

CH 201: “I Will Build My Church” / A Survey of 2000+ Years of Church History

Session #2 of 9: November 20, 2016 / Review of Today’s Chapters from the Text:

Church History in Plain Language : Fourth Edition by Bruce Shelley (Revised by R. L. Hatchett)

1. Chapter 47: Shift to Global South: *What Is the New Christianity?* / Highlights (See Previous Handout)
Point of Emphasis: The Foundational Importance of the Biblical Historical Books.
2. **Chapter 2: Wineskins Old & New: *The Gospel to the Gentiles* / Highlights (Bullet Pts. Pgs. 1 – 4 Below)**
3. Introduction to Section 2: The Age of Catholic Christianity 70 A.D. to 312 A.D.
4. Chapter 3: Only Worthless People: *Catholic Christianity*
5. Chapter 4: If the Tiber Floods: *The Persecution of Christians*
6. Chapter 5: Arguing about the Event: *The Rise of Orthodoxy*
7. Chapter 6: The Rule of Books: *The Formation of the Bible*

(Bullet Point Summaries of Text Chapters provided by Greg Weis & Deanna Brown. Thank you, D.B.)

Chapter 2: Wineskins: Old and New: *The Gospel to the Gentiles*

- **Shelley is speaking “tongue in cheek”** when he writes, “[Stephen] dared to renounce the law of Moses and attack the temple of God, openly and repeatedly” (14). **Shelley is referring to how the Sanhedrin falsely accused Stephen** as recorded in Acts 6:13: “...and they set up false witnesses who said, “This man never ceases to speak words against this holy place and the law...” (Acts 6:8-15 for more context).
- “God will send you a prophet like me from your own people” (Acts 7: 37, NIV). This is a quote from Deuteronomy 18:15: “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him. (NASB)
- “[Stephen] also told how the Lord gave Moses the pattern of the tabernacle and how Solomon built the temple, but he quoted the prophet Isaiah to prove that the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands” (14). In the Scripture used here, Isaiah is quoting Solomon's prayer in 1 Kings 8:27: “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built!” Thus, **in Acts 7:28-20, Stephen is quoting from Isaiah 66:1-2; who quoted from Solomon in 1 Kings 8:27. The Bible uses the Bible!** Isaiah 66:1-2 reads: “Thus says the Lord: ‘Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest? 2 All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the Lord. But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.’” It’s **also quoted by Paul in Athens:** (Acts 17:24-27) ²⁴ “The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; ²⁵ nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things; ²⁶ and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, ²⁷ that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; ²⁸ for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we also are His children ...’”
- Shelley uses the NIV, but it leaves out some key information (15). Here is the passage, but from the NASB:

(Acts 7:51-53) ⁵¹ “You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did. ⁵² Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become; ⁵³ you who received the law as ordained by angels, and yet did not keep it.”

- “The encounter with Jesus prompted **the early believers to examine the Old Testament anew**. They discovered in the Old Testament documents a greater and comprehensive message for the entire world that Israel had failed to embrace. God had promised Abraham long ago that all the peoples of the world would find their blessing in him (Gen. 12: 3).” (15) **(See John 5:39; Luke 24:27, 44; 2 Cor. 3:7-18)**
 - “From the beginning, then, **the apostles preached the resurrection of Jesus as the fulfillment of God’s purpose (promises) announced in the Old Testament**. The Messiah, once crucified, was exalted above the universe. Apart from that miracle, said the apostles, there is no gospel, no salvation, and no church” (17).
 - “Christians...have [always] insisted that **the death of Jesus on the cross, his resurrection from the grave, and the empowering mission of the Holy Spirit are the foundational realities of Christianity**” (17).
 - “[The Church] sprang up in most of the major cities in the Roman Empire and was transformed from a tiny Jewish sect into **a fellowship of many different peoples**” (17). **The diversity of the Church has always been necessary for its health and growth.**
- (Matthew 9: 17)** “Men [do not] pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved’ (NIV). **“The most important development in first-century Christianity was the rip in the old wineskins”** (18). **(See Ephesians 2:11-22)**
- “Since the whole company [of Jesus’ disciples] was devoutly Jewish, they remained loyal, for a time, to their Jewish law and continued to worship in synagogues and at the temple” (18).
 - **“[T]he Jerusalem community came to speak of itself by an Old Testament term used to refer to the assembly of Israel. The Greek equivalent was *Ekklesia* (or church in English) and meant a gathering of people, God’s people. Despite their outward conformity to Jewish religion and their use of the Jewish Scriptures, the disciples sensed that the resurrection of Jesus and the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost had made them something unique— a new wineskin?”** (18).
 - “Under the leadership of the apostles, the fledgling movement maintained its unity by **two special ceremonies that kept the reality of Jesus’ death and resurrection at the center of their fellowship**” (18).
 - “Baptism in the infant church was ... eschatological. It marked entrance into a kingdom already proclaimed...” (18).
 - “[T]he second ceremony, the Lord’s Supper...looked back to Jesus’ betrayal and death and found in the events of Calvary and the empty tomb evidence of the new covenant promised by the prophet Jeremiah... This simple meal renewed their covenant with God and with one another” (19). (See Jeremiah 31:31-34)
 - **“More and more of the converts were recruited from among Hellenist Jews”** (19).
 - Around 36 AD, “the Hellenist disciples were forced to flee Jerusalem. They found refuge in Samaria and in Syria, where they founded Christian communities. Other unnamed Hellenist Christians founded churches at Damascus, Antioch and Tarsus in Syria, on the island of Cyprus, and in Egypt” (20). (See Acts 8ff)
 - “There [Antioch of Syria] unnamed ‘men of Cyprus and Cyrene’ had founded a successful Christian movement by taking the revolutionary step of evangelizing Gentiles” (20). This happens shortly after Peter preaches to Cornelius & the gentiles. (See Acts 10:1 - 11:18.)

