

# The Story Of Christianity

1. The Fall of Jerusalem – The Church Moves Out
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3. Augustine – Father of the West
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5. Eastern Orthodoxy -- a Visceral Approach
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# The Story of Christianity



The Council of Nicaea  
The Trinity Affirmed

# What's in this Session?

## **You will learn...**

- How churches responded to persecution from the Roman Empire.
- How Constantine influenced the history of Christianity.
- What happened at the Council of Nicaea and why it matters.



# Persecution and Aftermath

**Nero** (c. 64-68). Traditional martyrdoms of Peter and Paul.

**Domitian** (r. 81-96).

**Trajan** (112-117). Christianity is outlawed but Christians are not sought out.

**Marcus Aurelius** (r. 161-180). Martyrdom of Polycarp.

**Septimus Severus** (202-210). Martyrdom of Perpetua.

# Persecution and Aftermath

**Decius (250-251).** Christians are actively sought out by requiring public sacrifice. Could buy certificates (libelli) instead of sacrificing.

**Valerian (257-59).** Martyrdoms of Cyprian of Carthage and Sixtus II of Rome.

**Maximinus the Thracian (235-38).**

**Aurelian (r. 270–275).**

**Diocletian and Galerius (303-324).**

# Persecution and Aftermath

- AD 247 was the 1,000<sup>th</sup> birthday of the city of Rome.
- Because the celebrations focused on Roman gods and goddesses, many Christians refused to participate in the festivities.





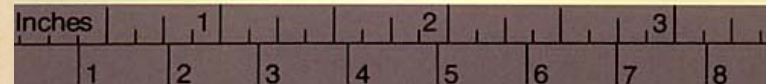
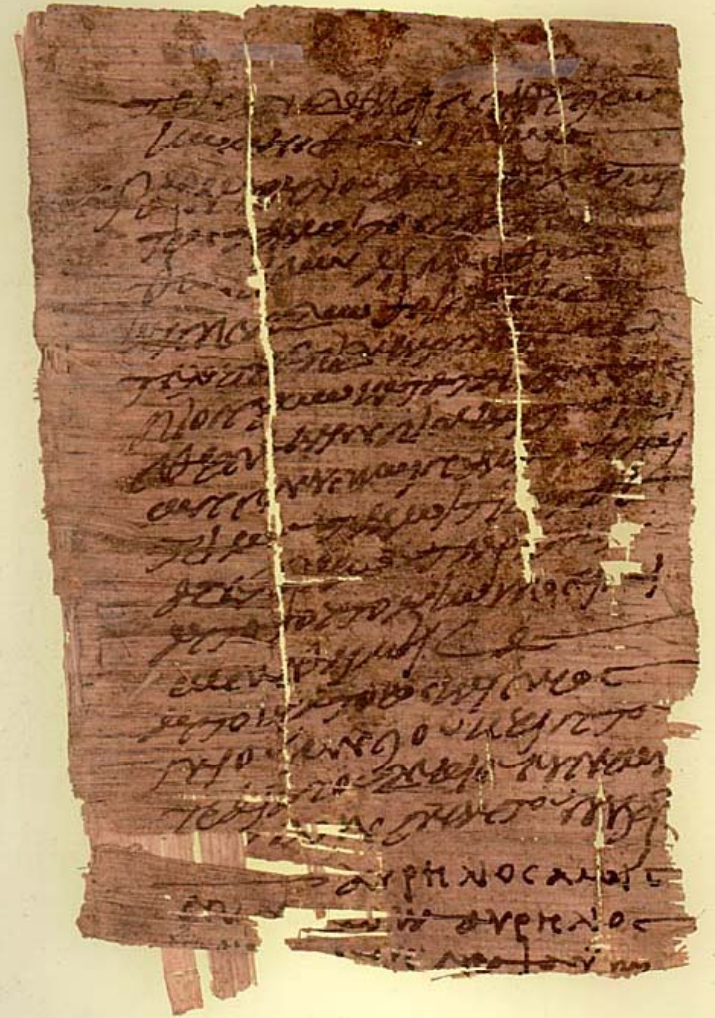
# Persecution and Aftermath

- Soon after the celebration, plague ravaged the city of Rome.
- Hoping to regain the gods' good favor, Emperor Decius launched an empire-wide persecution of Christians.



