

# 12ish Weeks in Church History

2000 Years of Christ's Power - An Introduction



# Why Church History?

- **History is traceable**
  - We came from somewhere
  - What is the connection between CBC and Acts 2?
- **History is a great teacher**
  - Observe past mistakes and Study past triumphs
- **History is literally His Story**
  - Witness the unveiling of God's sovereign will through the ages

# Goals

- **TO LEARN**
  - Our Roots
  - Our Theology
  - Our mistakes
- **TO WORSHIP**
  - God's Sovereignty
  - God's Faithfulness

# Matthew 16:16-18

- “Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.’”

# The Map

- **Reaction to Persecution and Infiltration (33-400)**
- **Reaction to the Culture: Acceptance and Opposition (400-1400)**
- **Reaction to Faithlessness: Reformation and Aftermath (1400-1700)**
- **Reaction to Enlightenment (1700-2000)**

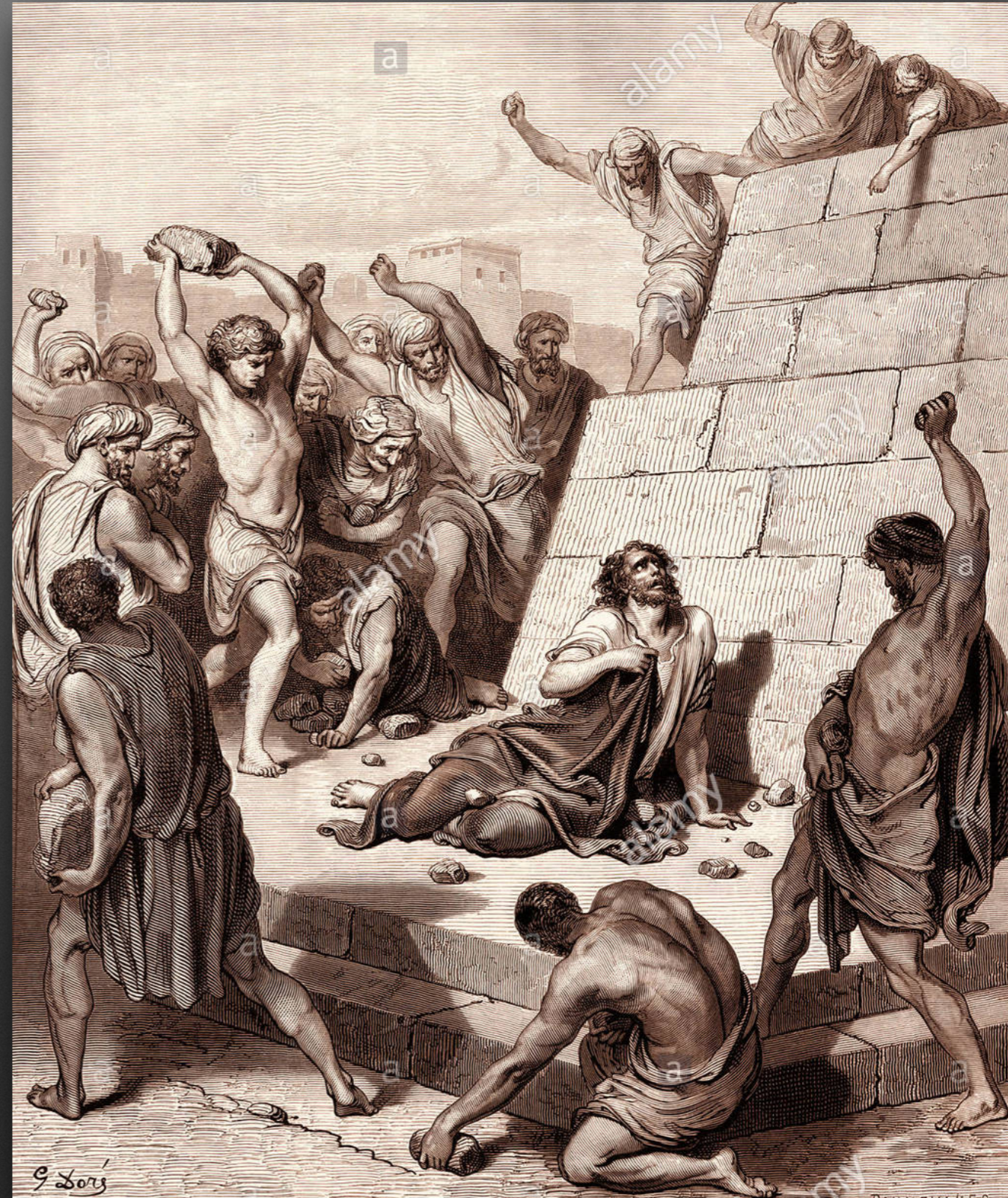


# The Church's Reaction to Persecution

The First 300 Years

# Jewish (cultural ) Persecution

- Now when they heard this, they were cut to the quick, and they began gnashing their teeth at him. But full of the Holy Spirit he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; and he said, “Behold, I see the heavens open up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” But they cried out with a loud voice, and covered their ears, and they rushed upon him with one impulse. And when they had driven him out to the city, they began stoning him.



# The Church's Reaction: Perseverance

- **Acts 4:1-22**
  - Arrest for preaching (vv. 1-4)
  - Peter Preaches (vv. 5-12)
  - Warnings Ignored (vv. 13-22)
- **Acts 5:17-42**
  - Rinse and Repeat
- **Acts 6:7-8:40**
  - Stephen arrested and killed
  - Philip and the Apostles keep preaching elsewhere



# The Church's Reaction: Evangelism

- The Church preached the Gospel to those who persecuted them
  - Acts 4:8-12
  - Acts 5:29-32
  - Acts 7:1-53
- The Church never stopped preaching the gospel
  - Acts 8:4-8
  - Acts 8:26-40

# The Church's Reaction: Apologetics

- The church argued for Christianity as a legitimate and logical interpretation of the OT and reality
