

Lessons from Church History (Part 1)

WEEK 1: Apostles, Martyrs, and Early Church Fathers

Why study church history?

1. Because God is at work in history.
2. Because church history is our history.
3. Because sound doctrine has been handed down by faithful generations.
4. Because we can learn from the successes and failures of the past.
5. Because we have much to learn from those who walked with God.

What Happened to the Apostles?

- Peter
- Paul
- John
- Matthew
- Thomas
- James, the brother of Jesus
- Andrew
- James, the brother of John
- Philip
- Bartholomew (aka Nathanael) and Thaddeus (aka Judas)
- James, son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, & Matthias

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Lessons from the Early Church Fathers

As the Apostles passed from the scene, others arose to shepherd the church. These leaders are referred to as early church Fathers, generally during a period from AD 95 to the late 400s. They can be divided into four groups:

1. **Post-Apostolic Fathers** (95-150). Edified, built up, strengthened the church.
2. **Apologists** (140-200). Defended against attacks on Christianity.
3. **Polemicists** (180-225). Defended attacks from within the church, against heresy.
4. **Scientific Theologians** (225-460). Applied modes of thought to theological investigation.

Who are the Fathers?

Polycarp (AD 69 – 155) – Smyrna, in Asia Minor (modern Turkey)

- Disciple of the Apostle John.
- Wrote the *Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians*.
- Martyred for his faith in AD 155 or 156
- Papias – A peer to Polycarp, was a bishop of Hierapolis in Phrygia, was also disciple of John.

Justin Martyr (AD 100 – 165) – Born in Samaria, Palestine

- One of the best-known Apologists
- His writings to Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius defended Christianity.
- Justin was tried, along with six friends and fellow Christians, and beheaded around 165.

Tertullian (AD 155 – 220) – Carthage, North Africa

- Lawyer. Converted to Christianity late in the second century. An excellent scholar.
- Around 207 he became attracted to the error of Montanism (New Prophecy).
- Worked to overthrow Gnosticism.

Origen (AD 185 – 253) – Alexandria, Egypt

- Born into a wealthy Christian family. Father was imprisoned and martyred.
- One of the most prolific writers in all ancient history.
- His work *On First Principles* is the earliest systematic theology.
- He established a Christian school in Caesarea in 231.
- Origen was not without controversy however...
- Origen was persecuted under Decius. He died at the age of 69.