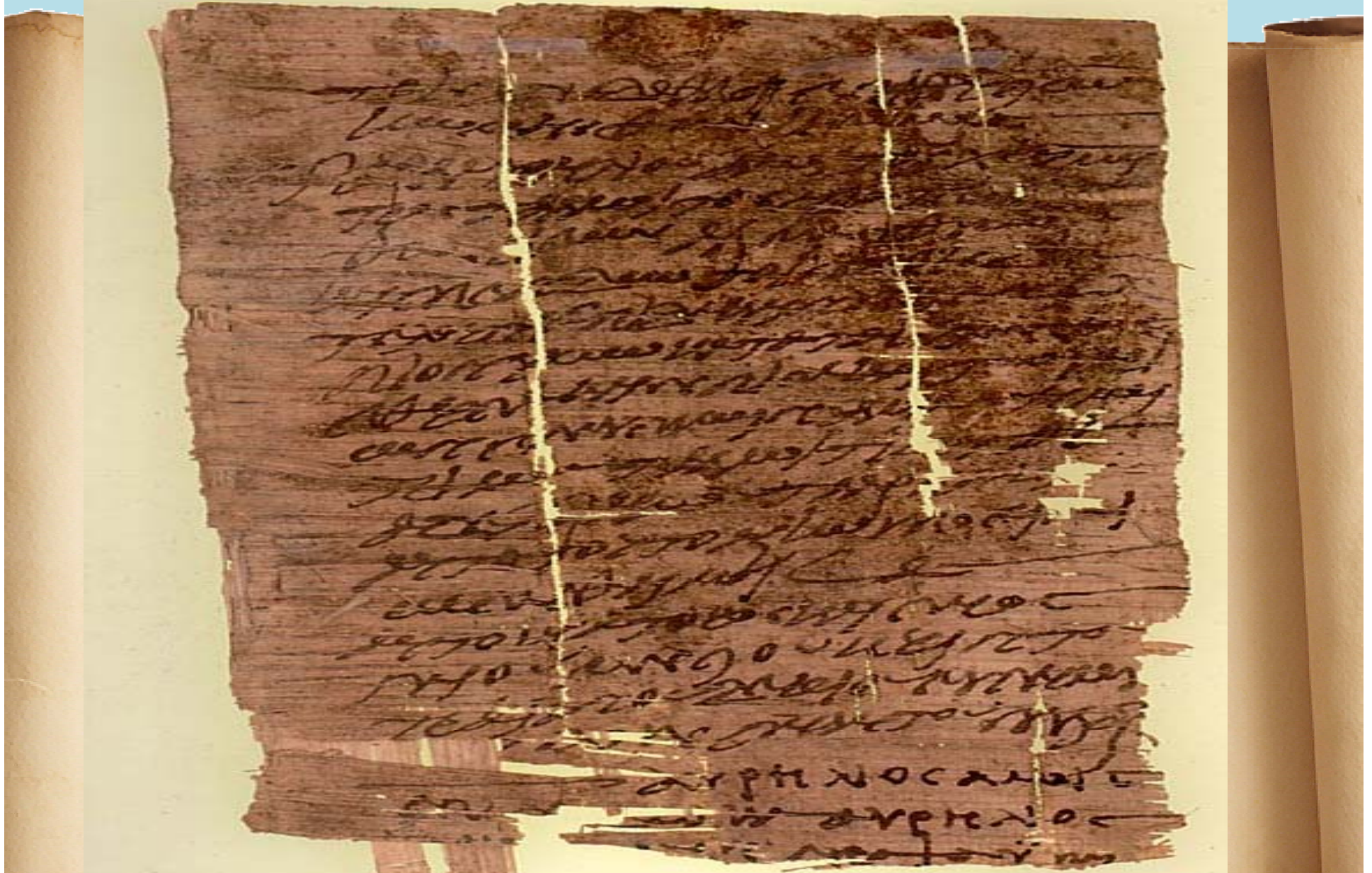
# Persecution and Aftermath

- Anyone without a libellus “sacrifice certificate” — granted by sacrificing to a pagan god—could be imprisoned.





