

Introduction

- The full name is "The Teaching of the Lord to the Gentiles by the twelve apostles."
- This is the earliest church document describing what the early church looked like.
- Half of the document describes Christian morality and the other church practice.
- It was written while the apostles and eye-witnesses of Christ were still alive.
- It appears to be a handbook for Christian church leaders.

The Way of Life

- The Christian life is defined by loving God and loving others.
- Love others by following the sermon on the mount.
- Abortion and infanticide are explicitly mentioned as sins to be avoided.
- The way of life gives what it has willingly whenever it knows someone is in need.
- Christians are to accept everything that happens to them as from God (3.10).

The Way of Death

- There is a warning against small sins because they lead to large sins.
- The way of death is an evil and cursed life.
- They are commanded to avoid food sacrificed to idols as much as they can.
- Christians seek perfection, but do what we can.
- We are to walk on the path of life instead of death.

Baptism

- The mode of baptism is flexible while the formula is not.
- Baptism must be in the trinitarian name
- Does not appear to include infants in baptism, requires instruction and fasting.
- Fasting is a necessary part of the recipient and others in the church.
- Fasting should only be on Wednesday and Fridays.

Prayer

- It encourages praying the Lord's prayer three times a day.
- Liturgical, or written, prayers appear to be normal and needed.
- The prayers are biblical, doctrinally rich, and Christ centered.
- The prophets are allowed to pray and give thanks as they want.

Eucharist

- This is only for those who have been baptized and no one else.
- They were to actively keep the table closed.
- There is a specific prayer for the eucharist and afterwards.
- The meal is viewed as spiritual food and drink.
- It appears to take place every week after confessing sins (14).

Traveling Apostles and Prophets

- This was written early enough when apostles and prophets could still come to town.
- Legitimacy is determined by conduct not by their doctrine.
- Anyone asking for money or staying too long was a false teacher.
- However, genuine prophets and teachers should be supported by giving.

Bishops and Deacons

- Has to be an early document because there is not a clear distinction between bishop and elder yet.
- There appears to be a primary teacher in the church who is to be honored "as the Lord" and prayed for day and night (4).
- Bishops and deacons inherit and continue the ministry of the prophets (15).
- The churches appoint these church leaders and they must be holy men.

Eschatology

- Appears to refer to a tribulation and future suffering before the end.
- There seems to be an allusion to the anti-christ (16.4).
- All of humanity will be tested but the righteous will be saved.
- After these things, then Jesus will return.
- Possible reference to the rapture, but it is unclear.
- It does not appear they believe the prophecies of Revelation have happened yet.

Concluding Thoughts

- This is one of the closest looks we get at how the early church interpreted church life.
- We need to learn from their emphasis on Christian living.
- We should be slow to tell those who had the apostles lead their churches that they did church the wrong way.