



ROOTS

TRACING THE CHURCH FROM PENTECOST TO TODAY

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Part 1: The Birth of the Church (AD 33-313)

A. The church began at Pentecost (AD 33)

- Believers were baptized (Acts 2:41)
- Believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching (Acts 2:42a)
- Believers devoted themselves to fellowship" (Acts 2:42b)
- It grew rapidly from 120 people to over 8,000 (Acts 1:15; 2:41; 4:4)
- Believers worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:46)
- Each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved (Acts 2:47)

B. The early church was called the "catholic"

- Meaning universal
- it was *inclusive* of all peoples
- Other religions were often *exclusive* to certain groups (e.g. Judaism)

C. The early church faced six major threats

- Misunderstanding who the "rock" was in Matthew 16:18
- Strong opposition from Judaizers

- Competing pagan religions
- False religious manuscripts
- Religious arguments against Christianity
- Persecution of Christians¹

D. Six reasons why early Christians were persecuted

- Christians had a different lifestyle
- Christians refused to worship Roman gods
- Christians refused to worship Roman emperors
- Christians refused to attend gladiatorial combats
- Christians treated their slaves differently
- Christian impacted the Roman economy

E. Four reasons why the early church survived

- Believers had strong convictions
- Christianity met true needs
- God's love was openly expressed
- Martyrdom's effect

F. Roman Emperor Constantine brought an end to Christian persecutions (AD 313)

- Edict of Milan (AD 313)
- Though debated, Constantine is still considered to be the first Christian emperor
- Christianity could now flourish openly

¹ It should be noted that believers were not called "Christians" until about AD 42 in the city of Antioch (Syria). See Acts 11:26.