# Persecution and Aftermath-Libellus



# Persecution and Aftermath

- The bishop of Rome, Antioch and Jerusalem were martyred.





# The Last Roman Persecution

- In the early 4<sup>th</sup> century, Emperor Galerius recognized that, despite harsh persecution, most Christians still refused to worship the gods.
- On his deathbed in AD 311, Galerius declared that it was legal for Christians to worship Jesus alone “as long as they don’t disturb the public order.”



# Persecution and Aftermath

- **What about church members who obtained false certificates or fled?**

CYPRIAN SAID	DONATUS SAID
<p>These church members should be given a second chance; re-admit them to the church after they show the authenticity of their repentance through prayer and fasting.</p>	<p>These church members were never true believers; furthermore, if one of them had been a pastor, every baptism or ordination ever performed by that pastor was invalid.</p>

# Key Leaders in the Early Church

- Irenaeus
- “Peacemaker”
- John...Polycarp...Irenaeus
- Asia Minor to Gaul
- Against Heresies



# Key Leaders in the Early Church

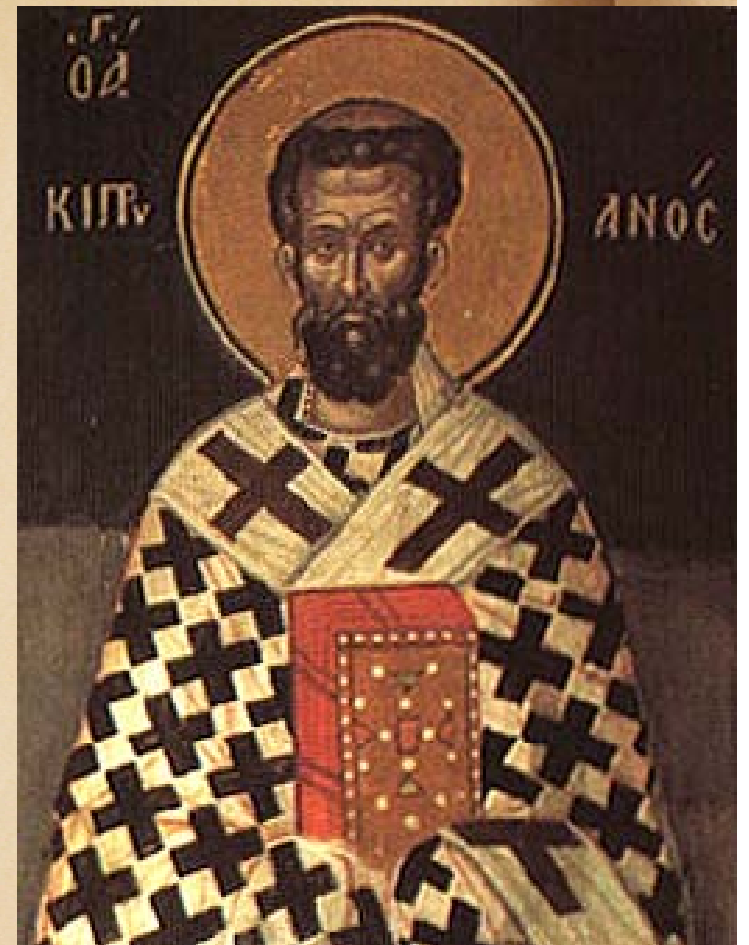
- Tertullian
- First to write theology in Latin
- Practical, brilliant, terse, funny
- First to use the term “trinity”
- “blood of the christians is the Seed of the Church”





# Key Leaders in the Early Church

- Cyprian
- Bishop of Carthage
- On the Fallen
- On the Unity of the Church



# Constantine Changes Everything

## The Tetrarchy





# Constantine Changes Everything



*The Chi-Rho (Latin  
"chiron")*

- Constantine was praying to the "god" of his father before the battle at the Milvian Bridge when he had a vision of a cross...CONQUER BY THIS
- Constantine's soldiers chalked the labarum - Chi-Rho - on their shields
- ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ is Greek for Christ

