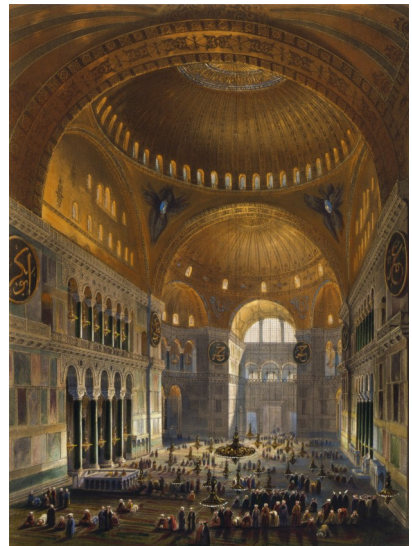
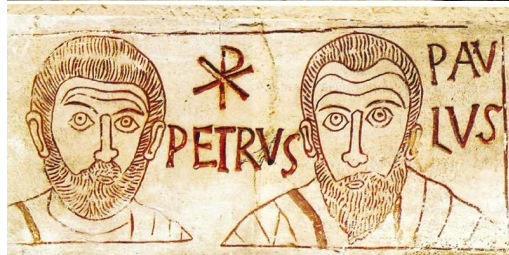
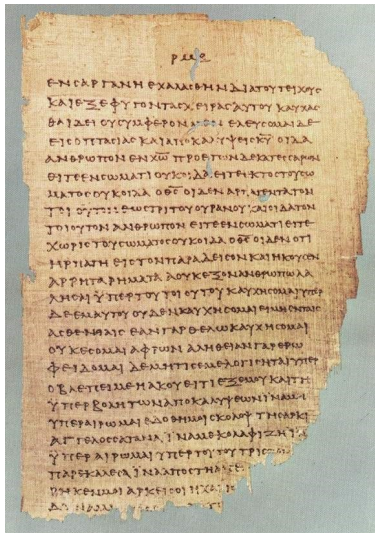


Pictures from CHRISTIAN HISTORY

*Visual and verbal images from the
pages of the Christian family album*



Richard Cravy

Pictures from CHRISTIAN HISTORY

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1. Pictures from Christian History

Why and How to Study Christian History

We Are Poor Students of Christian/Church History

1. The study of history for many is something to be avoided if possible, endured if unavoidable!
2. Unfortunately, the history of Christianity is viewed the same way by most believers.
3. Combine this aversion with the mostly negative presentation of Christian history made by many of us who are Bible teachers or preachers.
4. The result is a very skewed, uninformed view of the most transformative force at work on planet Earth over the last 2,000 years!

God and History

1. God is the Lord of History
 - a. The Old Testament
 - b. The New Testament
 - c. Did God retire after that? Not according to the Book of Revelation!
2. The prophecies of the OT and the promises of the NT indicate God's work was going to continue through all future human history.
 - a. Genesis 12:3; Daniel 2:31-45; 7:13-14
 - b. Matthew 16:18; 28:18-20; Revelation 7:9
 - c. The Book of Revelation pictures the Church and Satan battling until Christ comes again to bring the final victory.
3. Unlike the inspired historical records that make up the Old and New Testaments, the Holy Spirit has not chosen to reveal all that He and the Father and our Lord Jesus have been doing since the First Century.
4. This is what I am confident of:
 - a. The fundamental message of the Gospel has continued to be propagated throughout the world these last 1,900+ years – man's lostness in sin, the incarnation of Christ, His redeeming sacrifice on the cross, His resurrection, His reign now in heaven, His coming return, and the final judgment.
 - b. The Word of God has been preserved, distributed and honored as the revelation of God.
 - c. Countless men and women who have heard the gospel message, however imperfect the messengers, have been transformed.
5. This is not an endorsement of all the many errors, misinterpretations, corruptions and even occasional atrocities which have happened over these many generations within the Christian family. I only affirm that God has still been at work despite the many failings of those wearing the name Christian.

