

CHURCH PORTRAIT

	Acts 1:8	Eph. 2:19-22	1 Cor. 3:9-16	1 Pet. 2:4-12
A A key word from this passage				
B Express the truth of this passage in 10 words or less				
C How is the church described here?				

Notes:

What Do You Know . . . about the Early Church?

1. Which of these was one of Jesus' original twelve disciples?

- a. Paul
- b. Barnabas
- c. Matthias
- d. None of these

2. According to tradition, all the apostles died violent deaths, except for one. He was sent into exile for a time but died of old age. Who was he?

3. Which of the following pairs of apostles were brothers?

- a. Peter and Paul
- b. Peter and Andrew
- c. Peter and John
- d. Peter and James

4. Who is generally considered the major source behind Mark's Gospel?

- a. Peter
- b. Paul
- c. Mary
- d. Bob

5. The Apostle John wrote the Book of Revelation from what island?

- a. Crete
- b. Malta
- c. Patmos
- d. Manhattan

6. Which of these was the earliest term used to describe the church in the first century?

- a. Christians
- b. Followers of the Way
- c. Catholics
- d. Methodists
- e. Nazarenes

7. In many ways, the first century was an ideal time in which to spread the gospel. What made it so?

- a. Good roads built by the Roman army
- b. A common language, Greek
- c. The translation of the Old Testament into Greek
- d. The Roman control of Mediterranean sea travel
- e. Jewish settlements in most of the major cities of the empire
- f. Increasing religious curiosity in Rome and throughout the empire
- g. The new Miracle Sandal made walking a breeze

8. Which of these were leaders within the early church?

- a. Origen
- b. Hadrian
- c. Justin Martyr
- d. Justin Thyme
- e. Tertullian
- f. Septimius Severus
- g. Hilarius
- h. Ignatius

9. Catacombs were:

- a. Where the early Christians lived.
- b. Where the early Christians held their regular worship services.
- c. Where the early church held weddings.
- d. Where the early church held funeral services.
- e. Where the early church put its youth group.

10. Put the letter of the right early church woman with each description.

- _____ A young mother martyred for her faith
 - _____ The Christian mother of the Emperor Constantine
 - _____ A major force in the church at Cenchrea
 - _____ A colleague of Paul (along with husband Aquila)
 - _____ The first convert in Philippi
- A. Helena B. Lydia C. Perpetua D. Phoebe E. Priscilla

11. Scholars have long been interested in the way Christianity spread throughout the Roman Empire, despite persecution. How do they explain it?

- a. The Christians' proclamation of one God in a polytheistic society.
- b. The Christians' exemplary moral lifestyle.
- c. The Christians' demonstration of love for each other
- d. The Christians' willingness to be martyred for their faith.
- e. Free coffee

12. Christians in the Roman Empire were accused of which of these activities?

- a. atheism
- b. incest
- c. treason
- d. break-up of the family
- e. cannibalism

13. Christianity spread primarily through:

- a. loving witness of individual Christians
- b. mass evangelistic rallies
- c. door-to-door campaigns
- d. clever billboards on the Appian Way

14. Perpetua and Felicitas were:

- a. The first female deacons
- b. Outstanding Christian ladies in the court of Marcus Aurelius
- c. Two young mothers martyred for their faith
- d. Code names for Paul and Silas
- e. The prize-winning horses at Rome's Circus Maximus

15. Put the letter of the right Roman emperor with each description.

- _____ Imprisoned Peter and Paul
- _____ Wanted to be called "Lord and God"
- _____ Launched a "severe" persecution in North Africa
- _____ Wrote some great Stoic philosophy but carried on persecution of Christians
- _____ Started the Great Persecution of 303-312

A. Diocletian B. Domitian C. Marcus Aurelius D. Nero
E. Septimius Severus

16. There were some pretty good emperors who nevertheless persecuted Christians. What were some of their reasons?

- a. To unite the empire under pagan religion
- b. The Christians were considered disloyal, not serving in the army
- c. To demand full, worshipful allegiance to the emperor
- d. The Christians were secretly plotting to assassinate the emperor.

17. Which of the following best describes the early progress of Christianity in the cities of the Roman Empire?

- a. Started in synagogues and spread to Gentiles
- b. Started in Gentile lecture halls and spread to synagogues
- c. Started in Roman amphitheaters and spread to homes
- d. Started in the catacombs and spread to Roman villas
- e. Started between chariot races and spread to summer camp programs

18. Midway through his career as theologian and bishop, Tertullian had a major change. What was it?

- a. He was paralyzed with a stroke.
- b. He was named as the Roman proconsul for North Africa.
- c. He converted to Montanism, an early heresy.
- d. He moved to Britain and began evangelizing the Celts.
- e. He became a professional chariot racer.

