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This LightUnit goes with pages v-98 of
Church History – Resurrection to Reformation.

Section 1

The Birth of the Church and the Early Spread of the Way

LESSON 1

The Birth of the Church

Key Concepts

The Christian church was birthed at a time in history when certain world conditions supported its rapid spread.

Jesus' Gospel introduced new teachings that the disciples struggled to understand.

Terms

church – (Greek *ekklesia*): A called-out assembly.

martyr – A witness to the truth. Christian witnesses to the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ were sometimes executed; hence the word *martyr* has come to mean one who dies for his beliefs.

Hellenistic – Thinking, speaking, and living like a Greek.

Messiah – Deliverer; the Hebrew word for “anointed one.”

Christ – The Greek word for “anointed one” and for the Hebrew *Messiah*.

Pax Romana – Two-hundred-year period of peace under the rule of Rome (27 B.C. to A.D. 180).

Judaizers – Jewish believers who accepted Jesus' teachings but insisted that Christians from both Jewish and Gentile backgrounds must keep the Jewish ceremonial laws.



Instead of reading the Foreword and Chapter 1, read these summaries.

Summary of Foreword (pages v-vii)

The Greek word *ekklesia*, meaning “called-out assembly,” had been used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament to refer to the assembly of God's people Israel. Abraham and his family were “called out” from among pagan peoples to live and worship according to God's direction. The Israelites were “called out” from bondage in Egypt to live in Israel. Although His people always live “in the world,” they are “called out” from it to live according to His direction rather than following the ways of the surrounding world.

The Christian church (*ekklesia*) dates from Pentecost in A.D. 30, when the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus' disciples and others who believed the Gospel. Christians have been called out by Jesus from spiritual darkness into the light of the Gospel (1 Peter 2:9).

True Christians are those who have an active relationship with and serve Jesus Christ as their Lord (Matthew 7:23). Someone who claims to be a Christian but lacks a living relationship with Jesus is a nominal Christian (Christian in name only).

Just as there are true Christians and nominal Christians, so there are true Christian churches and nominal Christian churches. Some large institutional churches have distorted the Gospel while others have worked hard to maintain it. Church history includes the story of all these churches.

Summary of Chapter 1: “The Fullness of Time” (pages 1-14)

Jesus came to the world in “the fullness of time” (Galatians 4:4), meaning that the time was ripe for His coming. A number of world events made it easier for the Gospel to spread and capture the attention of men’s hearts in the years immediately following Jesus’ death and resurrection.

1. Several centuries before Christ, the Greeks (under Alexander the Great) took control of much of the western world and spread their culture and language, making Greek a very widely spoken language. Greek thinkers began questioning the validity of the old gods and were open to considering new ideas.
2. The Septuagint, a translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek, made the Jewish Scriptures accessible to Greek speaking Jews across the Roman Empire. These Scriptures prophesied the coming of the anointed one—the Messiah. *Christ* is the Greek word for “anointed one.”
3. When Jesus was born, the Roman Empire controlled Europe, northern Africa, and the Middle East. A network of Roman roads and two centuries of peaceful Roman rule known as the *Pax Romana* supported the spread of the Gospel across the empire.
4. The seafaring Phoenicians had developed navigation and sailing skills that led to a system of trade all around the Mediterranean Sea. Commerce by sea also helped make possible the spread of new ideas.
5. Besides the Jews living in Israel, Jewish people lived in many cities across the Roman Empire. They resented Roman rule and looked for their promised Messiah to come and deliver them. In the early days of the church, Jewish Christians spread the Gospel rapidly among Jews.



In Chapter 2, “The New Testament Church,” read from page 15 to the middle of page 22.

Circle the letters of seven events that facilitated the spread of the Gospel.

1. a. Greek conquests had led to the widespread and common use of Greek.
b. Trade along the silk road to China contributed to spreading the Gospel to Asia.
c. Roman rulers actively supported Christianity as a new religion across the empire.
d. Two centuries of Roman peace allowed evangelists to travel safely in the empire.
e. Most pagan religions taught that a savior would come through the Jewish religion.
f. Greek-speaking Jews everywhere read the Septuagint, which spoke of the Christ.
g. Jewish people living under Roman rule were looking for a Messiah to deliver them.
h. The Phoenicians’ navigation skills promoted sea trade that helped the spread of new ideas.
i. Roman roads provided easy travel for evangelists to carry the Gospel all across the empire.
j. Throughout the Roman world, a great interest in the Jew’s religion and the Messiah was growing.
k. Many were open to new teachings because they were questioning the power of ancient gods.

