

# The Church

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[0:00] For those who had to go back and listen because I know I throw a lot of information at you. With that in mind, this morning we'll be looking at the church. Next Sunday morning, if the Lord allows us to tarry, we'll be looking at the Historical Baptist Doctrine.

And then next Sunday night, so that will be the 15th, next Sunday night we'll do a Q&A; over those three. Okay, so if you have any questions as it pertains, because I know I didn't give a lot of time last week for questions.

I'll try to give more time this week, don't know if we do. But we'll do Q&A; next Sunday night. We'll cover those three. We'll cover the Bible, the church, and Historical Baptist Doctrine.

So if you know your question in advance, I would like for you to write it down and give it to me. Or send it to me, you can email it to me, or you can text it to me, however you want to do it. And I will try to give you a little bit more thorough answer.

If it's a question that's just asked while we're gathered together, then I will give you the best answer we can and we'll work it out together. All right, let's go to the Lord in prayer and then we'll get started.

[1:01] Father, we thank you so much for this day. We're so thankful. Lord, what a joy to be able to gather together with the saints. And what a joy to be able to come together as we look at the church.

So Father, we pray that you lead and guide us. We pray that you help us to do these things for your glory and your honor and yours alone. May you get all the recognition. And Lord, may Christ be exalted even as we study these things.

And may the church be encouraged. And Lord, may it be equipped for the sake of the kingdom. And we ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. All right. So we're doing these eight essentials intentionally. They all kind of dovetail together. So we laid the scripture out last week. We looked at the Bible. And the Bible is important because it dictates a lot of every area of our walk, every area of our faith. But it also is going to dovetail in perfectly with our study of the church. The church is the bride of Christ. And I've said this before. The church is absolutely important.

[2:00] In our day and time where we begin to think of salvation by more of a personal or individual means, and we have a personal Savior, and my relationship with the Lord is between me and the Lord, and all those different things that like to be said, we tend to discount the importance and the reality of the church.

Even we get to this point where we speak of, well, I'm a member of the universal church. And while that is true and that is important, we'll see that in just a moment, we also know that everything in scripture has application and even promises.

Every promise in the New Testament is given to a local body of believers referred to as the church. So we cannot separate our walk with Christ from the church.

I've said it this way before, and I've said it kind of tongue-in-cheek, but I mean it in absolute sincerity. If someone was to come to me and say, you know, Pastor, I really like you.

You are an amazing guy. We appreciate you and we're thankful. But I don't care so much about your wife. I don't care about your bride. Well, me and that person wouldn't get along real well because Carrie and I have become one, right?

[3:06] And you cannot say you like me but don't like her. And the church is the bride of Christ. So if people say, well, I love Jesus, but it's the church that I have a problem with, well, it's really not the church.

It's usually what has happened in the name of the church or by individuals within the church. And so it's important that we understand exactly what the church is, and it's even important as we study it. Bruce Shelley, who is one of the greatest church historians and writes a lot of those matters and has written a lot of books, once said this, One of the more remarkable aspects of Christianity today is how few professed believers have ever seriously studied the history of their religion.

Any other world religion, if you were to go to it, and people who can defend their world religions, not people who are kind of nominal believers, if you will, but people really who can defend it have studied it. They understand it.

They know why they are a part of that. And the sad reality is not many people within, quote, the church today have ever taken the time to study it because church history seems to be a little bit boring, and we tend to discount it.

But we need to know why, and the reason we need to know why, in the story of Christianity, Gonzales once said, Without understanding the past, we are unable to understand ourselves, for in a sense, the past still lives in and influences who we are and how we understand the Christian message.

[4:23] People have told me before, well, I don't want to be affected. I don't want to have anybody kind of sway me or persuade me. Well, the reality is that how we perceive our faith is absolutely dictated by the influences around us, one of those greatest influences of the church.

Nobody lives in isolation. How we interpret doctrine, how we interpret scripture, the importance we put on certain aspects are always tied to this thing called the bride of Christ or the church.

You're going to study somewhere. You're going to be influenced somewhere. It's not a matter of if you're influenced. It's a matter of who you allow to influence you and why you are doing so. And so that's why it's so important to understand the church.

When we look at the early church, we see that Matthew 16, 18 is the first mentioning in scripture of the church. We always talk about the law of first mentioning. In the first mentioning of scripture and scripture of the church, Jesus says, I also say to you that you are Peter.

And upon this rock, I will build my church. And the gates of Hades will not overpower it. Now, you know, Matthew 16, that's where Jesus asked him at Caesarea Philippi, who do men say that I am?

[5:26] Who do you say that I am? Peter makes this great confession of Christ. And then Jesus, for the very first time, speaks of this reality. I'm going to build my church. This verse is absolutely important because the law of first mentioning, something in scripture will stay consistent to how it is mentioned the first time throughout history.