19. What was "the Didache"?

- a. The twelve cities of Greece visited by the Apostle Paul.
- b. The leader of a heretical movement that afflicted early Christianity.
- c. An early Christian document that warned about the trickery of some traveling preachers.
- d. The collection of Plato's writings adopted by the Athenian Areopagus.
- e. Nero's summer palace.

20. As early as the second century, the church's worship services included:

- a. baptism
- b. the Lord's Supper
- c. Scripture reading
- d. sermon
- e. hymn singing
- f. offering

Quiz Answers

1. d. Mathias was #13, and Paul and Barnabas came later.
2. John. He became bishop of the church at Ephesus and was exiled probably during Domitian's reign. In exile, he penned Revelation.
3. b.
4. a. It was probably Peter who gave Mark his main information (See 1 Peter 5:13).
5. c. Patmos is a small island in the Aegean Sea.
6. b. See Acts 9:2. But take half credit for (a) or (e). See Acts 11:26, 24:5.
7. a through f
8. a, c, e, and h. Hadrian and Septimius were emperors.
9. d. Contrary to popular belief, Christians did not meet regularly for worship in the catacombs. They generally met in homes. Yet they did have funeral services and memorial services in the catacombs. This is where they buried their dead.
10. C-A-D-E-B
11. a, b, c, and d. Hold the coffee.
12. All of them. They did not worship the Roman gods or the emperor (a and c); they converted people out of pagan families (d); they talked about love between "brothers and sisters" (b); and they "ate the body and blood of the Son" (e). All of this was misunderstood.
13. a.
14. c.
15. D-B-E-C-A
16. a, b, and c.
17. a. This was the Apostle Paul's pattern through most of Acts.
18. c. Montanism was a charismatic group that relied heavily on the visions of a man named Montanus and two female associates. Some modern scholars question whether it was really a heresy, since it may have offered a needed corrective to an increasing rigidity in the early church. Yet the orthodox church opposed Montanism and branded it heretical.
19. c. Feed traveling preachers and house them, the Didache says, but if they ask for money, watch out!
20. All of them. Justin Martyr describes a worship service that includes them all, even the offering.

SHINING CITIZENS

SECTION A (for the artistic types)

Read Matthew 5:14-16

1. How does Christ describe his followers?
2. How is a Christian like a lamp?
3. In what specific ways can you "let your light shine"?
4. In what specific ways do you sometimes hide your light?

Turn the page over and use the top half of the page to draw a picture of this passage. It may be some abstract rendering or a specific presentation of some of the images in these verses or a picture of how you will fulfill these verses.

Read Philippians 2:14-16

1. According to these verses, why shouldn't we grumble and complain?
2. How does this text describe the world in which we live?
3. How do we appear to this world?
4. The first verb of verse 16 can be read as "holding fast" or "holding forth." In what way can we "hold forth" the word of life to our world?

Turn the page over again and draw another picture on the bottom (or revise the picture on top). This picture should express the truth of this passage--especially that image of "holding forth" the word of life.

SHINING CITIZENS

SECTION B (for the verbal types)

Read Philippians 1:27-30

1. The first verb ("conduct yourselves") has the sense of being a good citizen. We might translate it: "Let your life within society be worthy of Christ's gospel." What sort of social behavior is "worthy" of Christ?
2. What reports does Paul want to hear about the Philippians?
3. What is a "sign of destruction" for our opponents (and a sign of salvation for us)?
4. Flip over to Philippians 3:20. How should this fact affect the way we live?

Turn the page over and write 50 words or less for the Heavenly Gazette on "How the Model Citizen of Heaven Should Behave While on Earth." (But save the bottom half of the page for your next assignment.)

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17-20

1. What are some of the "old things" that pass away when one becomes a "new creation" in Christ?
2. What is the "ministry of reconciliation" that God has given us?
3. What is the job of an ambassador? What, then, is our job as ambassadors of God?
4. How does the role of ambassador differ from the role of being a "good citizen" of God's kingdom?

Turn the page over and write a brief report (50 words or less) to the "secretary of State" (that is, the Holy Spirit) on your activities as an ambassador this week. How have you represented God's kingdom on earth?

