THE QUESTION

Who led the early church?

Asked by a THF member on May 18, 2026 · published November 9, 2026 · 14 numbered quotations · the 38 early Christian passages and 203 Bible verses we kept are listed at the back, each with a link.

Read it online: thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/who-led-the-early-church

The short answer *From the text: says what the passages say*

Christ led the church through the apostles he chose and sent. The apostles then appointed bishops and deacons in each church, with presbyters serving alongside the bishop. Writers such as Irenaeus and Tertullian list bishops in order from the apostles, such as Linus and Clement at Rome and Polycarp at Smyrna.

LIBRARY ONLY	This study was written only from The Historic Faith's library of early-Christian writings and the Bible, never from the web. Every passage we kept from what the library gave is listed at the back, with a link to read it.
HOW IT WAS MADE	Compiled by machine learning from The Historic Faith's library of early-Christian writings and the Bible only. Every quotation was matched word for word against our stored text. Not yet reviewed by The Historic Faith.
SHARING WITH AN AI?	Every quotation here comes from The Historic Faith's library. If you paste this study into an AI, anything it adds beyond these pages comes from that AI, not from us.

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POINT 1 OF 7

Christ chose and sent the apostles

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

The Gospel harmony shows Jesus choosing twelve to be with him and sending them out to preach. Clement of Rome describes an orderly chain: God sent Christ, and Christ sent the apostles.

1 “These twelve he chose to be with him, so that he might send them to preach, and to have power to heal the sick and cast out demons.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Tatian,** *Diatessaron* 8 (c. 150–180 AD) **Source 12, page 7** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

2 “Christ was therefore sent forth by God, and the apostles by Christ.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Rome,** *First Epistle to the Corinthians* **Source 37, page 8** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

POINT 2 OF 7

The apostles appointed bishops and deacons

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Clement says the apostles tested their first converts by the Spirit and made them bishops and deacons. The Didache tells churches to choose such leaders carefully: gentle, honest men who do not love money.

3 “Thus, preaching through countries and cities, they appointed the first-fruits of their labors, having first proved them by the Spirit, to be bishops and deacons of those who would later believe.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Rome,** *First Epistle to the Corinthians* **Source 37, page 8** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

4 “Therefore, appoint for yourselves bishops and deacons who are worthy of the Lord: men who are gentle, not lovers of money, truthful, and proven.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Didache,** *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* 15 (c. 50–120 AD) **Source 1, page 6** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

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POINT 3 OF 7

Each church had bishop, presbyters and deacons

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Ignatius describes a clear order in each local church: the presbyters work with the bishop as his council, the deacons serve, and the people follow this good order.

5 “Presbyters, be subject to the bishop; deacons, to the presbyters; and you, the people, to the presbyters and the deacons.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Ignatius of Antioch,** *Epistles of Ignatius* (c. 98–117 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 6, page 6 Read it in the library ›

6 “And what is the presbytery but a sacred assembly, the counselors and advisers of the bishop?”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Ignatius of Antioch,** *Epistle to the Trallians* (c. 98–117 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 5, page 6 Read it in the library ›

POINT 4 OF 7

Bishops followed the apostles in order

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Irenaeus names the bishops of Rome in order, beginning with Linus, whom the apostles appointed. Tertullian says apostolic churches kept such records, naming Polycarp at Smyrna and Clement at Rome.

7 “The blessed apostles, having established and built up the Church, entrusted the role of the episcopate to Linus.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Irenaeus,** *Against Heresies: Book III* (c. 175–202 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 15, page 7 Read it in the library ›

8 “The church of Smyrna records that Polycarp was placed there by John. In the same way, the church of Rome says that Clement was ordained by Peter.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Tertullian,** *On Prescription Against Heretics* 32 (c. 196–220 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 21, page 7 Read it in the library ›

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POINT 5 OF 7

James is named bishop of Jerusalem

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

The Apostolic Constitutions presents James, the Lord's brother, as bishop of Jerusalem, appointed by the Lord and the apostles. Papias also calls him bishop and apostle.