Write the letter of the correct answer.

2. _____ From which of these has God *not* called out His people?
- a. From darkness to light.
 - b. From a hard life to an easy life.
 - c. From bondage to freedom.
 - d. From pagan practices to Godly ones.
3. _____ The Gospel (good news) proclaimed by Jesus invited men to enter the
- a. Jewish religion.
 - b. kingdom of God.
 - c. local synagogue.
 - d. kingdom of Judea.
4. _____ Jesus introduced a new way of living that included
- a. a new (spiritual) birth.
 - b. new practices for synagogue worship.
 - c. a new emphasis on keeping Old Testament laws.
 - d. a new set of laws to add to the Old Testament laws.
5. _____ The Jews were primarily looking for their coming Messiah to
- a. free them from sinful desires.
 - b. perform many kinds of miracles.
 - c. focus on healing the sick and helping the poor.
 - d. release them from oppression and restore the Jewish nation.
6. _____ One seemingly impossible thing Jesus taught was that He would
- a. never die.
 - b. be put to death and then come back to life.
 - c. be delivered to the Gentiles but be found innocent.
 - d. deliver the Jews from Roman rule and establish a new kingdom.
7. _____ Jesus promised His disciples that eventually they would be able to understand His teachings because
- a. they would witness His miracles.
 - b. the Holy Spirit would come and teach them.
 - c. they would witness the fulfilling of Old Testament Scriptures.
 - d. by spending enough time with Him, they would eventually understand.
8. _____ Which of the following did *not* happen on the Day of Pentecost?
- a. The church of Jesus Christ began.
 - b. Three thousand new believers were baptized.
 - c. Jewish leaders began persecuting the believers.
 - d. God's Spirit entered the hearts of the gathered believers.

Lesson 1

9. _____ A major result of the Jewish persecution of the believers in the infant church was
- many stopped spreading the Gospel.
 - many were put to death before the Gospel could spread.
 - many believers turned away from the Gospel and returned to the Jewish religion.
 - many left Jerusalem and took the Gospel to other areas of Judea and to Samaria.
10. _____ A major dispute that arose when Gentiles began becoming believers had to do with whether Gentile believers had to
- observe Jewish laws.
 - stop worshiping idols.
 - sign a statement of faith.
 - be baptized in Jesus' name.

Write a word from the box for each description. Two will not be used.

Christ	heathen	manuscript	nominal
<i>ekklesia</i> (church)	Gentile	martyr	<i>Pax Romana</i>
Hellenist	Judaizers	Messiah	Septuagint

11. _____ In name only.
12. _____ A called-out assembly.
13. _____ Greek translation of the Old Testament.
14. _____ Two hundred years of peace under Roman rule.
15. _____ Taught that Christians must keep Jewish ceremonial laws.
16. _____ One put to death for witnessing to the truth.
17. _____ One who speaks and lives like a Greek.
18. _____ Deliverer; Hebrew, "anointed one."
19. _____ Anyone who is not a Jew.
20. _____ Greek, "anointed one."

Complete the sentences.

21. The great goal and desire of the Lord Jesus for His church, as He expressed it in John 17:24, is, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, _____; that they _____, which thou hast given me."
22. The Book of Acts begins in about the year _____ and ends in about the year _____ (See sidebar, pages 21, 22).

Key Concepts

The twelve apostles based their doctrines on the teachings of Jesus Christ, the Old Testament Scriptures, and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

The New Testament is a collection of 27 books and letters that tell about Jesus and the birth of the church and explain how Christians live by faith in Christ. Most, but not all, were written by apostles.

Terms

doctrine – A truth or principle that is taught, such as the Christian teaching that Jesus is the Son of God who lived as a man, was crucified, and rose from the dead. The noun *teaching* is a synonym.

sabbath – A day of rest. Traditionally kept by Jews on the seventh (last) day of the week.

Lord's Day – The first day of the week, the day Jesus rose from the dead, observed by Christians as a day of rest, worship, and honoring Jesus as Lord.

testament – A covenant or agreement between two parties.

circular letter – A letter intended to be passed from one party to the next so they can all benefit from its contents.