So this is the very first mentioning. The second mentioning, let me give you just a quick quiz.

Anybody know where the second mentioning of the church is and the context that's in? It's two chapters later, Matthew 18.

And it regards church discipline. Removing someone from the fellowship of the church or correcting someone of the church. So anyway, in this verse alone or in this section of verse is not to separate it from its context.

We see that the church is his church. It's Christ's church. He said, I will build my church. If you remember, if you were here several years ago, we did a shirt. And this is not to speak down on or to look down on any other churches around us or anything like that.

But in our shirts, it said, I love my church. And we had marked out the my and replaced it with his. I love his church. And that's an absolutely essential doctrine.

[6:38] Friend, listen to me. This is not my church. This is not your church. He says, I will build his. He says, I will build my church.

Be careful who you put into possessive sense. Because if I say this is my church, that means I get to dictate what it does. If you say, well, this is you can. I know we say it, but words matter.

And it's his church. He gets to set the course. He gets to set the dictate. He gets to set the mandate. And he gets to establish what it looks like. None of us. And he says that. And Christ alone builds the church.

We're not church builders. We're not in a program. It is Christ alone who builds the church. And it is built upon the stones. And this is important later on. We'll get to this in just a minute. Upon this stone I will build.

He says, and you are Peter. And upon this profession I will build my church. He says, so it is built by the stones or Peter. Anybody know what Peter means? That means a little stone or a little rock. It is built by the little rocks, the stones of those who profess Christ.

[7:43] Peter actually is the one who writes in the letter of 1 Peter that the church is built up of living stones. Of individuals who profess Jesus Christ. Who are united to one another.

That's important because Peter himself never claims to be the foundation for the church. Peter, Paul says no other foundation we laid in the foundation of Jesus Christ. Now you'll have to hold on to this in just a moment.

We'll start getting in while we have denominations and things like that. You'll have to hold on to this. Peter never says he's the foundation stone. As a matter of fact, all Peter says is he is one of these stones. The word Peter is petros.

It means to be just a small rock. Not a large rock. And Jesus says upon this rock I will build my church. That rock is petra. That means a large foundational stone.

So the question that we must ask ourselves is what is the petra? Is it Peter or is it something else? Well, actually it is the profession which is the answer to the question, who do you say that I am?

[8:41] So in a nutshell, the church is Christ's church that he alone builds and he builds it upon the profession of who he is.

And it is built by and with individuals who name Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. That's a lot of information, but it is absolutely important. You need to know who the foundation stone is or what the foundation stone is.

And you need to know who it is built by. So the church is not our church. It's his church. He builds it, but he builds it with individuals who profess him as Lord and Savior.

And it is built upon the profession of who Christ is. So we see the biblical mandate. The only mandate, scriptural mandate we have, we called it when we went through the book of Acts several years ago, we called it God's handbook for the church.

So it is how we do the church. Because the church is proclaimed in Matthew 16. It is birthed in Acts 2. So we see the birth of the church and we see the formation of it.

[9:42] And every pastoral epistle and every other epistle sent to the churches after that are following the reality of what happens in the book of Acts. And Acts 2.42 tells us that the churches gather together.

That's when Peter stands up and preaches the Pentecost message. Remember that? And people profess Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior and they come to him. And they have these four things that they're doing in the book of Acts.

And we see them happening repeatedly. That is the mandate of what the church should do. The early believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching. Hold on to that phrase, okay?

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching. They fellowshiped with one another. So they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship of the saints. That is, they spent time fellowshiping together. They were communing around the table with one another.

This is why when we went through the book of Acts we said, You know what? Fellowships are important. If you were to go back and look at the history of when we started doing things here, that's also when we began to introduce Wednesday night meals. That's when we began to introduce other things.

[10:40] Why? Because fellowship of the saints is very important. So table fellowship is important. They broke bread with one another from house to house. That is, taking communion together. So they began to break bread with one another and they devoted themselves to prayer.

Those are the four mandates that we find in the book of Acts that the early church was doing. Devoted themselves to apostles' teaching, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer. Nothing else.

So the question is, do we see that happening in early church history? The early church testimony, Eusebius is the earliest historian. He is the first church historian. Actually, he lived from A.D. 260 to around 330.

He is called Eusebius of Corinth. He was not imprisoned for his faith, but one of his mentors was imprisoned for the faith. But then when Rome officially acknowledged it, he became...

Now, if you read the writings of Eusebius, you have to kind of understand this. He is kind of friendly with the Roman Empire. He is living in a time where the persecution is stopped. And so he's thankful for that.

[11:42] And he's writing his story. And he's not necessarily tainted by his times, but he is displayed by his times. But he writes a very early church history. He actually writes the history from the book of Acts up until his days. So you're looking at the early 300s, and we see exactly what the early church is doing.

