

CARRYING THE TORCH

CHURCH HISTORY

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A working knowledge of Church history teaches us to be humble. C.S. Lewis said, “History is a story written by the finger of God.”

Jude 1:11

For many years, the church has been so focused on “feelings” and “emotions” that it has shied away from depth in theology and the pursuit of understanding.

The Church Began at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4)

This coming of the Holy Spirit fulfilled the promise of Christ. (John 16:7)

The Spirit’s coming empowered the Apostles and gave birth to the church. The church is made up of the ‘called out’, whose purpose is to follow the bible and the apostles teaching.

The Expansion of the Early Church

It was not long after the establishment of the church that the Gospel went out to the Gentiles. (Romans 11:25)

Philip brought the Gospel to the Samaritans (Acts 8:5). Peter was called to bring Christ to the Gentile Roman Soldier Cornelius (Acts 10). The Apostle Paul, who would actually be called “the apostle to the gentiles” (Romans 11:13).

The church is the only cooperative society in the world that exists for the benefit of its non-members.

This time of ministry among the Apostles went on until all of them died. After their deaths, the Scriptures of the New Testament were considered closed.

In the centuries following the establishment of the church, many heresies began to arise.

The Emperor Nero was well known for his torture of Christians. Official persecution ended with the Edict of Milan, which made Christianity legal in the Roman Empire. Emperor Constantine’s conversion led to Christianity becoming the official religion of the empire.

The Rise of the Roman Church

Following the ‘conversion’ of Rome there was an ironic shift from Christians being persecuted to people who were being persecuted for NOT being Christians. Many people entered the church that did not have a true change of heart and brought their pagan religious expressions with them. Cultural Christianity was born!

Through the next few centuries, Christianity spread far and wide and church councils were held in an attempt to establish official doctrinal positions. In the centuries that followed, Rome claimed to have apostolic succession, and thus authority over the entire church. The Bishop of Rome began to call himself the Pope (Holy Father).

The Great Split of the Church

In 1054, the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church split. The Roman Church continued to strengthen and the Pope claiming authority over everything. From 1095 to 1204 the Church led crusades to free Jerusalem from the invading Muslims.

It was out of this Church that the great light of the Protestant Reformation would be born.

The Reformation of the Church

The Reformers were called "Protestants" because they were protesting false teachings.

John Wycliffe was a brilliant scholar and chose to write against the false teachings and this would ultimately get him put out of his teaching post at Oxford. He translated the Bible from Latin into English. Jon Huss was burned at the stake for his teachings. Martin Luther, who was responsible for the Reformation in Germany. John Calvin led in the Swiss Reformation. William Tyndale, who translated the Bible into English from the Greek/Hebrew.

A long-hidden truth was once again being preached. Martin Luther said, "Apart from the church, salvation is impossible." Calvin wrote, "So highly does the Lord esteem the communion of His church, that He considers everyone a traitor and apostate from religion who perversely withdraws himself from any Christian society which preserves the true ministry of the word and sacraments."

The Missionary Age of the Church

From the late 1700s there was a huge upturn in missionary work around the world. (Romans 10:14)

As a result, during this time period churches were established throughout the world, in places that had never before heard of Christ or the Gospel.

The Modern Church

There are churches all over the globe with a desire to break denominational ties and try to find peace and gather together with other like-minded groups.

Many people are more concerned with how they feel than what they believe. As a result, doctrine has taken a major backseat to our daily living concerns.

An evangelical is a person who believes in and follows the gospel of Christ. Unfortunately, the term has been used so much and so loosely by politicians and the media, that it really has lost a lot of its meaning and become a negative term to many.

The True Church Will Last Forever

Churches like HCC are fully committed to teaching biblical truth and the main focus is on the gospel, fellowship and the saving of souls.

Knowing your church History and how God uses the church should encourage us to raise the torch of truth and carry it boldly.