9 “I, James, the brother of Christ according to the flesh, but His servant as the only begotten God, and one appointed bishop of Jerusalem by the Lord Himself and by the Apostles, ordain this: When it is evening, you, O bishop, shall gather the church.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Apostolic Constitutions** (c. 250–380 AD) *THF's updated English* **Source 32, page 8** **Read it in the library ›**

10 “Mary, the wife of Cleophas or Alphaeus, who was the mother of James the bishop and apostle, Simon, Thaddeus, and Joseph; 3.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Papias,** *Fragments* (c. 95–130 AD) *THF's updated English* **Source 3, page 6** **Read it in the library ›**

POINT 6 OF 7

All the apostles shared equal power

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Cyprian says Christ spoke first to Peter to show the church's unity, yet gave all the apostles an equal share of honor and power. He sees the bishops as carrying on this ordering of the church.

11 “Certainly the rest of the apostles also were the same as Peter, endowed with an equal share of honor and power; but the beginning proceeds from unity.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Cyprian,** *Treatises* (c. 248–258 AD) *THF's updated English* **Source 26, page 7** **Read it in the library ›**

12 “From there, through the changes of times and successions, the ordering of bishops and the arrangement of the Church continues on.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Cyprian,** *Epistles* (c. 248–258 AD) *THF's updated English* **Source 27, page 7** **Read it in the library ›**

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POINT 7 OF 7

True leaders kept the apostles' teaching

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Irenaeus says believers should follow presbyters who hold both succession from the apostles and the gift of truth. Tertullian adds that men taught by the apostles would not teach anything different from them.

13 “Therefore, it is necessary to obey the presbyters in the Church—those who, as I have shown, possess the succession from the apostles; those who, along with the succession of the episcopate, have received the certain gift of truth, according to the good pleasure of the Father.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Irenaeus,** *Against Heresies: Book IV* (c. 175–202 AD) **Source 17, page 7** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

14 “As the apostles would never have taught things that contradicted each other, so apostolic men would not have taught something different from the apostles, unless those who received instruction from the apostles went out and preached the opposite.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Tertullian,** *On Prescription Against Heretics* 32 (c. 196–220 AD) **Source 21, page 7** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

THE LIMITS

What these passages don’t tell us

- These passages describe leadership within local churches; they do not describe one bishop ruling over all the churches.
- They do not give a full account of how leaders were chosen in every region.
- A word-for-word match shows that a quotation really is in our text. It does not show that our reading of it is right, or who wrote each work.

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WHERE EVERY QUOTE CAME FROM

The Sources

The 38 early Christian passages and 203 Bible verses we kept for this question (repeats and weak or off-topic search hits were left out): early Christian passages first (sources 1–38, grouped by writer, earliest first), then Bible verses in The Faith Once Delivered Bible (sources 39–156, in Bible order), then 85 more verses THF links to these passages, by reference. **Quote 1, page 2** beside a source shows where the study quotes it. Passages are in THF's updated English unless marked "1885 English" (the Roberts–Donaldson translation, public domain). "… [continues online]" marks a passage the library gave only in part. **On paper?** At **thehistoricfaith.com**, Bible verses are in the **Audio Bible** and early Christian writings in the **Library** (search for the title).

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITERS *38 passages from 14 writers*

Didache, *c. 50–120 AD · source 1*

1 *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* 15 (1885 English) **Quote 4, page 2** "appoint for yourselves bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, men meek, and not lovers of money, 1 Timothy 3:4 and truthful and proven… [continues online] **read ›**

Hermas, *c. 90–150 AD · source 2*

2 *Shepherd* (1885 English; on point 2) "square white stones which fitted exactly into each other, are apostles, bishops, teachers, and deacons, who have lived in godly purity, and have acted as bishops and teachers and deacons… [continues online] **read ›**

