

Passing the Torch

A Journey through Church History

Passing the Torch: A Journey through Church History

I. Intro.

A. 2 Tim. 2:1-2: You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

B. Reminder of our reasons:

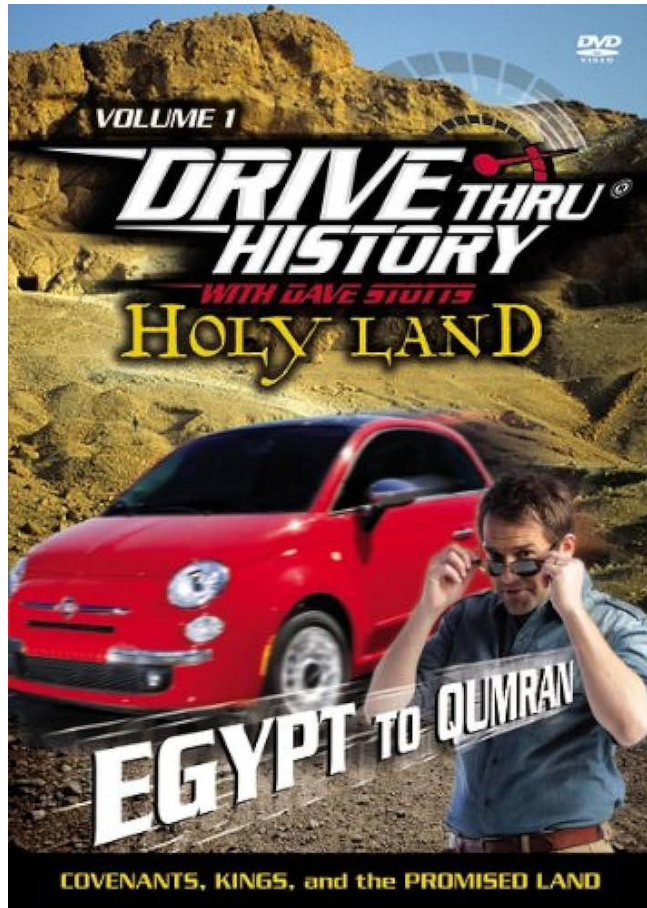
1. As an extra-Biblical testimony of God's sovereign power & purposes
2. As an "enfleshment" of Christ's promise of victory
3. As an expansion of "the great cloud of witnesses"
4. As a chronicle of the Great Commission
5. To help us understand how the doctrines we hold today were discovered and defined
6. To help us see how God works through His people despite their moral failings and incomplete understandings
7. To sharpen our commitment to truth as we see it pitted against error in successive generations

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C. Resource Recommendation

1. *DriveThru History*



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II. Setting the Stage: The Apostolic Witness

A. Events

1. As chronicled in Philip Schaff's *History of the Christian Church*

a. Schaff notes the importance of Josephus' writings to the documentation of this time

1a. Meet the Historian . . . Josephus

- i. Born A.D. 37-38 to aristocratic priestly Jewish family in Jerusalem
- ii. A.D. 64 sent to Rome to secure release of 5 Jewish prisoners
- iii. A.D. 66 during Jewish revolt urges compromise, but drawn in as a military leader
- iv. Surrenders to Romans, imprisoned in their camp for 2 years
- v. Given freedom by Emperor Vespasian, attaches himself to Roman cause
- vi. After fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 resides in Rome and devotes himself to writing

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II. Setting the Stage: The Apostolic Witness

A. Events

2. May, A.D. 30: Pentecost
3. A.D. 44: Death of Herod Agrippa I:
 - a. Preceded by death of James the Elder
 - b. Preceded by Peter's imprisonment & release
4. A.D. 50: Jerusalem Council
5. A.D. 51-58: Paul's missionary journeys:

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5. A.D. 51-58: Paul's missionary journeys:
 - a. A.D. 56-58: Writing of the epistles to the Galatians, Corinthians & Romans
6. A.D. 58-60: Paul's imprisonment in Caesarea (after being arrested in Jerusalem) during the procuratorship of Felix and Festus
7. A.D. 61-63: Paul's imprisonment in Rome:
 - a. Writing of epistles to Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians & Philemon during this time. Paul released (?) in A.D. 63

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8. A.D. 60-70: Writing of the synoptic gospels & Acts; writing of the Revelation (?)
9. A.D. 64: Persecution under Nero
10. A.D. 64: Epistle to the Hebrews written from Italy
11. A.D. 64-67:
 - a. 1st epistle of Peter, epistle of Jude, 2nd epistle of Peter (?)
 - b. 1st epistle to Timothy, epistle to Titus, 2nd epistle to Timothy (?)
 - c. A.D. 65-67: Peter & Paul's martyrdom in Rome (?)
12. A.D. 70: Destruction of Jerusalem under general Titus (Vespasian becomes emperor in A.D. 69)
13. A.D. 80-90: John writes his gospel and epistles (?)
14. A.D. 91: Domitian becomes emperor, persecution in A.D. 95
14. A.D. 98-100: Death of John (Trajan becomes emperor in A.D. 98)

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II. Setting the Stage: The Apostolic Witness

B. Reflections

1. Two strains emerge:

a. Deeds & leadership of apostles & disciples

b. Growth of the body of apostolic writing

1b. We are privileged to view the canon as a whole.

2b. Assimilation of the canon by the early church took place over time.

i. Gal. 1:8-9

ii. 1 John 2:27; 1 Thess. 4:9-10; 5:1-2

iii. Acts 2:41-42; 2 Thess. 2:5, 14; 3:6, 14; Eph. 2:20

2. Connection of this unfolding of truth in early church & in lives of believers in every age

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B. Reflections

C. Questions

1. How should we view our own faith and Christian growth in light of the fact that: 1) our knowledge and understanding are incomplete and grow gradually, 2) no part of the “whole counsel of God” is unimportant or superfluous to our growth?
2. How should we reckon with the age in which we live while understanding that God’s revealed truth is not merely a guidebook for navigating the problems and difficulties of our age?