

The Well Institute: Church History I (Fall 2026)

Week	Date	Topic	Assignment
1	Sep 14	The Bible as Narrative: Redemptive History in all Church History	No Assignment
Section 1: The Early Church & Apostolic Age			
2	Sep 21	ACTS; Expansion of the early Christian movement in the Greco-Roman world, Syria, and North Africa. (Judaism; Hellenism)	Church History in Plain Language; Chap 1-2
3	Sep 28	The Apostolic fathers and early apologetic defenses of the faith (Gnosticism; Clement of Rome; Ignatius; Polycarp; Papias; Barnabas)	Church History in Plain Language; Chap 3
4	Oct 5	Persecution under the Roman Empire and early Christian martyrdom. (Polycarp; Perpetua; Iranaeus of Lyon; Cyprian; Emperor Constatine)	Church History in Plain Language; Chap 4
Section 2: Creeds, Councils, and Orthodoxy (Orthodox Church)			
5	Oct 12	The rise of theological clarity and defining orthodox doctrine (Eastern Church; Apostles Creed; Justin Martyr; Clement of Alexandria; Origen of Alexandria; Tertullian of Carthage; Eusebius)	Church History in Plain Language; Chap 5
6	Oct 19	Development of the New Testament canon and early Christian worship.	Church History in Plain Language; Chap 6
7	Oct 26	The 7 major ecumenical councils; Nicene Fathers (Nicene Creed) (Athanasius; Basil; Gregory of Nazianzus; Basil of Caesarea; John Chrysostom; Ambrose of Milan; Jerome; Augustine of Hippo)	Church History in Plain Language; Chap 11 and 13
8	Nov 2	Trinitarian/Christological controversies/Heresies (Athanasian Creed)	Church History in Plain Language; Chap 10
Section 3: The Medieval Church & Christendom (Roman Catholicism)			
9	Nov 9	The decline of the Roman Empire in the West and the rise of the Papacy. (Constantinople; Emperor Justinian; Iconoclasm)	Church History in Plain Language; Chap 14-15
10	Nov 16	Monasticism, missionary expansions, and the synthesis of faith and medieval Culture (Patrick of Ireland; Clovis and the Franks; Catholic Orders)	Church History in Plain Language; Chap 12, 16-18
11	Nov 23	Church-state conflicts, the Great Schism, the Investiture Controversy, the rise of Islam and the Crusades.	Church History in Plain Language; Chap 19
Section 4: Forerunners of the Reformation			
12	Nov 30	Scholasticism and medieval theology (Augustine, Anselm, Abelard, Lombard; Aquinas).	Church History in Plain Language; Chap 20
13	Dec 14	The decline of medieval systems, the Renaissance, and pre-reformers (John Wycliffe, Jan Hus, Savonarola; Erasmus of Rotterdam).	Church History in Plain Language; Chap 22-23

Christian History Timeline

1. The Early Church (c. 30 – 590 AD)

- **Apostolic Period (c. 30–100 AD):** Begins with Jesus' public ministry 30AD, His Crucifixion/death at 3pm, on April 3rd 33AD, and the Day of Pentecost; apostles spread the gospel and write the New Testament (50AD-90AD)
- **Persecuted Church (c. 100–313 AD):** Christians face severe Roman persecution for refusing to worship the emperor or pagan gods.
- **Imperial/Nicene Period (c. 313–590 AD):** Emperor Constantine legalizes Christianity; the church convenes major ecumenical councils to establish orthodox doctrines like the Nicene Creed.

2. The Medieval Church (c. 590 – 1517 AD)

- **Missionary Period (c. 590–1049 AD):**
Marked by the rise of the papacy under Gregory I, the expansion of Islam, and the conversion of northern European tribes.
- **Papal Peak (c. 1049–1294 AD):** The height of papal power, the Crusades, and the rise of Scholasticism and monastic orders.
- **Pre-Reformation (c. 1294–1517 AD):** Characterized by political decline in the papacy, internal schisms, and early reform voices like John Wycliffe, Jan Huss, & Erasmus

3. The Reformation Era (c. 1517 – 1648 AD)

- **Protestant Reformation (1517–c. 1545):** Martin Luther posts his Ninety-Five Theses, sparking a theological break from the Catholic Church.
- **Radical Reformation & Counter-Reformation (c. 1545–1648):** Emergence of Anabaptist, Reformed, and Anglican groups, alongside the Catholic Counter-Reformation and the Peace of Westphalia.