(Acts 11: 20-27) ²⁰ “But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus. ²¹ And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a

great number who believed turned to the Lord. ²² The report of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. ²³ When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose, ²⁴ for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord. ²⁵ So Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, ²⁶ and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.

- “Antioch was the administrative capital of the Roman province of Syria. With a population of half a million, it was also the third largest city in the empire, after Rome and Alexandria” (20). **(Paul’s MO by gw)**
- “Originally, opponents of the church used the term as a derogatory label for the “devotees of the Anointed One” (in Greek, *Christianoi*). But the believers soon adopted it gladly” (20).
- “In time [the Antioch church] succeeded Jerusalem as the center of missionary outreach” (20). More importantly, beginning about AD 44, **Antioch became the model.**

- “No one did more for the faith [than Paul], but no one seemed less likely” (21).

(2 Corinthians 4:6-7) For God, who said, “Light shall shine out of darkness,” is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. 7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves...” **(1 Timothy 1:12-17)** ¹² “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service, ¹³ even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; ¹⁴ and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all. ¹⁶ Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life. ¹⁷ Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.” (NASB)

- “...all who hope to gain God’s favor by keeping the law are exposed to a curse. ... ‘Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us,’ by hanging on a cross (Galatians 3: 10– 14, NIV)” (21).
- “[Paul] was a man of three worlds: Jewish, Greek, and Roman” (21). This idea is articulated clearly and at length in N.T. Wright’s book, ***Paul in Fresh Perspective*** in Chapter 1; Section 1.
- “...righteousness by personal effort can only lead to failure. Man can be accepted as righteous only through God’s undeserved mercy. That is grace. And grace always arises from the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ” (22). **This is what we call “performance based” at GCF.**
- “...said Paul, if [people] really have accepted Christ by faith, they have accepted the way of Christ and the mind of Christ. The man who really loves God can do as he chooses, for if he really loves God he will choose to do the will of God” (22).

(John 15:15-21) “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, ¹⁷ even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. ¹⁸ “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹ Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. ²⁰ In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. ²¹ Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.” (ESV)

- “This superficial similarity to Christian belief was useful to Paul in explaining the message of Jesus to pagans” (23). In Athens, Paul uses “**Common Grace**” and “**General Revelation**” to communicate with the lost. (See Romans 1 through 4.)
- “...the Sabbath (seventh day) observance had given way to worship on the first day of the week, the day on which Jesus rose from the dead” (23). Jesus made most of His post-resurrection appearances on the Lord’s Day. Pentecost also came on the Lord’s Day.
- “The leadership of the Jerusalem church rested first in the hands of James, “the brother of the Lord.” A devout, law-abiding Jew, he was revered by his followers, **but in AD 62 he was murdered by command of the Jewish high priest**” (24).
- “The Holy City was totally destroyed. In the reprisals that followed, every synagogue in Palestine was burned to the ground. At the start of the revolt, the leaders of the Jerusalem church were advised in a vision to flee the city” (24). **(For more information on this “Google” “The Flight to Pella.”)**
See Matthew 24-25, Mark 13 and Luke 19 & 21 for the “Mount Olivet Discourse” in which Jesus predicts these events. Titus was the son of Vespasian and later Emperor himself. His “victory” over Jerusalem and the sacking of both the city and Temple was celebrated in Rome by a triumphal march and the erection of the “Arch of Titus” which is still a great tourist attraction in Rome.
- “Pious Jews considered the Christian flight an act of treason, and it sealed the fate of the church in the Jewish world. With the decision to bar Christian Jews from synagogue services some years later, **the break was complete.** Any Jew who wished to remain faithful to his religion could not also be a Christian” (24).
- “**AD 70 and the destruction of Jerusalem mark the end of the apostolic age. Most of the original apostles were dead**” (24).