Papias, *c. 95–130 AD · source 3*

3 *Fragments* **Quote 10, page 4** Mary, the mother of the Lord; 2. Mary, the wife of Cleophas or Alphaeus, who was the mother of James the bishop and apostle, Simon, Thaddeus, and Joseph; 3. Mary… [continues online] **read ›**

Ignatius of Antioch, *c. 98–117 AD · sources 4–11*

4 *Epistle to the Philadelphians* (on point 3) free." Let governors be obedient to Caesar; soldiers to those that command them; deacons to the presbyters, as to high priests; the presbyters, deacons, and the rest of the clergy… [continues online] **read ›**

5 *Epistle to the Trallians* **Quote 6, page 3** blessed apostles. He who is within the altar is pure; therefore, he is obedient to the bishop and presbyters. But he who is outside does anything apart from the bishop… [continues online] **read ›**

6 *Epistles of Ignatius* **Quote 5, page 3** "But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts." Presbyters, be subject to the bishop; deacons, to the presbyters; and you… [continues online] **read ›**

7 *Epistle to the Philadelphians* (1885 English; on point 3) "also the nearest Churches have sent, in some cases bishops, and in others presbyters and deacons… [continues online] **read ›**

8 *Epistle to the Philadelphians* (1885 English; on point 3) "also the nearest Churches have sent, in some cases bishops, and in others presbyters and deacons… [continues online] **read ›**

9 *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* (on point 3) "deacons to the presbyters; the presbyters to the bishop… [continues online] **read ›**

10 *Epistles of Ignatius* (1885 English; on point 5) "thou ministerest to them, as the holy Stephen did at Jerusalem to James and the presbyters… [continues online] **read ›**

11 *Epistles of Ignatius* (on point 3) presbyters, "feed the flock which is among you," until God reveals who is to lead you. For "I am now ready to be offered," that I "may win Christ." Let… [continues online] **read ›**

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Tatian, *c. 150–180 AD · sources 12–13*

12 *Diatessaron* 8 **Quote 1, page 2** these are the ones he named apostles: Simon, whom he named Cephas, and Andrew his brother, and James and John, and Philip and Bartholomew, and Matthew and Thomas, and James… [continues online] **read ›**

13 *Diatessaron* 27 (1885 English) “Matthew 18:18 Verily I say unto you, All that you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: 20 and what ye loose on earth shall be loosed in… [continues online] **read ›**

Irenaeus, *c. 175–202 AD · sources 14–17*

14 *Against Heresies: Book III* (1885 English) “when Paul and Barnabas had gone up to Jerusalem to the apostles on account of this question, and the whole Church had convened together, Peter thus addressed them: “Men, brethren… [continues online] **read ›**

15 *Against Heresies: Book III* **Quote 7, page 3** “blessed apostles, having established and built up the Church, entrusted the role of the episcopate to Linus. Paul mentions Linus in the Epistles to Timothy. Anacletus succeeded him, and after… [continues online] **read ›**

16 *Against Heresies: Book III* (on point 4) was also appointed by apostles in Asia to be the bishop of the Church in Smyrna. I saw him in my early youth, for he lived a very long time… [continues online] **read ›**

17 *Against Heresies: Book IV* **Quote 13, page 5** “it is necessary to obey the presbyters in the Church—those who, as I have shown, possess the succession from the apostles; those who, along with the succession of the… [continues online] **read ›**

Clement of Alexandria, *c. 190–215 AD · source 18*

18 *Stromata* 7.1 (1885 English; on point 3) “also, in the Church, the elders attend to the department which has improvement for its object… [continues online] **read ›**

Tertullian, *c. 196–220 AD · sources 19–22*

19 *Scorpiace* 10 (1885 English; on point 6) “though you think heaven still shut, remember that the Lord left here to Peter and through him to the Church, the keys of it, which every one who has been… [continues online] **read ›**

20 *On Prescription Against Heretics* 22 (on point 6) “anything withheld from the knowledge of Peter, who is called the rock on which the church should be… [continues online] **read ›**