Sources of Information for Christian History

1. Written sources – official documents, private writings of those involved, accounts by chroniclers, published letters and books by church leaders and scholars, quotations by later authors of earlier writers

2. Unwritten sources – inscriptions, buildings, art, monuments, customs, ceremonies, holy days
3. The difficulty with historical sources: often incomplete, may be biased and/or inconsequential, might reflect situations unfamiliar to us.
4. Modern “histories” are necessarily include interpretations and are selective in what they choose to include.

Brief Outline of Christian History – Focused on Western Christianity

1. AD 1-100 – The Age of Jesus, the Apostles and other Eyewitnesses.
2. AD 100-311 – The Growing Church is Persecuted, Identifies Apostolic Scripture, and Becomes More Structured.
3. AD 311-590 – The Legalized Church is Empowered as the Roman Empire falters
4. AD 590-1054 – The Papal Hierarchy dominates. The Church Faces the Challenge of Islam and Begins to Divide into East and West.
5. AD 1054-1517 – The Crusades, Rise of Scholasticism and Corruption of the Papal Office. Attempts at Reform begin.
6. AD 1517-1650 – An Explosive Reformation Movement Leads to Many Churches and Conflicts.
7. AD 1650-1789 – The Age of Revival and the Challenge of Rationalism.
8. AD 1789-2018 – The Age of Political, Social, Ideological and Theological Upheaval.

Approaching a Study of Church History

1. Reasons to Study – Knowledge, Understanding, Courage, Inspiration, Empathy, Warning, Reflection, Humility
2. Methods/Approaches of Study – Classic Timeline, Specific Eras, Biographical, Turning Points, Geographically, Documentary, Departures and Heresies, Revivals and Reforms, Anecdotal (Stories), Topical, By Traditions (Orthodox, Eastern, Catholic, Reform, Evangelical, etc.)

This Study

1. Our title says “Pictures.” We are using that word in both of its two most common meanings:
 - a. (1) “a visual representation, such as a photograph or painting,” and
 - b. (2) “to depict with words; to describe graphically.”
 - c. An old saying: “A picture is worth a thousand words.” But words are often needed to give the context, meaning, and significance of a picture!
2. Each week we will select three or four things along a certain theme from Christian history and share them with you. Examples may include:
 - a. Church meeting places/buildings
 - b. The evangelistic spread of the Gospel
 - c. Great preachers and preaching
 - d. Suffering and persecution
 - e. Significance of women
 - f. How the New Testament was transmitted and preserved
 - g. Christian art of symbols
 - h. Influence of Christianity on culture

2. Where the Saints Met

“Church Buildings” in the Early Church

INTRODUCTION: Two key principles of history and archeology

1. What survives from the past is often “random” and a very incomplete picture.
2. Just because material evidence for the existence of a person, place or thing has not yet been found, we cannot automatically assume they/it never existed.

I. NEW TESTAMENT PLACES OF MEETING

- a. “Church buildings” and meeting places were not a primary focus of early Christian congregations, although needed.
 - i. First church in Jerusalem began with meetings at the Temple, particularly Solomon’s Porch – Acts 2:46; 3:11; 5:12
 - ii. Also included daily meetings in homes – Acts 2:46; 8:3
- b. As the early church expanded throughout the Roman Empire, a number of different meeting places are mentioned in passing.
 - i. Homes – Acts 12:12; 18:7; Romans 16:4-5; I Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15; Philemon 1:2
 - ii. Synagogues (probably) – Acts 19:8-9; James 2:2-3
 - iii. Lecture hall – Acts 19:9-10
 - iv. Three-story building – Acts 20:7-10