His writing is not perfect, but there are some things you can glean from it that are really, really beneficial. And the reason it's not perfect is because he didn't have a whole lot of information to pull from. There's not a lot of things out there.

A lot of it was word of mouth. A lot of it was stuff he had been told. A lot of it was stuff that had been passed down to him. But he also was able to be in contact with people who had walked hand-in-hand with some of the apostles and people that sat under the teaching of John, and they had sat under all of these things.

He declares that the orthodoxy and the unshakable devotion of the apostolic tradition was an earmark of the early church. That is, they were really committed to the apostolic teaching, the apostles' teaching.

Which shows us in the time of Eusebius, they were actually doing exactly what it declared in the book of Acts. They were devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching. He quotes Clement, who says, In the early things that in every city there is according to the preaching of the law, the prophets, and the Lord.

[12:53] So notice the three-fold preaching. The law, the prophets, that's the Old Testament, and the Lord. So that's what the early church is doing. They gathered together on the first day of the week to celebrate the Lord's resurrection.

Every week it was a weekly celebration of the resurrection. The focus of the early church, and we'll get to it a little bit more in just a moment, was not so much on the death of Christ as it was the resurrection of Christ.

It was not really, a lot of time, what we consider evangelistic preaching, it was more edification of the saints, that he is indeed alive.

Now, evangelism and all those things came later, and we'll see that why in just a moment. But their primary focus was just, it was a weekly celebration of the gathering and rejoicing in the resurrection of Christ.

And they did it on the first day of the week, which was a work day, and they did it because that was Resurrection Sunday. These gatherings focused primarily on communion. We know that when they got together, and we can see this from compiling different church historian accounts, we can kind of put the order of service together.

[13:58] If you want to know what an early church order of service looks like, this is what they did. They came together for a reading of scriptures and commentaries their own. Usually that would take several hours. Why?

Because nobody walked in the door with a Bible in their hand. So there was one person who could read scriptures, and then they would take time to comment on them. Does that sound like anything else you've heard in the Bible?

Sounds like what Ezra was doing in Nehemiah, right? Where they would read from the law, and then he would give the saints, and he would declare the law. So they were living in an oral tradition society where they would have to just give information one another, and they would have prayers and hymn singing.

I'm really excited about this because hymns were very important to the early church. And why were hymns very important in the early church? It's because this is how they taught truth and doctrine. If you can put it to a tune and make it singable, people will leave with it.

They didn't have a copy of the Word to carry out with them, so they would teach them a song. And science has shown us, history has shown us. You remember things. I guarantee you, if I could get kind of a sketch of every generation of every person in here, I could find a song from every one of your generations, and I could play maybe three chords of that song, and you would start singing it.

[15:12] You might not sing it out loud. Some of them I hope you wouldn't sing out loud, but it probably is stuck in there. Why? Some of them you wish they weren't in there. I have songs in my head I wish they weren't in there, but they're there because I listened to them and I heard them.

And all I have to do is hear one tune of it, and sometimes my kids are like, Dad, you know that song? Well, yeah, unfortunately, I do know that song because I wasn't. That was the BC right before Christ's years. And that was all those things, those times that are there.

Why? Because it just gets ingrained in our mind. Well, the church knew that. This is why hymn singing was so important because if you want to teach doctrine and you want to teach truth, you would teach a song and you would send them out into the world.

They couldn't carry their Bibles with them, but they could carry a song with them. So it was very important. I'm excited when Brother Jamie shares church music with us, but it started very, very early. Then after that, they would dismiss by prayer and blessing those who had not been baptized. Okay, so there's this dismissal. We're going to bless you. We're going to pray over you. You can leave. After the non-baptized left, then they would have communion with the baptized believers only. Baptism was absolutely important to the early church.

[16:17] We'll get to all this in just a moment, so stay with me. We're just looking at their early service. So they would have communion with one another, and this was like really, really the central part of the service. They used to have a great meal.

They'd have a fellowship meal. They stopped that pretty early on because they started catching a little bit of slack. They called it the love feast, the agape feast, and that's what was being used to ridicule them and mock them in the Roman Empire, saying, well, their love feast is nothing other than, well, we have some kids present.

You know, it's love in the most fornicated sense, and they're doing things in there that are atrocious, so they just kind of got rid of the fellowship meal and said, we're just going to come together and take communion. And so they would take communion, and it was such a sweet time of worship, and this was the central part of their worship, and then they would share with one another by taking an offering, and they were blessed because, what does it tell us in the book of Acts, that they sowed their belongings and had all things in common.

But very, very early on, the tax started beginning in the early church, very early. And we need to understand this, but these attacks were not without cause, because God is not really bothered by things.