21 *On Prescription Against Heretics* 32 **Quotes 8, 14, pages 3, 5** “if there are any heresies bold enough to place themselves in the middle of the apostolic age, so that they may seem to have been handed down by the apostles… [continues online] **read ›**

22 *On Modesty* 21 (on point 6) “because the Lord said to Peter, "Upon this rock I will build My Church," and, "To you have I given the keys of the heavenly kingdom," or, "Whatever you shall… [continues online] **read ›**

Origen, *c. 215–254 AD · sources 23–24*

23 *Commentary on Matthew* 12 (on point 6) “16:18? Are the keys of the kingdom of heaven given by the Lord to Peter only, and will no other of the blessed receive them… [continues online] **read ›**

24 *Commentary on Matthew* 12 (on point 6) “after this, let us see in what sense it is said to Peter, and to every Peter, "I… [continues online] **read ›**

Cyprian, *c. 248–258 AD · sources 25–27*

25 *Epistles* (on point 2) “But deacons ought to remember that the Lord chose apostles, that is, bishops and overseers… [continues online] **read ›**

26 *Treatises* (1885 English) **Quote 11, page 4** “I will give unto you the keys of the kingdom of heaven… [continues online] **read ›**

27 *Epistles* **Quote 12, page 4** “commands and warnings we ought to keep, describes the honor of a bishop and the order of His Church in the Gospel. He says to Peter: “I say to you… [continues online] **read ›**

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Apostolic Constitutions, *c. 250–380 AD · sources 28–34*

28 *Apostolic Constitutions* (on point 2) “among us, you yourselves are not ignorant of them. For you certainly know that those named by us bishops, and presbyters, and deacons, were made so by prayer and by… [continues online] **read ›**

29 *Apostolic Constitutions* (on point 5) the lot of Judas, as it is said, "Let another take his bishopric." We discussed, together with James the Lord's brother, what should be done. And it seemed good… [continues online] **read ›**

30 *Apostolic Constitutions* (on point 2) named and approved, let the people gather on the Lord's Day, together with the presbytery and the bishops who are present, and let them give their consent. And let… [continues online] **read ›**

31 *Apostolic Constitutions* (on point 2) prayer, let one of the bishops elevate the sacrifice upon the hands of him that is ordained, and early in the morning let him be placed in his throne, in… [continues online] **read ›**

32 *Apostolic Constitutions* **Quote 9, page 4** “I, James, the brother of Christ according to the flesh, but His servant as the only begotten God, and one appointed bishop of Jerusalem… [continues online] **read ›**

33 *Apostolic Constitutions* (on point 3) for a good shepherd, let the lay person honor him, love him, and respect him as his lord, as his master, as the high priest of God, and as a… [continues online] **read ›**

34 *Apostolic Constitutions* (1885 English) have already said, that a bishop, a presbyter, and a deacon, when they are constituted, must be but once married, whether their wives be alive or whether they be dead… [continues online] **read ›**

Malchion, *c. 260–280 AD · source 35*

35 *Epistle Against Paul of Samosata* 1 (on point 3) Dionysius and Maximus, and to all our fellow ministers throughout the world—both bishops and presbyters and deacons—and to the whole Catholic Church under heaven: Helenus, Hymenaeus, Theophilus, Theotecnus… [continues online] **read ›**

Peter of Alexandria, *c. 300–311 AD · source 36*

36 *Canonical Epistle* pay the heavier penalty of losing, as far as he is concerned, the flock of which he was appointed shepherd by the great and chief Shepherd and High Priest. But… [continues online] **read ›**

Clement of Rome · *sources 37–38*

37 *First Epistle to the Corinthians* **Quotes 2, 3, page 2** “Thus, preaching through countries and cities, they appointed the first-fruits of… [continues online] **read ›**

38 *First Epistle to the Corinthians* (on point 4) Our apostles also knew, through our Lord Jesus Christ, that there would be conflict regarding the office of the episcopate. For this reason, considering that they had obtained perfect foreknowledge… [continues online] **read ›**

