

The Early Church: An Introduction and De-mythology
A Great Cloud of Witnesses: A Study of the Early Church
Lesson 1

I. The Early Church: A General Introduction

A. Who?

1. The Early Church are the generations of disciples _____ the Apostles but _____ the Middle Ages

B. When?

1. Period of time from _____ AD to _____ AD

II. Vision for Study: A Great Cloud of Witnesses

A. Goals:

1. To increase faith, hope, and love in _____
2. To gain knowledge of the past in order to guard against _____ in the present
3. To _____ observing God preserve and govern His Church and His creation

- B. Method:** From the Apostles to Augustine, surveying six key Church fathers, within their historical context, along with some of their theological contributions to the Church, as reflected in samples of their writings

“It is the responsibility of the modern Church to personally understand the ancient teachings of the Church, and not merely to take someone else’s word for it” - Dr. Scott Manor

III. Orientation: The Marriage of History and Theology

- A. Argument:** History and Theology must be observed _____

- B. Timeline:** Rome and the Early Church

- C. Map:** Roman Empire

IV. De-Mythologizing the Early Church

A. Nine Common Myths

1. **Myth** - Church History is unnecessary, all we need is the Bible

a) **Reality** - The Bible is the final, _____ authority for truth, faith, and practice, but much benefit comes from knowing and recognizing the _____ of the Church's history

b) Four Arguments for Church History:

(1) Identifies and helps to avoid _____

(2) Provides many reasons to be _____ in modern, difficult times

(3) Displays God's _____ story of redemption through His chosen people

(4) Allows the Church to understand Jesus Christ better and to _____ Him more fully

2. **Myth** - "Catholic" is synonymous with Roman Catholic and should be rejected

a) **Reality** - "Catholic" means _____ and is an appropriate description of Christ's Church often used by the Early Church

3. **Myth** - Orthodoxy is a bad word

a) **Reality** - Orthodoxy is a term meaning "_____" which the Early Church believed was knowable, worthy of defending, and to be pursued at all cost

4. **Myth** - Bishop is another bad word

a) **Reality** - In the Early Church the bishop represents the same thing as the modern _____

5. **Myth** - The Early Church practiced idolatry through art and icons

a) **Reality** - For the most part, the early Church saw images, artwork, and icons as a way to _____ Christ, _____ the faith of notable disciples, and to _____ biblical truth

6. **Myth** - The Early Church was always persecuted in every place

a) **Reality** - The persecution of early Christians, with a couple of exceptions, was _____ and _____

7. **Myth** - Early Christians and Jews had nothing to do with each other
- a) **Reality** - The first Christians were _____, the first persecutors of Christians were _____, and the first Christian martyrs were _____
8. **Myth** - The Early Church did not have the books of the New Testament until the 4th century when Emperor Constantine gathered them together
- a) **Reality** - The earliest witness of the liturgies and writings of the Church _____ the books of the New Testament
9. **Myth** - Apostolic succession refers to the succession of Roman popes and should be rejected
- a) **Reality** - The Early Church recognized apostolic succession as being contained in the faithful preservation and passing on of the _____ contained in the teaching of the Apostles of Christ

V. Homework

A. Read: *The Letter of Polycarp to the Philippians*

1. Things to look for:
- a) What is your first impression of the style, attitude, and flow of Polycarp's letter?
- b) What is Polycarp's view of himself?
- c) What is Polycarp's view of the Philippians?
- d) What does Polycarp say about:
- (1) Christ
 - (2) Charity
 - (3) Church and State
 - (4) Christian Life
 - (5) Salvation