We understand that they mowed the church and the doctrine of the church. These attacks were important. Think about one of the earliest attacks when Paul was present and held the coats of those who stoned Stephen.

[17:29] Do you remember the outcome of the stoning of Stephen? That all those that were present started going to every area, carrying the gospel. Do you remember Acts 1-8? You should proclaim me, you should teach me, in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the other most parts of the earth.

Well, at that time, until the stoning of Stephen, nobody was leaving Jerusalem. After Stephen was stoned and people were afraid of the persecution that was coming, everybody began to disperse. Where did they go? Judea, Samaria, and to the other most parts of the earth. God used the persecution of Stephen, the martyrdom of Stephen, to move the church to do what they should have been doing already.

I'm not saying that that was the reason he was, but that was kind of the impetus to get them to move. And they said, okay, we're going to take it where we ought to. So this shapes the church and the doctrine of the church.

You start seeing these. Persecution under the Roman Empire was often sporadic and regional. It wasn't as widespread as at times we would like to think it would be. When it happened, it was horrendous. Romans were really good at torture.

[18:29] They were really good at the way they did things. And you can read all those accounts. Some of the greatest accounts of the first-hand accounts we find are from Eusebius who gives a really extensive account of some regional suffering that is happening by some of these believers.

I had a pretty rough week this week. A lot of things fell apart on me. A lot of things didn't happen. And I was really, really kind of down and out. I'm just being honest with you in my humanity. But I'm thankful that everything fell apart at home this week in the week when I was studying church history.

Because what are my concerns and problems compared to with the suffering of the saints have experienced in the ages past? And when you begin to read the suffering of the saints that have gone on from the very beginning and you see the price that they were paying and you can understand the early church originally had a little bit of peace because of the Pax Romana. They were considered a part of Judaism. They were just kind of a segment of the Jewish faith. And Rome, when they overtook areas and they overtook lands, they allowed you to exist in your religion. And as long as Christianity was seen as a part of Judaism, they left them alone. It is when they had this clear break and they said, no, we are not them. We are something different. Then all of a sudden people began to see them and perceive them as a threat and a concern because they were professing Jesus as king.

[19:45] And then we started having all these emperors with the complex and all these things that happened. And so they're regional. It's usually what happened because some people in the community would complain. Some people would get upset. Think the book of Acts.

Remember there was a silversmith that said, our whole trade is in disrepair because Paul is here preaching that there is but one God. And so we have to defend the silversmith. He was losing business so he got mad so they started persecution.

That's exactly what was going on in the Roman Empire in the early days. Okay, people would get upset. People, movements would start happening. And we would understand the church was growing at a rate of about 3% a year.

So, I mean, to go from the end gathering of the saints we see in Pentecost to about the year we get to 313, mid 300s, around 325. You see so many people in the Roman society that are believers it is growing at about 3% per year.

So it's not really a rapid growth but it is, you know, instrumental growth and it is affecting societies and changing. Some would recant because of the threat. That's important. You need to hold on to that. Some would recant and say, well, the persecution seems too much.

[20:48] They would deny Jesus. They would give the pinch of incense burning to the Roman leaders and governors and all of these people and they'd say, no, we're going to deny Jesus. Others would not. The majority of them would not.

So this was greatly encouraging. What we would find when we read accurate first-hand accounts is some of those who recanted early on when they witnessed the steadfast devotion and the love of their brothers and sisters in Christ and they saw the peace and joy they had even in death.

Some of them would come back and go, I should have never recanted and they would willingly go suffer the same way their brothers and sisters did. But it was really this major important issue that happened early in churches.

Some would recant, some wouldn't. I love this quote that there were men who in such wars fought manfully for the truth rather than for country, for true religion rather than for their dear ones.

These people fought, as you see, I said, manfully. They would go and march and singing and rejoicing and suffering and it was really an astounding sight to behold.

[21:53] We've seen it over and over again. There were those that would die in such a manner, aged men. And one of the greatest of those is Polycarp when they were looking for Polycarp. He was the last one to die in the Colosseum for his faith. He was in his mid-80s and they searched for him forever and they decided we're going to move him because he was the beloved leader of that church and they moved him to a house and he was there and he was up in the loft and they found him and the Roman guards got there to carry Polycarp away.

Polycarp said, would you give me an hour to pray? And they said, yes, we'll give you an hour to pray. So when he went to pray, what he did is he asked the people he was staying with to set a meal before these Roman soldiers.

martyrs. And so they fed the soldiers that came to lead him away to execution. And his love and concern for these soldiers and his love as he went into the Colosseum and he eventually dies for his faith and the testimony of his faith silenced the crowd and really it was the testimony that was so many people they fought manfully for the faith not for the love of their life or their country.