THE BIBLE *118 verses, The Faith Once Delivered Bible (Old Testament from the Septuagint), in Bible order*

39 **Exodus 24:9** Then Moses went up, and Aaron, and Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel. **read ›**

40 **Exodus 29:30** The priest from among his sons who succeeds him, who goes into the tabernacle of witness to minister in the holy place, shall put them on for seven days. **read ›**

41 **Exodus 34:31** Moses called them, and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation turned back to him; and Moses spoke to them. **read ›**

42 **Leviticus 16:32** The priest whom they anoint, and whose hands they consecrate to serve as priest after his father, shall make atonement; he shall put on the linen garment, the holy garment. **read ›**

43 **Numbers 1:16** These are those called from the congregation, leaders of the tribes by their families; they are commanders of thousands in Israel. **read ›**

44 **Numbers 11:16** Then the Lord said to Moses, “Gather to me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you yourself know to be elders of the people and their scribes; and bring them to the tabernacle of witness, and they shall stand there with you. **read ›**

45 **Numbers 11:24** So Moses went out and spoke the words of the Lord to the people; and he gathered seventy men of the elders of the people and set them all around the tabernacle. **read ›**

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46 **Numbers 15:23** just as the Lord commanded you by the hand of Moses, from the day the Lord gave the command to you and onward throughout your generations, **read ›**

47 **Numbers 27:16** “Let the Lord God of the spirits and of all flesh select a man over this congregation, **read ›**

48 **Numbers 27:17** who shall go out before them and who shall come in before them, who shall lead them out and who shall bring them in, so that the congregation of the Lord may not be like sheep that have no shepherd.” **read ›**

49 **Numbers 30:10** If her vow is in her husband’s house, or the obligation on her soul with an oath, (Septuagint Numbers 30:11 (Numbers 30:10 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

50 **1 Chronicles 8:28** These were heads of families, rulers according to their generations; these dwelt in Jerusalem. **read ›**

51 **2 Chronicles 34:13** And they were over the burden-bearers and over all who did the work in every kind of service; and of the Levites there were scribes, judges, and gatekeepers. **read ›**

52 **Ezra 1:2** “Thus says Cyrus king of the Persians: The Lord God of heaven has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he himself has charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judea. **read ›**

53 **Ezra 7:2** the son of Shallum, the son of Zadok, the son of Ahitub, **read ›**

54 **Esther 8:11** in which he commanded them to use their own laws in every city, and to come to their own aid, and to deal with their opponents and those who attacked them as they wished, **read ›**

55 **Job 8:16** For he is moist under the sun, and his shoot shall come out of his rot. **read ›**

56 **Job 11:19** For you will be at rest, and there will be no one to make war on you; and many will turn and plead with you. **read ›**

57 **Job 15:8** Or have you heard the ordinance of the Lord? Or did God use you as his counselor? And has wisdom come to you? **read ›**

58 **Psalms 1:6** For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish. **read ›**

59 **Proverbs 2:21** For the upright will dwell in the earth, and the holy ones will be left in it. **read ›**

60 **Proverbs 5:16** Do not let waters from your spring be spilled over for you, but let your waters go through your streets. **read ›**

61 **Proverbs 10:32** The lips of righteous men drip graces, but the mouth of the ungodly is turned away. **read ›**

62 **Proverbs 14:19** The evil will fall before the good, and the ungodly will wait at the doors of the righteous. **read ›**

63 **Proverbs 14:35** A servant with understanding is acceptable to a king, and by his good conduct he removes dishonor. **read ›**

64 **Proverbs 16:24** Good words are honeycombs, and their sweetness is healing for the soul. **read ›**

65 **Ecclesiastes 1:1** The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king of Israel in Jerusalem. **read ›**

66 **Ecclesiastes 1:10** Who is he who will speak and say, “See, this is new”? It has already been in the ages that were before us. **read ›**

67 **Ecclesiastes 3:9** What advantage does the worker have in that at which he labors? **read ›**