4. The Modern Church (c. 1648 – Present)

- **Post-Reformation & Awakenings (c. 1648–1789):** Periods of religious orthodoxy, Pietism, and the Great Awakenings.
- **The Age of Missions (19th Century):** Rapid global expansion of Christianity through worldwide missionary movements.
- **Contemporary Church (20th Century–Present):** Marked by the ecumenical movement, Vatican II for Catholics, and massive shifts in global Christianity toward the Southern Hemisphere

Church History

Lecture 1 Introduction

people was ever born so gayly and confidently indifferent to history as the people of the United States" - John Brooks

A Biblical Encouragement for the Study of Church History

What does God's Word say about the importance of the Believer in _____

(Dt 8:2; Dt. 32:7; Ps. 77:11-12; Ps. 78:5-6; Heb. 13:7-8)

So, Church History is God's history as He has been working on this earth to glorify Himself and redeem peoples for His glory and their blessing. **Romans 15:4**

We are given a biblical mandate to study the Bible, which is reading and learning church _____. Church history is the study of _____ hand (His actions) throughout the generations to accomplish His purposes. The theme of the Bible is:

God's _____ in the _____ of mankind.

Read Hebrews 11:

Church history begins in the _____. The Old Testament is full of the fellowship of the faithful. Those who have greatly *trusted* in the One true God and were saved because of that _____, and then the promise of God's future gift of the Messiah, Jesus Christ -the Savior.

Church history is the story of God's _____ throughout redemptive history, Old and New testament, and the continuation of God's Spirit even until now. **We** are living and making history as part of the great story of God throughout redemption of history in our lives and in the present.

READ 1 Corinthians 10:1-12

Church history is a study of the _____ church in all its glory and all it's glorious brokenness.

The Kingdom Story (Meta-narrative of Scripture)

Theme of Bible: **God's glory in the creation and redemption of mankind**

Redemptive history is best conceived in four clear words:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Why study Church History?

- 1 **History has _____ under God's direction.** Acts 17:26.

Thom Wells states "when we study history, we are studying the _____ of God"

THE most critical event in history (for all peoples of all time) is the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ!! [Gal 4:4. Heb 1:1-3 Cf. Acts 7:1-53; 13:16-41; 14:15-16; 17:22-31] God has been active in all of history. It is **His Story**. God does not want us to forget what He has done.)Ps. 111:4. And 78:4,7)

2. **History teaches us valuable _____** "It has been said, a wise man learns from his mistakes A Wiser man learns from the mistakes of others; and a fool learns from neither of them."

"Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it"

CH Spurgeon states "*it seems odd that certain men who talk so much of what the Holy Spirit reveals to themselves, should think so little of what the spirit has revealed to others.*"

3. **History helps to illuminate and clarify what we _____**, providing valuable context for evaluating our _____ (Orthodoxy) and _____ (Orthopraxy) according to the teaching of the church of all the ages.

4. **History is a safeguard against _____**. There are no new heresies only old ones masquerading as new ones..

5. **History stirs us to _____ God.**

Richard Baxter says "the writing of church history is the duty of all ages, because God's works are to be known, as well as his Word, he who proves not what God has been doing in the world, actually lacks much to the completing of his knowledge.

Carl Truman: "remember, that history is a narrative of the past constructed on the basis of evidence. Thus, when reading history, always ask: what evidence is being cited. Second, remember, that the historian has an agenda that will no doubt shape how he reads and interprets the evidence.."

There are no neutral observers in history. Prejudice is endemic to narrative & storytelling.