VIDEO REVIEW

- Conditions were ripe for the spread of Christianity. The population was concentrated in cities; most everyone spoke Greek; the Romans had built an impressive network of roads and controlled the seas; the Roman army preserved the peace (the Pax Romana); and there was an efficient postal system.
- The faith was spread mostly by common believers living Christian lives--not by professional preachers or missionaries.
- Christianity spread quickly in the cities. In close quarters (such as ancient tenements and workplaces), outsiders could see the faith lived out.
- Christians became known as care-givers.
- Miracles also took place in those days, confirming the faith.
- By 300 A.D., it is estimated that five to ten percent of the Roman Empire's population was Christian. Shortly after that, under Constantine, Christianity became the official religion of the empire.
- The ROTAS square may illustrate one major concept of Christianity, hiding the words Pater Noster, Latin for "our Father." This idea was novel in the Roman Empire. The thought that one could have a personal, family-like relationship with the almighty Creator would have appealed to many.

DEALING WITH ACCUSATION

TEXT: 1 Peter 3:13-18

1. How would you answer the question in verse 13?

FOLLOW-UP: Consider those early Christians facing arrest and torture for their faith. How would they answer the question?

CROSS-REFERENCE: Read Romans 8:38-39. Does this give a different perspective on the question here in verse 13?

2. How can we be "blessed" (v. 14) if we're suffering?

FOLLOW-UP: Do you think the early Christians felt "blessed" as they were persecuted for the sake of righteousness?

CROSS-REFERENCE: Read Matthew 5:10-12. What did Jesus say about those who were being persecuted for the sake of righteousness?

3. According to verses 14 and 15, what should we do instead of being afraid?

FOLLOW-UP: What does this mean?

CROSS-REFERENCE: Peter is quoting from Isaiah 8:12. In that passage, Isaiah was warning King Ahaz not to cower before the threats of his neighboring nations. According to Isaiah 8:13 and 8:17, what was Ahaz supposed to do instead?

FOLLOW-UP: How can persecuted Christians take that advice?

4. Why does Peter use the word "hope" for the thing inside of us that gets people's attention?

FOLLOW-UP: Describe a modern situation when you might be asked to explain your "hope."

5. Why is it important to explain our hope with "gentleness and respect" and with a "clear conscience" (vs 15-16)?

FOLLOW-UP: Describe a case where a modern Christian does not speak with gentleness and respect.

6. Can you think of something "evil" for which you might be persecuted (v. 17)?

FOLLOW-UP: Are there Christians today who think they're being persecuted for righteousness when they're really just obnoxious?

7. What does Christ's example mean in a situation of persecution?

THE ACCUSATION

VIDEO REVIEW

Non-Christians in the Roman Empire accused Christians of:

- cannibalism
- disruption of business
- gross immorality
- anti-family sentiment
- poverty
- atheism
- novelty
- lack of patriotism
- anti-social behavior
- causing disasters

In works such as the Octavius of Minucius Felix, Christian writers sought to challenge these charges.

Their counter-arguments included:

- They showed more concern for human life than the Roman pagans who often abandoned unwanted children.
- They had higher standards of morality than the Roman pagans.
- They included a range of social classes, including the poor and slave but also some from the upper class.
- They were not enslaved to wealth.
- They worshipped the one true God over all.
- Their religion was actually quite ancient, based on Judaism and honoring the God who existed from the beginning.
- They were actually quite patriotic, praying for the empire's leaders, yet they could not credit the pagan gods for Rome's great power.

Through ongoing interaction with pagan attacks, the Christians slowly broke down walls of resistance among the Romans.

EXPECTING PERSECUTION

Text: _____

1. What was the occasion when Jesus said this?
2. How do you think the original hearers would have responded?
3. Sum up in three sentences or less the main message of this passage.
4. According to Jesus' comments here, why will persecution come on believers?
5. What is the believer's responsibility when dealing with persecution?

VIDEO REVIEW

■ Persecution of Christians in the first three centuries was not constant but sporadic and localized (until 250).

■ Christians were taught not to seek out martyrdom but to accept it joyfully if it happened.

■ It seems that martyrdoms actually helped build the church.

Persecuting emperors included:

Nero (54-68)--started persecution; blamed Christians for the Fire of Rome in 64 A.D.