68 **Song of Solomon 1:8** If you do not know yourself, O beautiful one among women, go out in the footsteps of the flocks, and shepherd your young goats by the shepherds’ tents. **read ›**

69 **Isaiah 8:16** Then those who seal up the law so as not to learn it shall be made manifest. **read ›**

70 **Isaiah 15:3** Wrap yourselves in sackcloth in her squares, and lament on her rooftops and in her lanes; all of you, wail with weeping. **read ›**

71 **1 Esdras 1:2** having set the priests in their robes by their daily courses in the temple of the Lord. **read ›**

72 **1 Esdras 5:40** And Nehemiah and Attharias told them not to share in the holy things until a high priest should arise clothed with the Manifestation and the Truth. **read ›**

73 **1 Esdras 7:2** supervised the holy works very carefully, working together with the elders of the Jews and the temple officials. **read ›**

74 **1 Esdras 8:94** as has been decided by you and by all who obey the law of the Lord. **read ›**

75 **Judith 8:16** But as for you, do not try to bind the plans of the Lord our God with pledges; for God is not like a man, to be threatened, nor like a son of man, to be bargained with. **read ›**

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76 **Judith 11:19** And I will lead you through the midst of Judea until you come before Jerusalem, and I will set your seat in the midst of it; and you will drive them like sheep that have no shepherd, and not a dog will growl with its tongue at you. For these things were told me according to my foreknowledge; they were announced to me, and I was sent to tell you." **read ›**

77 **Judith 15:8** Then Joakim the high priest and the council of elders of the children of Israel who lived in Jerusalem came to see the good things the Lord had done for Israel, and to see Judith and to greet her with peace. **read ›**

78 **Wisdom of Sirach 10:20** Among brothers their leader is honored, and those who fear the Lord in his eyes. **read ›**

79 **Wisdom of Sirach 21:19** Instruction is shackles on the feet of the foolish, and like manacles on the right hand. **read ›**

80 **Wisdom of Sirach 24:33** I will again pour out teaching like prophecy, and leave it to generations of the ages. **read ›**

81 **Baruch 1:16** and to our kings and to our rulers and to our priests and to our prophets and to our fathers, **read ›**

82 **Susanna 1:34** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

83 **Susanna 1:50** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

84 **1 Maccabees 1:49** so that they would forget the law and change all the ordinances. **read ›**

85 **1 Maccabees 2:21** Far be it from us to forsake the law and the ordinances. **read ›**

86 **1 Maccabees 3:55** After this Judas appointed leaders of the people, commanders of thousands and of hundreds and of fifties and of tens. **read ›**

87 **1 Maccabees 5:16** When Judas and the people heard these words, a great assembly gathered to decide what they should do for their brothers who were in trouble and were being attacked by them. **read ›**

88 **1 Maccabees 10:32** I also give up my authority over the citadel in Jerusalem and give it to the high priest, so that he may station in it men of his own choosing to guard it. **read ›**

89 **1 Maccabees 14:19** And these were read before the assembly in Jerusalem. **read ›**

90 **1 Maccabees 14:35** The people saw Simon's deeds and the glory he planned to bring to his nation, and they made him their leader and high priest, because he had done all these things, and for the righteousness and the faithfulness he had kept toward his nation, and because he sought in every way to exalt his people. **read ›**

91 **1 Maccabees 14:38** And King Demetrius confirmed him in the high priesthood accordingly, **read ›**

92 **1 Maccabees 14:41** and that the Jews and the priests were well pleased that Simon should be their leader and high priest forever, until a faithful prophet should arise; **read ›**

93 **1 Maccabees 14:44** None of the people or the priests shall be permitted to set aside any of these things, or to oppose what he says, or to convene a gathering in the country without him, or to be clothed in purple or wear a gold clasp. **read ›**

94 **1 Maccabees 16:24** behold, these are written in the book of the days of his high priesthood, from the time he became high priest after his father. **read ›**