Sunday – The Roman name for the first day of the week.



In Chapter 2, “The New Testament Church,” read from the middle of page 22 through page 27.

Answer the questions.

1. Which of the four gospels was written to
 - a. Jewish believers? _____
 - b. Gentile believers? _____
 - c. Believers at Rome? _____
 - d. The Christians at Ephesus? _____
2. _____ On which three did the apostles base their teachings?
 - a. The teachings of Jesus.
 - b. Books written by other apostles.
 - c. Truths that were obvious to everyone.
 - d. Old Testament foundational teachings.
 - e. Eyewitness accounts from the life of Jesus.
3. Who wrote most of the New Testament books? _____

4. Which six books were addressed to specific individuals?

5. Which book was written first? _____

6. Which book was written last? _____

7. For which book is the author not known? _____

8. Which was likely a circular letter to churches in Asia? _____

Complete the sentences.

9. Luke, the only _____ writer of New Testament books, based his record of Jesus' life and teaching on accounts given by _____ .

10. The Jews observed the Sabbath on the _____ day of the week.

11. The first Jewish Christians observed the Jewish Sabbath on the _____ day and also observed the _____ day of the week, which they called the _____ Day.

Write the letter of the correct answer.

12. _____ In the Old Testament, God instructed the Jews to keep the Sabbath on the seventh day in remembrance of the Israelites'
 - a. deliverance from Egypt.
 - b. crossing of the Jordan River.
 - c. receiving the law.
 - d. wilderness wanderings.
13. _____ The first Jewish Christians in Jerusalem began meeting
 - a. on Wednesday and Friday evenings.
 - b. only on the traditional Jewish Sabbath day.
 - c. on both the traditional Jewish Sabbath and on the Lord's Day.
 - d. only on the Lord's Day instead of the traditional Jewish Sabbath day.
14. _____ New Gentile churches, such as the one in Corinth, developed the practice of meeting for worship on
 - a. the day of the new moon.
 - b. the last day of the week.
 - c. former pagan holidays.
 - d. the first day of the week.
15. _____ Although the Lord's Day is not observed on the seventh day of the week, it can be considered the "Christian Sabbath" because
 - a. it comes every seven days.
 - b. Christians observe it as a day of rest.
 - c. Jesus Himself began keeping the first day as the Sabbath.
 - d. Old Testament prophets predicted the Sabbath would change from the seventh to the first day of the week.

Review

Underline the correct choice.

16. *Christ* in Greek and *Messiah* in Hebrew mean “**anointed one,**” “**promised one.**”
17. *Judaizers* taught that non-Jews (known as **Gentiles, Arabs**) who become Christians must **keep Jewish ceremonial laws, join a local Jewish synagogue.**
18. *Hellenist* is a name for **a Greek citizen, a person who lives and thinks like a Greek.**
19. A professing Christian who does not obey the Lord Jesus is considered a **heretical, nominal** Christian.
20. The **Romans, Jews** were first to persecute Christians, soon after the Day of Pentecost.
21. To be a disciple and a part of the kingdom, a person must **speak in tongues, be born again.**
22. The birth date of the church is the **day Jesus rose, Day of Pentecost when the Spirit came.**
23. Jesus’ final goal for the church is that it **be with Him where he is, spread to the whole world.**
24. The Greek word for church is *ekklesia*, “**a called-out assembly,**” “**the people of God.**”
25. God’s people are called to live **like everyone else, according to His direction.**
26. Jesus taught His disciples they would eventually understand His teachings because **the Holy Spirit would teach them, they would have the New Testament.**
27. One result of the Jewish persecution of the infant church in Jerusalem was that many believers **stopped spreading the Gospel, scattered out to other areas.**

Explain how each of these helped the Gospel to spread rapidly across the Roman Empire.

28. The Roman government maintained a system of excellent roads. _____

29. The Pax Romana lasted 200 years. _____

30. As a result of the Phoenicians’ earlier seafaring expertise, the Romans carried on widespread trade across the empire. _____

31. Greek was spoken by nearly everyone across the empire. _____

32. The Septuagint (Greek Old Testament) was widely used by Jews across the empire. _____

33. The Jews hated being under Roman rule and wanted to get out from under it. _____

34. Many pagans were questioning the power of the ancient gods. _____