Martyrs were seen as a really, really major thing in early church. This is part of why they went to the catacombs because they would take communion with the saints in the catacombs and not that it was really a kind of going to the graves and worshiping type of thing and also didn't have buildings but they were some of those early believers did own the catacombs so it was the only place they owned so it was a place they could go gather together or they would gather in a house and they really did withstand those attacks from without.

But much like we understand when you show yourself strong, when the enemy cannot hinder you from without he moves within. Eusebius says the enemy moved in by cloaking themselves with the same name as our religion and this is where you start getting and we mentioned this last week when you start getting so many different schisms and divisions in the early church in every way many people believe and many people would like to think well the early church was so united we need to go back to the early church in every way the early Christian community was a highly diverse community it did not take very long before there were divisions as a matter of fact we don't get to Acts chapter 6 before the Hellenistic widows are crying out saying we have a problem the church was born in Acts 2 by the time we get to Acts chapter 6 there seems to be discord and division and then we have the appointment of the seven deacons that we call them and the deacons are there so in every way the early church community was not necessarily just one blissful we always like to dream about the good old days it was always a place of conflict and division the reason is because as the church expanded more and more Gentiles

[24:35] Paul the minister to the Gentiles missionary to the Gentiles more and more Gentiles came to faith the Gentiles were coming to faith and they didn't have the Jewish background of monotheism they didn't have the background of a coming Messiah who would set up on the throne of David they didn't have all of these things that are laid out in the Old Testament right so their backgrounds are Greco-Roman backgrounds or Hellenistic backgrounds and so they're bringing all these different things in there and these influences and as the church grows think about it for just a moment as the church grows diversity multiplies and when diversity comes in discord comes in so then the more people that are coming in now some we start getting this Gnosticism we start getting all these different things and there's some things that are really essential to the church that they start fighting over very very very early on the first one is divinity and the humanity of Christ because it was out of the mind for some people that God could die how in the world could that happen and we think about for just a moment if I was to ask any one of you to explain the divinity and the humanity of Christ it is hard right or if I say hey explain the trinity to me it's hard it's difficult and these are the things that very beginning early on in the church started causing problems and the majority of them the virgin birth some schisms in the early church said well Mary was a young lady by the way if you talk to

Jewish people today they'll interpret Isaiah 7 if they are practicing Jews of Judaism they will tell you that word in Isaiah 7 behold the virgin shall conceive and give birth that word just means a young lady of marriageable age and they're exactly right that's what it means in the Hebrew but Matthew highlighted it and said that she had not known a man yet so she was not only a virgin in age she was also a virgin in chastity and so the virgin birth began to be kind of a conflict of problems because it was absolutely important it is important for interpretation of scripture to understand is the virgin birth right the trinity did was Jesus a the first some people began to teach very early on Jesus was the first created being he was the one created before God created the heavens and the earth now here's the problem if Jesus was indeed created by God then he is not God he is a part of creation and a part of creation cannot redeem all of creation it can only redeem itself so how you interpret the divinity and the humanity of Christ and if Jesus was not fully

God and if he's not fully man then man has not died in your place and man is still held accountable for their sins these are major things and the new writings started coming up one thing I know I had this question before and I had it as far as it applies to the gospel of Thomas and the gospel of Peter and the gospel of Judas and all those other things when these gnostic writings started pulling up one thing you need to understand is that in no time at no time did the early church ever recognize these other gospels quote unquote gnostic writings as secret truth and spiritual but also at no time did the proponents of those writings ever recognize our canon of scripture they never said we're adding this to the canon they said ours is completely different if you may find if you study some church history say well they took the gospel of Luke yes they took the gospel of Luke and they removed every aspect of his humanity every aspect of all these things and reconciled it with the other lost gospels of gnosticism and it was the spiritual truth that and by the way what all gnosticism teaches is that the flesh is innately wicked therefore

