

The Church Breaks Out

In AD 66 Jewish frustration with the insensitive Roman rule came to a boil. A long history of strife lay between Jews and their Roman occupiers in Judea. Jewish relations with Greek-speaking neighbours was no better.

Rome had frequently raided the temple treasury to make up for what it called unpaid taxes.

It had sent Greek-speaking procurators, governors, as rulers in Palestine who had neither interest nor sympathy for Judea or Jerusalem. It had a monopoly positions of wealth and influence. Half the population wasn't Jewish.

The Jewish revolt began in Caesarea, on the Mediterranean coast about 80 K's from Jerusalem. The Greek-speakers celebrated a local legal victory by launching an attack on the Jewish quarters. The Roman army stood passively by as Jews were cut down. When word of this event arrived in Jerusalem, there was an immediate reaction. Though the Jews were divided into many factions, radical voices prevailed. The Jews attacked the local garrison, slaughtered its defenders, and appealed for an end of the occupation of Judah.

For seven years there would be a bloody conflict. Then the Romans sent Vespasian with four legions. Started closing in on Jerusalem. 68 there was a slight repast when Nero, the Roman emperor died. Vespasian was called by to become the new Emperor. But his son, Titus, equally capable, took over. He moved on Jerusalem, but this time no respite. The suffering in Jerusalem was horrific. In September 70, there was a last stand from the zealots in the Temple. Josephus said Titus was eager to save the Temple as a sign of Roman moderation. But another historian, Roman Sulpicius Severus, said he had ever intention of destroying it and ending this rallying point, "in order that the Jewish and Christian religions might more completely be abolished; for although these religions were mutually hostile, they had nevertheless sprung from the same founders; the Christians were an offshoot of the Jews, and if the root were taken away the stock would easily perish."

He would go on to destroy the last remnant at Masada three years after Jerusalem fell.

Whether Severus got the story right, his comments illuminated a crucial reality about the history of the early church. After AD 70, Titus' observation about the mutual dependency of Christianity and Judaism would be ancient history. By AD 70, Christianity was moving out on its own

From other viewpoints, the Jews would never forgive the Jewish Christians for leaving for Pella, across the Jordan rather than fighting. One more benediction would be added to the close of every Synagogue service, a curse on all Nazarenes, where those left still attending were forced out.

In NT - still trying to bridge. After 70, new directions, converting the gentiles. Conflicts would shift from Jewish law to Greek philosophy and Roman conceptions of order.

It became clear to all, Christians, Jews, and everyone else, that Rome's disruption of Judaism had pushed the Christian church out on its own.

New questions:

How would the church define itself?

How would the church organize its worship?

Find authority?

Find security?

Ward off false teaching?

1. What is truth? linked to their Jewish past, comes from divine revelation, personified in Jesus.
2. How do we know truth? written revelation.
3. How do we put truth in action? followed the ritual year

Also was able to take advantage of the Jewish legal privileges.

God had prepared a great time for his church to expand.

1. Pax Romana, established by Caesar Augustus provided political and social stability.
2. Greek language available to all learned people who lived under Roman rule allowed easy transmission of the message. Similar to English.
3. The dispersion of the Jews from Judea produced many God-fearers attached to the synagogue providing a ready audience to the Gospel message.
4. dissatisfaction with the Roman religions.

Not without reaction.

Roman persecution flared:

Nero, 64

Domitian, 90
Marcus Aurelius, 177
Decius and Valerian, mid 3rd century
Diocletian, 4th.

The destruction of the Temple was also accompanied by the dying off of the apostles. Peter and Paul probably executed under Nero in 64-67.
War starting in 67.

How would the church function

With the removal of apostles, already by 112, Ignatius, leaders of the church in Antioch, Syria, urged the believers to “follow the bishop as Jesus Christ followed the Father.” His injunction revealed the emergence of a system of church organization constructed around locally powerful bishops.

Alongside this leadership structure, there were at least two collections of Christian documents floating around - one, the fourfold gospel account of the life of Christ. The other, ten to thirteen letters from the Apostle Paul. Wasn't long before they would be joined by the Acts of the Apostles to constitute a New Testament.

Thirdly, the evolution of creedal statements. Short concise summaries of what it means to be a Christian. Latin - credo - I believe or credimus, “we believe” which would be useful for setting the boundaries of Christian faith and also an introduction to inquirers or the children of believers.

Very little hard evidence of the 50 years following AD 70.
110 starts to trickle in again.

Issues:

How we got the Bible:

1. catholic theology which is so centred on continuance connection with the apostles by apostolic succession, makes the church the authority that determined what was to be scripture.
2. protestants - no the church only recognized those documents that had apostolic origins or connections to the apostles. They did not give the authority to the documents but recognized it.

canon - rod or ruler

Marcion, 144, arrived at Rome from Asia Minor. His teaching appeared to be right, Jesus bringing in love.

But, looking more deeply, this God of love in Jesus was opposed the evil god in the OT.

Scissors and paste.

Muratorian Canon - by 200, four gospels, Acts, letters of Paul to seven churches, (2) Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Galatians, Colossians, (2) Thessalonians, Romans, Philemon, Titus, (2) Timothy, Jude, 1,2, 3rd John, and Revelation.

Books not in the latter NT - Wisdom of Solomon, Apocalypse of Peter, two letters forged to be by Paul to Laodicea and Alexandria.

Books not listed - 1 and 2 Peter, James, and Hebrews.

By the end of 3rd C, set list.

So Athanasius, 367, lists them.

Episcopacy - elders, deacons.

Evangelist role is morphed into the chief elder or bishop.

We all try to keep connection.

We will appoint an eldership in Sydney next year. But that existing eldership will be responsible for the next elders coming along.

Creeds - Church of Christ - anti creed. Only need the Bible.

What is wrong with that?