II. SIMON PETER’S HOUSE IN CAPERNAUM

- a. Peter and his family had a home in Capernaum – Mark 1:29-31; Matthew 8:14-15
 - i. Jesus regularly stayed there – Luke 4:38; Mark 1:29-33; perhaps Mark 2:1,15
 - ii. Its location was very near the synagogue – Mark 1:29
- b. Many Jewish families in Galilee lived in “compounds” called *insulas*, where several generations and even extended family lived within the walls. Archeologists can point to many of these *insulas* in Galilee, including the ruins at Capernaum.
- c. Capernaum was a major trading, fishing and religious center in New Testament times. It continued to be occupied until about AD 1000, though heavily damaged several times by earthquakes and invasions. After the 11th Century it disappeared from history, so that even its location was forgotten until its buried ruins were rediscovered in 1838.
- d. Various archeological digs during the 20th Century have uncovered the ruins of a Jewish synagogue, fishing docks and



Ruins built over and around Peter's house in Capernaum – Wikimedia Commons

- market, streets, homes and an octagonal shaped church building.
- e. In 1968, archeologists discovered that the octagonal church (dated from the 5th Century), was built on top of two older structures.
 - i. Beneath the church was a 4th Century wall and buildings believed to have been both a place of worship and of veneration.
 - ii. At the lowest level were found walls and foundation of an insula dating back to before the 1st Century.
 - iii. This lowest level is now widely considered to be the house of Peter. Discoveries show that in the middle of the 1st Century it was remodeled and turned into a place of Christian worship.
 - f. In 1990 the Franciscan Order erected and dedicated a church building on stilts above the ruins to protect and preserve them. This new church has a glass floor for viewing the ruins beneath.
 - g. The evidence is considered very high that this was the house of Peter. It represents the earliest known surviving place of meeting for Christians!



St. Peter's Church built over ruins of Peter's house – by Hoshvilim on Wikimedia Commons

III. OTHER EARLY CHRISTIAN MEETING PLACES (by 4th century)

- a. **Dura-Europos** – on the eastern border of modern Syria with Iraq, on the Euphrates River. It was destroyed and abandoned in AD 257 following a war between the Romans and the Sassanian Empire in the East. It was never rebuilt and lost to history until its rediscovery in 1920 by British soldiers.
 - i. In the ruins that have been excavated were discovered a Temple to Mithras (worshiped by Roman soldiers), a Jewish synagogue, and a Christian church building!
 - ii. The church building, originally three houses joined together, has a baptistry for immersion, meeting hall, and eating hall.
 - iii. A number of still preserved paintings of biblical scenes are on the walls, particularly around the baptistry.
 - iv. Unfortunately, this area has been subjected to part of the massive destruction of archeological and historical discoveries by the radical Islamic factions since about 2011.
- b. **Megiddo, Israel** – archeologists are still excavating a 3rd Century church beneath Megiddo Prison where Palestinian prisoners are housed. Discoveries so far include a well preserved 580 sq. ft. floor mosaic and an inscription referring to “God Jesus Christ.” This area is in Galilee.
- c. **Beit Shemesh, Israel** – discovered in 2017, early excavations have revealed a mosaic floor, carvings of crosses, and a building foundation of about 130 by 230 feet. It



Mosaic floor of church building in Megiddo, Israel - www.theguardian.com, Nov. 7, 2005

is currently dated to the early 4th Century. The location is about 19 miles west of central Jerusalem.

IV. THE CAVE CHURCHES OF CAPPADOCIA

- a. By the 2nd and 3rd centuries, Christianity was widespread around the Roman Empire, with particular strength in Egypt, North Africa, Rome, Syria, Asia, Galatia and Cappadocia.
- b. The region of Cappadocia was particularly interesting because it was more isolated and insulated from Roman authority, being off the beaten path and challenging to access.
- c. Some regions in Cappadocia are covered with ancient volcanic rock (tuff) which is weather resistant yet easy to cut and dig into. At the same time, trees for building material are scarce. Therefore, many homes, churches and even cities in the region are carved into and out of the volcanic rock.
 - i. The areas of Göreme, Derinkuyu and Kaymakli are most famous for these structures
 - ii. At least 36 completely underground cities have been discovered, some possibly dating back to before Christ. The largest found so far is estimated to have supported a population over 20,000.
 - iii. Around 600 Christian cave churches have also been found, with dates ranging from the 3rd to the 12th centuries.
 - iv. One area of underground cities and cave churches have been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
 - v. Numerous documentaries, books, internet sites, and magazine articles can be found providing more pictures and details.