Jesus may have indwelt a man for a season but God could not become man for everything material is innately wicked but the spirit is clean and you say well what difference does that matter well that says it doesn't matter what you do in your body for your body is wicked and ugly anyway and it's immoral and it's created so all material things are supposed to be given over to all these desires but it is what you are internally it is your spirit you're seeking to redeem and your spirit is just waiting to be released from this wicked thing it's held captive to in your flesh so Gnosticism would say go live however you want to because in the end it's going to die and your spirit will finally be released that's pretty rough it's giving you a license to sin however you want to and these are the things that really started concerning that which you know why was that absolutely important and why do we have to get there here we go come on Billy Joe because they led to the early creeds and confessions the creeds and confessions are how the church defined and declared their doctrine people have asked me about these we need to clarify what we believe we need to clarify why we believe this so we get all these creeds and confessions that come very early on the rise of heretical and false teaching within the church mandated the church to find its position of doctrinal matters creeds and confessions were used to refute false teaching and declare truth and they were also used to ensure a catholic and be careful how we use the word catholic when we refer to the early church it just means one or according to the rule church are we all a church according to the rule are we one church the apostles creeds the first one to come out it came out in the third or fourth century between the third and fourth century you said it's up there you probably know it rich mullins sang it the third day did a take on the song too the apostles creeds says i believe in god the father almighty creator of heaven and earth i believe in jesus christ his only son our lord who was conceived by the holy spirit born of the virgin mary he suffered under pontius pilot was crucified and died and was buried he descended to hell the third day he rose again from the dead he ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of god the father almighty from there he will come to judge the living and the dead i believe in the holy spirit the holy catholic church the communion of the saints the forgiveness of sins the resurrection of the body and the everlasting life amen it's the apostles creed it did not come out with the apostles but it's referred to the apostles creed because it is united with their writing the apostles creed came out because it was a response to three questions you were asked before you were baptized what do you believe about these and so before your baptism you would have to recite the apostles creed because it was your declaration i believe the same thing you believe false teachers would not do that they would not adhere to that so the apostles creed was something that was given to kind of clarify do you believe the same things we believe and you had to declare this and it was a response so baptism followed an extended period of instruction teaching you these doctrines and observation that is making sure your life looked according to the fact that you professed these doctrines and that would take sometimes two to three years so they weren't quickly baptizing in the early church they would make sure that because the lions were walking around in sheep clothing they wanted to make sure you were really genuine in your belief and communion was only given to those who had been baptized there's and i know i'll get asked this question at some point there's much discussion on did the early church practice infant baptism and just to be honest with you church historians are not really sure some say yes they absolutely did others say ah well we really don't know so there's much discussion the question is not did the early church practice infant baptism and child baptism but really what does it symbolize we'll get to that in just a minute so stay with me the second one that came out in the sand creed it's a long one but it's a good one the sand creed says i believe in one god



the father almighty maker of heaven and earth and all things visible and invisible and in one lord  
jesus christ the only begotten son of god begotten father before all worlds god of god light of light  
very god of very god begotten not made being of one substance with the father by who all things  
were made who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the  
holy ghost of the virgin mary and was made man and was crucified also for us under pontius pilate  
he suffered and was buried and on the third day he rose again according to the scriptures and  
ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of the father and he shall come again with glory  
to judge the quick and the dead whose kingdom will have no end and i believe in the holy ghost the  
lord and giver of life who proceeded from the father and the son who with the father and the son  
together is worshiped and glorified who spake by the prophets and i believe in one holy catholic and  
apostolic church i acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sin and i look for the resurrection  
of the dead and the life of the worlds to come do you notice here the emphasis on the resurrection  
that is you will have a bodily resurrection you need to know this creed you need to know why you  
know this creed because this is still today the most universally accepted summary of christian  
doctrine baptist doctrine is built upon the nesan creed every church you go to bible preaching  
church is based upon that creed it's important and it's where they declare an affirmation of the trinity  
do you notice that i believe in god i believe in the son and i believe in the holy ghost and they are  
one and the same and affirmation of the person and the work of christ that he is absolutely god of  
gods and he became man of man's these things are important these creeds were given so that it  
could lay out this is what we believe these were the defining marks by the way the nesan creed  
came out what was that date 8325 athanasius is the one who penned the nesan creed you may  
remember him he is the first one that recorded all 27 books of the new testament as we have them  
today the same man who's the first to write in record history the 27 books of the new testament is  
also the one who wrote the nesan creed and just in case you didn't know he's a deacon he was not  
a priest he's a deacon he was right he wrote the nesan creed in response to the teaching of a  
bishop in his area who had proclaimed these things someone was refuting them and arguing about  
the humanity and deity of christ so to support the bishop which is just another name for pastor or  
presbytery at that time he wrote this creed and this creed was accepted as officially recognized by  
the church in 8325 the chalcedonian creed in 451 i'm not going to take time it is even longer than  
that one so i didn't put it up there for you you can look it up but it's an affirmation of divinity and the  
humanity of christ and again just affirms this reality and we see as edwin tant once said the trinity  
and the incarnation were important for early christians because it was the union of jesus's humanity  
and divinity that we sinful and mortal as we are encounter the divine life that saves us we need a  
savior who is both god and man we have to have that because if he is not fully man he did not die in  
our place and if he is not fully god and he is not perfect for there is none righteous no not one all  
those of the seed of adam are falling so we see this this really important establishment of creeds  
and confessions we won't have time to get into all the confessions we'll get into some of the  
confessions next week we look at historical baptist doctrine like the westminster's confession and  
things like that so the question is why do we have denominations why the division of the church why  
[36:07] do they come up and we look at all these things in today's time  
and we look across the landscape we see so many different things that are  
going on understanding this the church was suffering division very very  
very early on the reason it suffered division between the eastern and  
western church eastern orthodox church and the western church their  
greatest divisions came over the move of the capital of the roman empire  
when the romans left rome and moved to constantinople then we have the  
division of the eastern and western church a lot of division happened  
early in the church remember those people i said that some of them  
recanted in their faith well after christianity became accepted many of  
those who recanted came back and said well we want to be a part of the  
church again there was great division in the church do we let them back  
in or not if they weren't willing to suffer for christ should we and then  
there were some in the church that would say well god's grace is  
sufficient his mercy overcomes their failures and their weakness but  
there was great division very early in the church and really people that  
would profess the same creed but practically how they lived it out some  
churches would not give communion to anyone that ever recanted others