<http://aleteia.org/2015/09/15/interactive-map-shows-how-the-gospel-spread/>



# Constantine Changes Everything



*Emperor Constantine*

- In AD 312, Constantine was fighting to become sole emperor of the Roman Empire.
- Constantine defeated Maxentius at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge

# The Edict of Milan—AD 313



*Roman coin from the  
reign of Constantine*

**Constantine declared in the Edict of Milan: “Our purpose is to allow Christians ... to worship as they desire, so that whatever Divinity lives in the heavens will be kind to us.”**



# The Council of Nicaea—AD 325



- The first Ecumenical council of the Christian Church
- The Triumph of Orthodoxy



# Arius



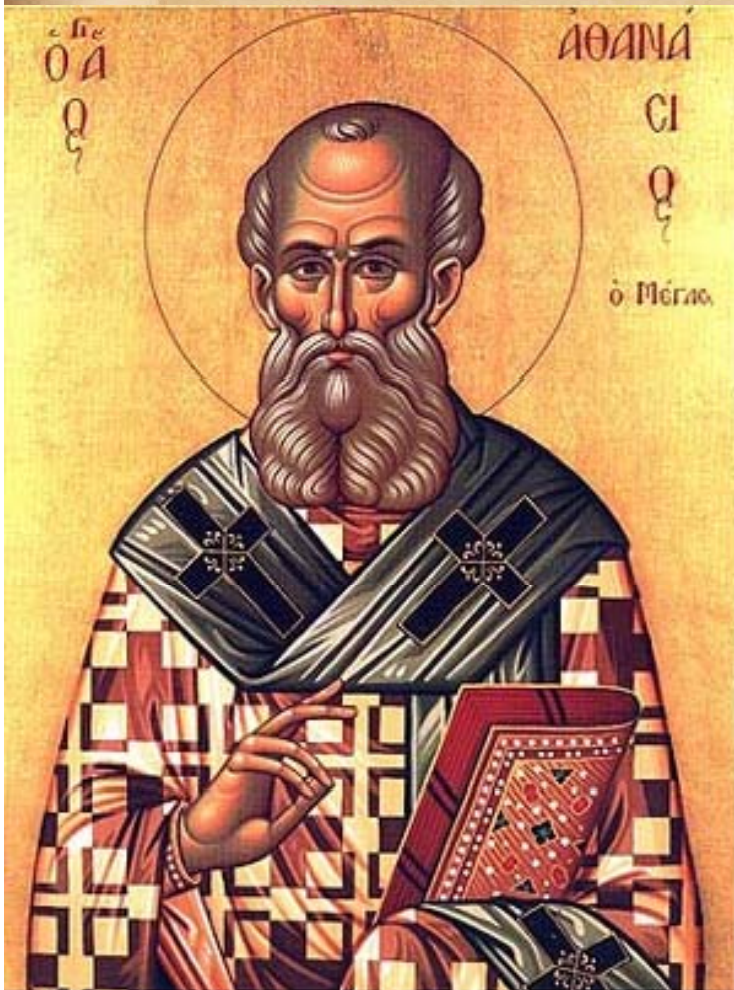
- Lybian and Berber ancestry
- 250-336 AD
- 306 Ordained a deacon in Alexandria and in 313 a priest.
- Before and during the reign of Bishop Alexander, he started to preach Arianism

# Arius



- Arius grounded his faith in the absolute transcendence of God
- Alone ingenerate
- Alone without beginning
- Alone true
- Alone unchanging
- Alone wise

