

Introduction

- Ignatius wrote 7 letters on his way to martyrdom in Rome.
- He was possibly the child held by Jesus when He welcomed the little children.
- He was the bishop of the church in Antioch, Syria.
- He appears to be one of the primary leaders of the global church in his day.
- The letters were written to churches along his journey, (Ephesus, Magnesia, Tralles, Rome, Philadelphia, Smyrna) and to Polycarp.
- Each of these letters addresses church leaders and other individuals by name.

Martyrdom

- He was taken by 10 Roman soldiers to be eaten by wild animals (Rom 5:1).
- He begged the church in Rome to not speak out or attempt to free him (Rom 1-2)
- He believed martyrdom was his chance to prove he was a Christian (Rom 3:2).
- "Christianity is greatest when it is hated by the world (Rom 3:3).
- He wanted to be food for the beasts (Rom 4:1).

Necessity of Bishop

- Every church is united around the bishop and council of elders.
- The true gathering is in the assembly especially with the bishop (Eph 5:2-3).
- Presbyters are to defer to the bishop even if he is young (Mag 3:1).
- Without the presbyters and bishop it cannot be a church (Tral 3;1).
- Despite his emphasis on the bishop, there is no hint of papacy (Rom 4:3).
- Antioch was center of church leadership until the 3rd-4th centuries.

Beauty of the Assembly

- Gathering on Sunday overthrows the power of Satan (Eph 13:1).
- Communion is the medicine of immortality (Eph 20:2)
- There is only one Eucharist and table in the assembly (Phil 4:1).
- Not permissible to baptize without bishop (Smy 8:2).

Prophetic Utterance

- There was a moment while preaching to the church in Philadelphia he prophesied.
- This appears to be a one time even and not a regular occurrence.
- His prophetic word was to be like Christ and be united as a church (Phil 7-8).

Absurdness of Legalism

- They are to abandon the laws of Judaism and embrace Christ (Mag 10:3).
- Be wary of those who preach Judaism without the gospel (Phil 6).
- Ignatius viewed the New Testament writings on par with the Old Testament.
- Jesus is the unalterable archives (Phil 8:2).

Christ

- They must remember and believe in the real birth, death, and resurrection of Christ (Mag 11).
- Do not believe those who say Christ only appeared to suffer (Tral 10)
- He believes the resurrection was in the flesh (Smy 3:1).
- Salvation only comes through Christ's blood (Smy 6:1).

Polycarp (great letter for elders/church leaders to read)

- He writes a personal letter encouraging Polycarp to behave as an honorable bishop.
- He is to love the troublesome disciples (2:1).
- It appears bishops regularly preached sermons (5:1).
- Polycarp is to appoint someone to go serve the church in Syria in Ignatius' absence (7:2).

Ecclesiology

- The church is organized with a bishop, a council of elders, and deacons.
- The bishop functions as the senior pastor and leader of the church.
- The council of elders/presbyters serve alongside and yet under the pastor.
- The deacons do the work of ministry under the presbyters.
- The congregation serves and submits to the leaders.

Conclusion

- The churches are not independent from one another but know each other deeply and go to extra effort to serve one another.
- The early church strongly emphasized church unity, particularly in submission to the leaders.
- More proof the earliest churches affirmed the basic tenants of the faith.