said well if you really genuinely repented of that and you're suffering forgiveness who are we to withhold communion from you so they would welcome them back into the fellowship and division was just an ongoing reality even among like-minded people they just didn't call them what we call them today but after 313 AD a lot of things changed the edict of Milan that came from Constantine because if you remember he's getting ready to fight a battle you remember your history right I told my son I was kind of channeling his energy but he could probably teach this part of it better than me they came together he's getting ready to fight this battle the night before the battle over the bridge he had this vision and the vision said you will conquer under this sign and it was the sign of the cross so he went and he won the battle he put that on their shields they won the battle and then he issued this edict in 313 which legalized Christianity so the Roman church was full legal status from that point on he did not necessarily come to

Christ and was baptized until right before his death many years later so don't think we have just instantaneous conversion he was baptized shortly before his death but this decree this edict that legalized Christianity in the Roman Empire changed everything because now they go from being a persecuted minority to being an accepted majority and when persecution is pulled back they can focus on other things and unfortunately when life gets easy and we get fat in the land that we're given to then we become kind of mundane and we become kind of lackadaisical in our faith so the Roman Catholic Church became more and more entrenched in the world powers and the ruling figures remember Eusebius a church historian he really loved the Roman emperors why because he had freedom during their reign so all of a sudden the church became at home in the world and they started really liking the world and when the Romans left the city of Rome it was actually one of the bishops of the church in Rome that mandated the peace for when all the armed forces were coming in and I'm not I want to say this from the very beginning these things were done with genuine concern and love I'm not saying that they were intentionally trying to be this way but the early popes in Rome would mandate the peace and and saw this power started shifting because the powers of the Roman Empire were falling and the power of the church was arising and they were meeting needs and the people were looking to the church to meet the needs because there really was no separation between church and state there just wasn't when it was officially recognized there was no separation as a matter of fact by the time we get to the middle ages Pope Boniface the 8th who was Pope from 1294 to 1303 said this both swords therefore the spiritual and the temporal are in the power of the church that's a good way of saying the Pope can tell you as an emperor when you are to go to war and when you are not when you should stay home and you can we can tell you what battle to fight for us thank the Crusades you can we can tell you what you should do and why you shouldn't do it we have the ability and so what they were holding over them was this spiritual sword because in the Middle Ages what was known and defined by the authority of the church faith was how it was defined by the Roman church the church got to tell you what you should and shouldn't do based upon the authority granted them through Peter it was their interpretation of what we read at the very beginning in Matthew 16 they were claiming the apostolic succession through Peter for the popes we don't have time to get into all that but therefore they could tell you and to withhold communion from you was the greatest harm they could ever give you because in communion the bread literally became the body of Christ and the wine literally became the blood of Christ so to withhold communion from you was to withhold you from the objects remember the early focus of the early church was the communion table it was to keep you from the objects of your salvation and so if they removed you from communion you did not have any hope of salvation gradually though the Roman church began to add a little bit more penance and all these other things don't have time to get into that but the early reformers in early time the early reformers started beginning to think maybe the rule of faith shouldn't be what the church tells us maybe the rule of faith should be what the Bible teaches us but the problem is it's not everybody had a

Bible remember Jerome's Latin Vulgate was all they had and the only ones that could read Latin were in the church so the church was telling you what scripture said the Renaissance came and I'm making my way really quickly here the Renaissance came when the Renaissance came there was

this great resurgence of things that happened the first thing that happened during the Renaissance there was further secularization of the established church that is the church started gaining more and more property more and more influence and more and more money and they started selling offices within the church to the highest bidder kind of sounds like the time of Christ with the high priesthood right and they started acquiring more and more land the feudal system was there a lot of things I don't have time to get into it but the church started getting a lot like the world instead of helping the world they were a representation of the world and that happened during the Renaissance period but also one of the things that God brought about during the Renaissance period was that men in general started having this desire to learn there were these ancient writings now because of the new union the trade routes it's kind of I know I'm running out of time but because the Roman church wanted to expand so much they created trade routes through the Crusades with the

