

GOD
IN
CHURCH HISTORY

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Class Booklet in Outline Format

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God in Church History

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THE STUDY OF HISTORY

For Christian believers, the study of history, particularly of the history of the Christian church since the day of Pentecost, can add great depth to our understanding of what a precious privilege and responsibility it is to have an accurate knowledge of God's Word in our day and time.

Periodically throughout history, men have risen up whose diligence and believing can serve as an example to us today. More often, we see how easily men, even men of great ability, have been led to compromise or to a deceitful handling of God's Word. Perhaps the most inspiring testimony of history is the faithfulness of God to protect and preserve His Word even in times of unbelief, and to continue to honor His promises whenever and wherever believing emerges.

Those who base their belief upon the traditions of men need history to substantiate their theology. If a particular religious practice has been accepted as right in the past, they theorize, then it certainly must be right today.

We as Christian believers do not *need* man's records of past events to validate our believing. We need only the Word of God. It is pleasant to discover that a notable historical figure may have agreed with God's Word in doctrine or practice, but this type of documentation is not essential to our believing. The Word of God is still true if no one believes it, and the Word of God is our standard. Thus, we need never "squeeze" history to find evidence of any Biblical doctrine or practice. The Word of God is evidence enough.

In the history of the Christian church, instances of error in doctrine and practice are commonplace. The casual student may find these amusing. The mature believer, realizing how blessed we are to know *any* of God's Word, looks instead at why these errors occurred, and how they can be avoided in the future. He also learns from commitment and believing, even in those who held only a small portion of the truth.

Finally, it is important to note that the historical records which we possess today were recorded, preserved, and passed down by men. The prejudices of men will almost invariably influence what they write, how they write it, and what they choose to preserve or discard. For example, would a future generation receive an accurate and complete picture by reading a letter or news article about your life or mine? Thus, unlike God's Word, no historical record is wholly trustworthy, and there is always the possibility for error.

With the above information in mind, the serious student will be prepared for a fruitful and balanced study of the history of the Christian church.

Foreword

Session 1

PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

A. What is Church History?

B. How Church History Helps Us (and How it Doesn't)

PART TWO: ACTS – THE CHURCH OF THE FIRST CENTURY

A. The Rise

B. . The Jerusalem Council

C. Paul's Trip to Jerusalem, Reasons and Consequences

Session 2

PART TWO (CONT'D): ACTS – THE CHURCH OF THE FIRST CENTURY

D. The “Steps Down” in II Timothy

E. . The Aftermath

F. The Thirty-Year “Gap”

Session 3

PART THREE: THE SECOND AND THIRD CENTURIES – ATTACKS

A. Gnosticism and Other Teachings

B. Roman Persecution and Martyrdom

Session 4

PART THREE (CONT'D): THE SECOND AND THIRD CENTURIES – ATTACKS

C. Attack from Within

1. Apologists
2. Polemicists
3. “Apostolic Succession”

Session 5

PART FOUR: THE NICENE COUNCIL

D. Emperor Constantine

E. Arius

F. The Council and its Aftermath

PART FIVE: AFTER NICAEA

A. Doctrine Systematized

B. Practices Standardized

1. Church Buildings, Sunday Worship, etc.

Session 6

PART FIVE (CONT'D): AFTER NICAEA

2. The Monastic Movement

PART SIX: THE EMPIRE DIVIDES

A. The Rise of the Roman Church

B. The Church as a Political Power

C. The East

1. The Orthodox Church
2. Islam

Session 7

PART SEVEN: THE MIDDLE AGES

- A. The Crusades
- B. The Cathari and the Waldensians
- C. The Inquisition
- D. The Power of the Pope

Session 8

PART SEVEN (CONT'D): THE MIDDLE AGES

E. Scholasticism and Mysticism

F. The “False Dawn” of the Reformation

G. The Renaissance

Session 9

PART EIGHT: MARTIN LUTHER

Session 10

PART NINE: THE REFORMATION

A. Zwingli, Calvin, etc.

Session 11

PART NINE (CONT'D): THE REFORMATION

B. The Counter-Reformation

C. Servetus

Session 12

PART NINE (CONT'D): THE REFORMATION

D. Tyndale

PART TEN: CONCLUSIONS