A cave church (in ruins) in the Sword Valley of Cappadocia - Beetjedwars at Dutch Wikipedia

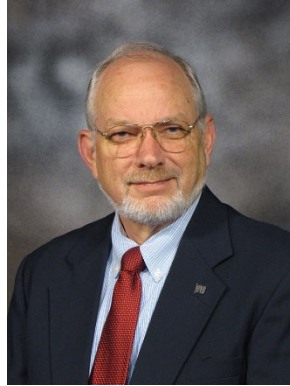
V. THE HAGIA SOPHIA IN CONSTANTINOPLE

- a. When Constantine became emperor of the Roman Empire around AD 311, he identified himself as Christian, legalized the Christian faith, and moved his capitol from Rome to Byzantium on the western coast of Asia. The city's name was changed to Constantinople (now Istanbul) and royal palaces and government offices were built. Soon a church building befitting the Emperor and his capital city was also built there. Over the following two centuries the church was damaged or destroyed and rebuilt several times.
- b. Under Christian Emperor Justinian I the building was once again heavily damaged during the Nika Riots in AD 532.



Hagia Sophia today – by Nserrano, Wikimedia Commons

- In fact, about half the entire city was burned and thousands killed by warring factions. Issues leading to the riots included excessive taxes, other claimants to the throne, theological disagreements... and who won the recent chariot races!
- c. Emperor Justinian commissioned two mathematicians turned architects to design a new edifice which would represent Justinian's magnificence and Christianity's dominance at that time. And in the process, the massive government expenditures to rebuild the church and city would provide employment and an economic boom for Constantinople.
 - d. In AD 537 the "Church of the Holy Wisdom" (Hagia Sophia) had been completed after just 6 years of construction.
 - i. Architectural historians today mark its Byzantine style as a revolution and turning point in building design, influencing the construction of new buildings for the next millennium. Before it, most large Greek and Roman buildings were in the form of long rectangular buildings supported by rows of columns. The Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem and Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem are in this earlier form.
 - ii. It would be the largest building and church building for the next 700 years. A huge dome above the center nave seemed suspended on "nothing," and the building around the central hall was in two stories. The walls, floors and ceilings were lavishly covered with paintings and mosaics of biblical scenes and characters.
 1. The height of the dome from the floor is 180 feet and is 108 feet across in diameter. The foundation of the main building is 240 x 270 feet. If the building were filled with worshipers, it could accommodate up to 15,000-20,000 at once.
 2. The Hagia Sophia has suffered from earthquakes, fires, structural failures and repairs over the centuries, but remains in essence like the original.
 3. In AD 1453 the city fell to armies of the Ottoman Empire, and the church was converted to a mosque. Large symbolic shields were mounted high in the nave, and most of the Christian art plastered over by the new Islamic landlords. Four large minarets were constructed outside at the corners.
 4. In 1935 the Hagia Sophia ceased being used as a mosque and is now a museum. Gradually more of the original art within the building is being uncovered and restored.



Richard Cravy has been part of Sunset International Bible Institute since 1996. His education comes from Rice University in Houston, Texas and Florida College in Temple Terrace, Florida. He has served in ministry since 1970 with churches in Texas, Florida, Nevada and California. He retired in 2018 from the Tanglewood Church of Christ in Odessa, Texas after 18 years as the minister and an elder. With Sunset, he works to help move the school forward in technology. He is also the instructor for Christian History and Doctrine in the two-year program and a teacher in the adult education program of the Sunset church.

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