Eastern and the Western church which there had been a division since the move of the capital of Rome and now I got to go really quick okay and so in these new trade routes brought something else with them the Eastern people had all these ancient writings these things that were not allowed in the Western world they were over there in the Eastern world the writings of the early church fathers and all these new things that came with these trade routes brought wealth and brought all these visiting Empire stuff into their world and brought the acquisition of lands but God also saw fit all of a sudden these ancient writings started showing up and part of these ancient writings were the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts of Scripture and now during the Renaissance people are reading some of the early writings of the church and there's this desire to learn and this desire to grow that's one of the products of the Renaissance and there people start learning Greek again and now all of a sudden they can read the Greek language for themselves and now all of a sudden we start getting Hebrew and Greek text and then we translate the Scripture in our own language and people see what the Bible teaches them and they say wait a minute the Bible doesn't say anything about penance and doesn't say anything about all these things so now this is the kind of the fuel of the fire for the

[43:44] Reformation none of the early reformers understand this none of the early reformers really wanted to divide the church they wanted to reform or purify the church they said we're not doing something right we can read the Bible we see it it's in our own language we've translated it we read Greek now something's wrong so they were calling out the fallacy the fallacies and all the wrong but when we get to reformers and we're still looking at why we have denominations there are two different types of reformers and this is where we kind of start getting nudged into the scene and we'll we'll look at it a lot next week there were the magisterial reformers these are Lutherans and other reformed groups Anglicans and things like that even today this is why they exist they desire to return back to the early churches of the early centuries the one in two hundred a.d.

churches they wanted to go back to the early church I'm not saying that all Lutheran churches are that way today but they didn't see any separation of church and state even during the days of Martin Luther in Germany if you lived in this region then you were Lutheran everybody in this region was Lutheran once it was accepted if you lived over there you could be Catholic but so there was no separation of church and state it was regional because that's the way it was in the early centuries of the church so they had no desire to separate church and state it kind of created chaos in Germany started having civil war you started had the peasants revolt all those things it's really it did some bad things in the name of this regional faith but to live here you could be Lutheran if you wanted to be Lutheran but the community you lived in was Catholic well you just moved communities you couldn't necessarily move churches you had to move communities you had to go live over there in the Lutheran world so there's no separation so baptism for them while they did infant baptism it became a sign of being a member of Christian society you are a member of society because you were born into this Lutheran society so it had nothing to do with your faith had nothing to do with salvation baptism was a sign of being born into this society that's all of your magisterial reformers your radical reformers hey we're radical here that's okay you'll know why next week radical reformers insisted on returning to the New Testament and the apostolic church they didn't care what they were doing

in the 200s and 300s and there were a lot of conflicts back there they wanted to get back to the New

Testament church they could read the Bible so they said the reformation is going too slow let's go faster let's get to the New Testament church and church was a voluntary body called out from society that is they were not a part of society you voluntarily said well I'm going to join this body and you join that body your entrance to that body was through the new birth of salvation due to an individual's acceptance of God's grace so you didn't you weren't Baptist because you were born in a Baptist or you weren't Moravian or Brethren or Mennonite or Amish because you were born in those regions you were there because you decided to join it because you profess Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and the testimony to that profession was your baptism so now baptism wasn't because you were born in a certain area baptism was because you have trusted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and you are declaring that new birth through your baptism see the difference even today by the way that's why we have infant baptism and what we call believers baptism those are important distinctions are you born into that is it a sign of the fact that you could come to faith because you're born in that or is it a testimony that you do know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and that's where we start getting historical Baptist doctrine from okay and so we see these two so time it is got eight minutes for 11 o'clock any questions really quick yes ma'am can you spell that house name for me I couldn't see you see yes can you spell that house name for me which one the one that did the early church history e e u s e b i u s and i have to thank my late brother barna came for giving from his library the writings of bc gifts in early church history thank you for sharing that reading through that one what a blessing i've read a lot of church history but when you open one up it was written in the 300s your life yes yes constantine's edict of milan was in 313 and constantine actually oversaw the the gathering of the saints that passed and approved the nyssen creed um but it wasn't until after the nyssen creed because he was actually baptized later on accepted into the church yes so it was after that the church was accepted we started having all this influence and people are coming out and going public with their now we can debate in the public forum so to say as an early church because we're accepted we're not undergone anymore so that's when i had to start laying out the creeds and all the confessions yeah and even the apostles creed came out about that time as well as kind of a to ensure baptismal candidates for true believers yeah anything else all right let's break take a quick break and we'll come back to work father thank you so much for this day we praise you for the opportunity we have again together thank you for each one that's here lord thank you for the chance we have to learn and to grow and pray that we continue to do so for your glory lord may we be edified and equipped for it we ask it all in jesus name amen remember as we take a break next sunday night we'll do q a over the three of the bible church and historical baptist thank you as five five  
Thank you.