the last of the Apostles to die and the only one to die of natural causes.

John 21:20-23

We lose track of John after Acts 8. He was prominent in the first persecutions of the church by the Sanhedrin. We are fairly confident that he ended up in Ephesus toward the end of his life.

#### Irenaeus

...the church of Ephesus, founded by Paul, with John continuing with them until the times of Trajan.

Rome didn't really persecute Christianity in the early years, with the exception of Nero following the burning of Rome and Domitian who was zealous for traditional Roman religion. Legend has it that under the persecution of Domitian, John was boiled alive in oil, but survived (apparently without any harm leading to the conversion of all present).

John trained Polycarp and Ignatius who were early church fathers into the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. At some point, John was exiled to Patmos where he wrote the book of Revelation. Modern scholars by and large reject this, claiming it was a different John.

However, they have no solid evidence on which to base this supposition.

### C. PETER

We chart Peter's story through Acts and the epistles. We know that he stayed close to Jerusalem, but he often traveled when a new church was founded (e.g. Samaria, Caesarea). We also know a bit of his travels in Galatia. He may have visited Corinth accounting for the cultlike following there.

The Roman church tries to put him in Rome for a significant period of time, but we have almost no biblical evidence for that and some to the contrary. Paul makes no mention of Peter when he greets the church in the book of Romans. Peter does write 1<sup>st</sup> Peter from a place called Babylon which some hold to be Rome metaphorically. Later church historians Eusebius and Jerome wrote that Peter followed Simon Magus to Rome to confront him there.

### **Clement I**

Let us take the noble examples of our own generation. Through jealousy and envy the greatest and most just pillars of the Church were persecuted, and came even unto death. ...Peter, through unjust envy, endured not one or two but many labours, and at last, having delivered his testimony, departed unto the place of glory due to him.

Tertullian, Origen, and Jerome both attest to the manner of Peter's death under Nero, being crucified upside down so as not to go in the same manner as his Lord.

### **D. PAUL**

Paul was executed during the last year of Nero's reign, according to early church fathers, being decapitated.

### **E. ANDREW**

According to legend, Andrew traveled north to what would become Constantinople, perhaps stopping by Cyprus and Malta on the way. He may have then went beyond that city through what is now Romania. He is held in high regard by the Georgians and Ukrainians who claim him as the founder of the churches there. Legend says that he was crucified in 60 AD in Greece by a local Roman governor.

### **F. PHILIP**

Philip had a dynamic ministry to Samaria and to the Ethiopian Eunuch. Legend says that he went on to preach in Phrygia, Syria, and Greece. He is said to have died by crucifixion after the wife of the proconsul came to faith in Christ.

### **G. BARTHOLOMEW**

Eusebius wrote that Bartholomew traveled to India and Armenia, taking with him the Gospel of Matthew. He may have died in India under the leadership of a man named Polymius. Another legend suggests that Bartholomew died in Greece with Philip.

### **H. MATTHEW**

Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria wrote that Matthew preached in Judea before going to other countries and finally dying as a martyr.

### **I. JAMES SON OF ALPHEUS**

We know little of this James, but according to tradition was stoned to death in Jerusalem in AD 62.

### **J. THOMAS**

Eusebius wrote that Thomas went to India, legend says to the southwest coast of India, where he was eventually martyred in 72AD.

### **K. SIMON THE ZEALOT**

Simon may have preached the Gospel in Persia where he was killed for refusing to sacrifice to the sun god. He may have been sawn in two.

### **L. JUDE**

Jude may have been a companion of Simon the Zealot throughout Mesopotamia, though legend also says he went to Libya. He may have been killed with an axe.

## M. MATTHIAS

Matthias may have preached in northern Galatia to the Caspian Sea. Other legends suggest that he perhaps went to Ethiopia. He died either by stoning in Georgia or of old age in Jerusalem.

? How do we think of these accounts of the Apostles?

## II. THREE CIRCUMSTANCES THAT SHAPED THE 2<sup>ND</sup> CENTURY CHURCH

### A. THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE

Matthew 24

In 66AD, a revolt was led by Jews against Roman rule. Herod the Great ruled over northern Palestine as a vassal king of Rome from 37 to 4 BC. He was known for his great building projects, but also for his Edomite heritage, his tyranny, and economic hardship of the people under his reign.

Herod and his offspring sought to Hellenize and Romanize Jewish culture. They set up Roman procurators who initially allowed the Jews to follow their own religion and gave them certain exemptions from Roman paganism.

While there were always groups of Jews who despised the encroachment of Rome into daily life, life was relatively peaceful. There were minor rebellions and unpopular and unwise Roman policies, but active rebellion didn't occur until Gessisus Florus became procurator.

Unrest in Caesarea led to conflicts between Greeks and Jews leading to random attacks on Roman citizens and protesting taxes. Florus raided the

temple and took 17 talents, murdering several Jews who resisted him. The Jews appealed to Rome for justice but didn't receive help from the Governor of Syria. This led to riots which were suppressed by Florus by arresting and crucifying many leaders of Jerusalem, inciting even more rebellion.

Eventually, the rebels overran the Roman soldiers. Herod Agrippa and his wife fled the city. Other areas of Judea were freed from Roman occupation including the Roman fortress Masada.

Cestius Gallus, the legate of Syria raised some 30,000 troops to quell the rebellion, but after a series of advances and retreats, eventually withdrew. The Jews set up their own government which lasted for about four years.

Nero sent Vespasian in 67AD to take back Palestine. Vespasian took back northern Palestine and by 69AD had taken Hebron in the south. Nero committed suicide leaving a vacancy in leadership. Many hailed Vespasian as emperor so he went to Rome, leaving his son Titus to finish the campaign. Titus quickly ravaged the Judean province and laid siege to Jerusalem.

After a seven month siege, the Romans broke through the wall. Though Romans typically didn't destroy architecture in conquest, a certain frenzy came over the soldiers and much of Jerusalem including the temple was destroyed as Jesus had predicted.

? What were the consequences of the destruction of the temple?

## B. THE TARRYING OF CHRIST

### **1 Thessalonians 4:17**

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive, who remain, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore, comfort one another with these words.

### **2 Timothy 4:17**

The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

### **John 21:23**

Therefore this account went out among the brothers, that that disciple would not die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but only, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?"

## C. THE DEATH OF THE APOSTLES

The Church continued to grow and spread and rise in popularity. The death of the Apostles gave opportunity for this popular movement to be coerced by any and all who would use it for their own means (a problem still today) and led to the rise of several heresies. This led to the age of the Church Fathers who held councils to condemn these heresies, resulting in the recognizing of the canon of Scripture and the formulating of orthodox theology.