Domitian (81-96)--considered himself divine, required sacrifices

Hadrian (117-138)--continued localized policy of persecution but made accusations more difficult to make martyrdom

Marcus Aurelius (161-181)--Stoic philosopher, had no regard for Christian faith; ruled during several natural disasters; approved massacre of Christians in Gaul (France)

Septimius Severus (202-211)--prohibited conversion to Christianity; severe persecution went on in North Africa

■ At this point there was a period of relative peace for the church. Church buildings were constructed; Christians had some freedom.

Decius (249-251)--launched first empire-wide persecution; required all to sacrifice to pagan gods and get certificate; Christians lost property, jobs, lives

Valerian (257-260)--resumed Decius's policies

■ When Valerian was captured in battle, it began another peaceful period of growth for the church. Some Christians rose to powerful positions.

Diocletian (284-305)--toward end of reign, at the bidding of his assistant (and successor) Galerius, launched massive persecution; Christians were deposed, arrested, tortured, kept from meeting, etc.

Galerius (305-311)--intensified the Great Persecution; killing many who refused to sacrifice; on deathbed, he gave in, allowing Christianity and asking for prayer

■ Coming to power in 313, Constantine ended persecution of Christians and eventually established Christianity as the official religion of the empire.

VIDEO REVIEW

The early church celebrated the dates of the deaths of the martyrs as we celebrate the birthdays of prominent people.

This video focuses on two early martyrs.

Polycarp

■ Bishop of the Church at Smyrna

■ A student of the Apostle John

■ **Date of Martyrdom:** about 155 A.D.

■ **Roman emperor in power:** Antoninus Pius

■ **Circumstances:** Was in hiding, but soldiers tortured slave boys to reveal location. When they arrested him, he welcomed them as friends, prayed, then went to his execution.

■ **Charge:** He would not sacrifice to the "genius" (divine spirit) of the emperor.

■ **Manner of death:** Burned at the stake

■ **Quote:** "Eighty and six years I have served him and he has done me no wrong. How then can I blaspheme my king who has saved me?"

Perpetua

■ A Christian convert in Carthage

■ A young mother from a noble family

■ **Roman emperor in power:** Septimius Severus

■ **Circumstances:** Was arrested along with her slave girl Felicitas, who was eight months pregnant. Her father tried to talk her into renouncing her faith. He was even beaten by authorities in an effort to make her recant.

■ **Charge:** Would not sacrifice to pagan gods

■ **Manner of death:** Attacked by beasts but ultimately slain by gladiator's sword (which she had to guide to her own throat.)

■ **Quote:** "Do you see this waterpot here? . . . Can it be called by any other name than what it is? Then I can't be called anything other than what I am, and I am a Christian."

Thousands of others were martyred in the church's first three centuries--and many more have been martyred since. There are many other tales of faith to be told. These are two of the earliest and the most gripping.

KEY VERSES

"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

Matthew 5:11-12

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

John 16:33

What sort of opposition to my faith have I encountered? Have people insulted or slandered me because I'm a Christian?

When people oppose me because of my faith in Christ, I will . . .

I trust in God's power to help me withstand such opposition.

VIDEO REVIEW

The Great Persecution was drawing to a close. Then Constantine had a vision that turned the tide for the church.

Marching on Rome to do battle with his rival and establish power as emperor, Constantine saw the sign of a cross in the sky and heard the promise: "In this sign you will conquer." He had his soldiers paint the sign of the cross on their shields. They won.

How had the church prevailed?

1. **The promise of eternal life.** Christians were not afraid of death as pagans were.
2. **A simple message.** Anyone could understand the truth of Jesus.
3. **Universal appeal.** The gospel was for all groups of people.
4. **Acceptance in a close-knit community.** Christians were known for their love and fellowship.
5. **Care for others.** Christians also went out of their way to provide care for the sick and needy in society.
6. **The person of Christ.** His life, death, and resurrection were at the heart of the faith.

The church has continued to grow. We may be facing another transition as the church catches fire in South America and Africa. Some say there will be two billion Christians on earth in the year 2000.

VICTORY

"But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

1 Corinthians 15:57

Look up this passage. What was the "enemy" over which Christ won the victory?

How did he win this victory?

"And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross."

Colossians 2:15

Look up this passage. About what "powers and authorities" is he talking?

How did Christ win this victory?

Over what enemy do you need to win victory? (Be specific. But if you don't want to write it down, use a code word.)

How can Christ's cross help you win this victory?

How can Christ's resurrection help you win this victory?