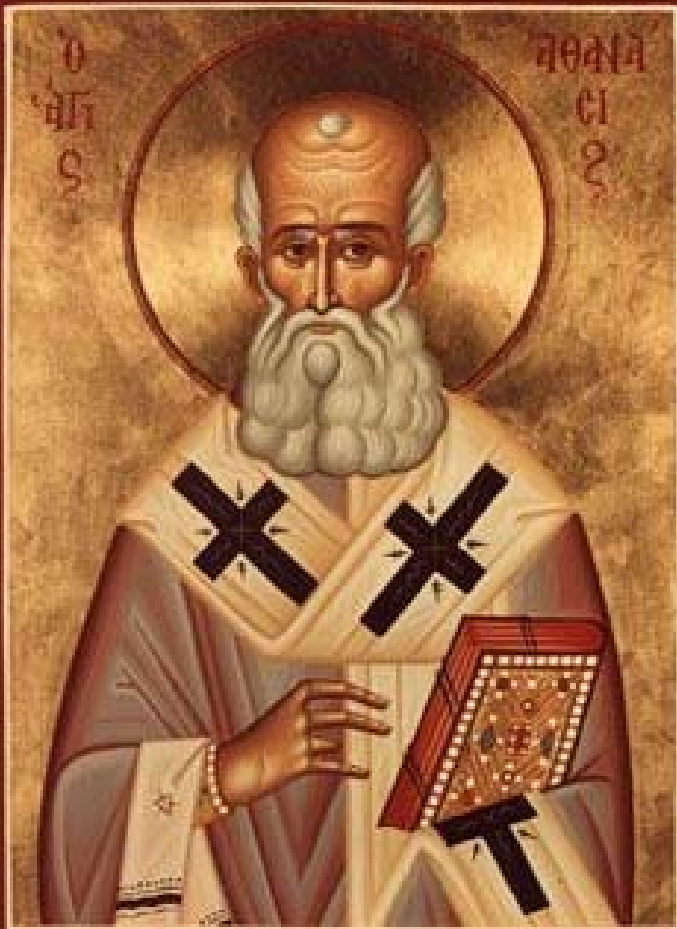
# Bishop Alexander I



- 250-328 AD (5 months after Council of Nicaea)
- Priest in Alexandria during the time of persecutions of Roman emperors Galerius and Maximinus
- 313 Ordained 19<sup>th</sup> Patriarch of Alexandria
- He had expelled Arius from the Church and from Egypt prior to the Council of Nicaea and he lead the fight against Arius' heresy along with St. Athanasius.



# St. Athanasius



- 298 to 373 AD
- Before age 20, he wrote *On the Incarnation* explaining that Jesus Christ was both God and Man
- He was a deacon during the Council of Nicaea and the primary person who refuted Arius' arguments
- He was ordained the 20<sup>th</sup> Patriarch after Pope Alexander died in 328 AD

# The Council of Nicaea—AD 325

- Constantine's conversion allowed him to see Christianity as a unifying force for the Roman empire.
- Arianism was dividing the whole of Christianity
- To maintain peace, Constantine convened a council in the village of Nicaea, in northern Asia Minor.









# The Council of Nicaea—AD 325

- More than 1500 clergy with more than 300 bishops made their way to Nicaea
- The Emperor paid the way for all who traveled
- On July 4, 325, Constantine called the council to order and declared himself a bishop and an apostle.



# What the Council Decided



- Christ was true God from true God
- Christ was consubstantial with the Father
- Homoousios vs. Homoiousios
- Christ was begotten not made
- Christ became human for us humans and for our salvation

*Emperor Constantine  
and the First Council  
of Nicaea*



# The Creed of Nicaea

“We believe in one God, the Father, almighty creator of all things visible and invisible. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, God’s Son, begotten from the Father, uniquely begotten from the Father’s essence; God from God, Light from Light, very God from very God; begotten not created, of one essence with the Father.

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# The Creed of Nicaea

Through him all things were made, in heaven and earth; for us humans and for our salvation, he came down and was made flesh—was made human—suffered, and rose again the third day; he ascended into heaven and is coming to judge the living and the dead.

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# The Creed of Nicaea

We believe in the Holy Spirit. The universal apostolic church curses all who say, 'There was a time when he was not' and 'Before he was begotten, he was not' and 'He came out of nothing,' or those who pretend God's Son is of another substance or essence or created or variable or changeable."

# The Council of Nicaea—AD 325



Why so Vital?

- The council made the critical choice for the wisdom of God in preference to human wisdom