  - Acts 6:8-10
  - Acts 9:20-22
  - Acts 13:13-41
  - Acts 17:1-3
  - Acts 17:22-31
  - Acts 28:17-31

# Roman (state) Persecution

*“When the Tiber floods,  
or the Nile fails to flood,  
up goes the cry:  
Christians to the lions!”*  
- Tertullian (160-225)



# Switch from cultural to political persecution

- In the early years, the church was not on Rome's radar and thus was not considered any sort of threat
  - Acts 16:22-40
  - Acts 18:12-17
  - Acts 21:31-22:29
- All of that changed in when it became clear that Christians were not Jews
  - But even then, most of the persecution came from the regional level rather than empire wide.

# Emperor Worship & Atheism

- All subjects expected to accept Roman pagan worship
  - Syncretism accepted
  - “Atheism” was illegal
- All subjects expected to make offering for/to the Emperor
  - Offer incense and declare Caesar is Lord
  - Failure to do so was considered Treason

# The Church's Reaction: Perseverance

- Local Persecutions
  - Nero's Persecution (64)
  - Domitian's Persecution (96)
- Empire Wide Persecutions
  - Trajan's Persecution (112)
  - Marcus Aurelius (177)

# Example of Martyrdom

- Polycarp of Smyrna (69-156)
  - Disciple of John and very likely a direct recipient of Revelation
  - Martyred in 156 at the age of 86

# The Church's Reaction: Apologetics/Evangelism

- **Aristides (138-161)**
  - Converted Athenian philosopher
  - Wrote a dedicated apology to the Emperor Antonius Pius in 140
- **Justin Martyr (??-165)**
  - A Greek born in Palestine, he was converted through a search for the meaning of life, found the OT and Christ
  - Wrote two apologies. One to The emperor Antious Pius and the other to the Roman Senate.
  - Wrote *Dialogue with Trypho* an attempt to convert a Jew (Trypho) that Jesus is the Christ



# Conclusion

- One of Satan's first attacks upon the church was to physically attack their life/liberty/livelihood
- The Church's response:
  - Endure
  - Preach the Gospel
  - Defend the Gospel
- What will our response be?
- What must our response be?