95 **2 Maccabees 1:1** To their brothers, the Jews throughout Egypt, greeting. Their brothers, the Jews in Jerusalem and those in the land of Judea, wish you good peace. **read ›**

96 **2 Maccabees 1:10** In the one hundred and eighty-eighth year, those in Jerusalem and those in Judea, and the council of elders, and Judas, to Aristobulus, teacher of King Ptolemy, who is of the family of the anointed priests, and to the Jews in Egypt: greeting and good health. **read ›**

97 **2 Maccabees 3:9** When he had arrived at Jerusalem and had been kindly received by the high priest of the city, he told about the report that had been made and made clear why he had come; and he asked whether these things were really so. **read ›**

98 **3 Maccabees 1:8** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

99 **3 Maccabees 6:27** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

100 **4 Maccabees 5:38** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

101 **4 Maccabees 15:3** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

102 **1 Enoch 13:2** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

103 **1 Enoch 89:19** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

104 **1 Enoch 89:22** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

105 **1 Enoch 89:29** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

106 **1 Enoch 89:30** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

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107 **1 Enoch 89:36** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

108 **1 Enoch 89:51** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

109 **1 Enoch 89:53** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

110 **1 Enoch 89:59** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

111 **1 Enoch 89:65** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

112 **1 Enoch 89:68** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

113 **1 Enoch 90:2** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

114 **1 Enoch 90:19** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

115 **1 Enoch 90:20** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

116 **1 Enoch 90:22** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

117 **Matthew 16:19** And I shall give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.” **read ›**

118 **Matthew 18:18** Amen, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven. **read ›**

119 **Luke 11:4** And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And do not bring us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.’” **read ›**

120 **John 21:15** So when they had eaten their breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I have affection for you.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs.” **read ›**

121 **John 21:16** He said to him again a second time, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I have affection for you.” He said to him, “Tend my sheep.” **read ›**

122 **John 21:17** He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you have affection for me?” Peter was grieved because he asked him the third time, “Do you have affection for me?” He said to him, “Lord, you know everything. You know that I have affection for you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep. **read ›**

123 **Acts 3:2** A man lame from his mother’s womb was being carried. They laid him daily at the temple gate called Beautiful to ask alms from those entering the temple. **read ›**

124 **Acts 4:5** The next day their rulers, elders, and scribes gathered in Jerusalem, **read ›**

125 **Acts 4:6** with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and all who belonged to the high-priestly family. **read ›**

126 **Acts 6:3** Therefore, brothers, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this work. **read ›**

127 **Acts 9:14** Here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name.” **read ›**

128 **Acts 14:23** They appointed elders for them in every church and, after prayer with fasting, commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed. **read ›**

129 **Acts 15:2** After considerable dissension and debate between Paul and Barnabas and these men, Paul and Barnabas and some others from among them were appointed to go up to the apostles and elders in Jerusalem about this question. **read ›**

130 **Acts 15:4** When they reached Jerusalem, the church, the apostles, and the elders welcomed them, and they reported all that God had done with them. **read ›**

131 **Acts 15:6** The apostles and the elders were gathered together to see about this matter. **read ›**

132 **Acts 15:13** After they were silent, James answered, “Brothers, listen to me. **read ›**

133 **Acts 15:22** Then the apostles and elders, with the whole church, decided to choose men from among them and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas: Judas called Barsabbas and Silas, leading men among the brothers. **read ›**

134 **Acts 15:23** They wrote this letter to be delivered by them: “The apostles, the elders, and the brothers, to the brothers among the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia: Greetings. **read ›**

135 **Acts 20:17** From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and summoned the elders of the church. **read ›**

136 **Acts 20:28** Therefore pay attention to yourselves and to all the flock among whom the Holy Spirit has made you bishops, to shepherd the church of the Lord and God, which he purchased with his own blood. **read ›**

137 **Acts 21:18** The day following, Paul went in with us to James; and all the elders were present. **read ›**

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138 **Acts 22:22** They listened to him until this statement. Then they lifted up their voice, saying, “Away with such a man from the earth, for he is not fit to live!” **read ›**

139 **Romans 3:15** their feet are swift to shed blood; **read ›**

140 **1 Corinthians 1:16** I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else. **read ›**

141 **1 Corinthians 11:16** But if anyone wishes to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God. **read ›**

142 **1 Corinthians 12:28** God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, and kinds of tongues. **read ›**

143 **Ephesians 4:11** He gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, shepherds and teachers; **read ›**

144 **1 Timothy 3:1** The saying is trustworthy: if anyone aspires to the office of bishop, he desires a good work. **read ›**

145 **1 Timothy 3:2** The bishop therefore must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, self-controlled, orderly, hospitable, able to teach; **read ›**

146 **1 Timothy 3:15** but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how one ought to conduct oneself in God’s house, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth. **read ›**

147 **1 Timothy 5:17** Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and in teaching. **read ›**

148 **Titus 1:5** I left you in Crete for this reason, that you would set in order the things that were lacking and appoint elders in every city, as I directed you— **read ›**

149 **Titus 2:15** Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you. **read ›**

150 **Hebrews 13:9** Do not be carried away by various and strange teachings, for it is good that the heart be established by grace, not by foods, through which those who were so occupied were not benefited. **read ›**

151 **Hebrews 13:17** Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they watch on behalf of your souls, as those who will give account, that they may do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be unprofitable for you. **read ›**

152 **1 Peter 2:25** For you were going astray like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls. **read ›**

153 **1 Peter 5:1** I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ’s sufferings, and a partaker of the glory to be revealed: **read ›**

154 **1 Peter 5:2** shepherd the flock of God which is among you, exercising the oversight, not under compulsion, but voluntarily; not for dishonest gain, but willingly; **read ›**

155 **1 Peter 5:3** not as lording it over those entrusted to you, but making yourselves examples to the flock. **read ›**

156 **1 Peter 5:4** When the chief Shepherd is revealed, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away. **read ›**

ALSO LINKED BY THF TO THESE PASSAGES *85 verses, by reference*

Partly machine-linked: related to the passages, not always quoted in them. Each reference links to the verse in our audio Bible.

Proverbs 30:19

Song of Solomon 2:16

Isaiah 40:15 · 60:17 · 63:3

Jeremiah 1:5

Amos 9:6

Matthew 3:2 · 5:6 · 7:12 · 7:24 · 8:15 · 9:2 · 9:12 · 10:5 · 10:21 · 10:34 · 13:11 · 16:13 · 16:18 · 17:1 · 18:12 · 20:25

Mark 4:34 · 5:34 · 7:9 · 9:50

Luke 5:20 · 6:31 · 10:16 · 11:23 · 12:47 · 12:50 · 15:4 · 17:21 · 19:10 · 24:27

John 10:11 · 13:25 · 16:12 · 19:26 · 20:22 · 20:23 · 21:20

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Acts 1:8 · 1:20 · 2:22 · 9:5 · 10:13 · 10:34 · 11:15 · 15:1 · 15:7 · 15:9
Romans 13:14 · 15:16
1 Corinthians 1:30 · 6:10 · 9:25 · 10:4 · 10:20 · 14:33 · 15:6
2 Corinthians 1:3 · 3:18 · 13:1
Galatians 3:27 · 6:1
Ephesians 2:20 · 4:2
Philippians 1:18 · 2:2 · 3:16
1 Timothy 3:4 · 3:10 · 4:12 · 5:3 · 5:9
2 Timothy 4:6
Titus 1:6
Hebrews 5:1 · 6:6
1 Peter 2:5 · 2:13
1 John 2:27

Searched: Ante-Nicene Fathers volumes 1–9 and the Bible, including the Septuagint.

ABOUT THIS STUDY

A THF member asked “Who led the early church?” on May 18, 2026. The Historic Faith answered it as a public study on November 9, 2026.

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THE END OF THIS STUDY