

The History of Christianity Podcast

Cyril of Jerusalem and Epiphanius of Salamis

1. Historical Context

The 4th century was a turning point for Christianity: the Arian controversy, the Councils of Nicaea (325) and Constantinople (381), and the rise of imperial Christianity shaped the era. Cyril and Epiphanius emerged as defenders of orthodoxy in this transformative time.

2. Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 313–386 AD)

Born near Jerusalem, Cyril became Bishop of Jerusalem around 350 AD. Known for his Catechetical Lectures, he trained converts and defended Nicene orthodoxy. Despite multiple exiles, he remained committed to the faith and attended the Council of Constantinople (381), where his orthodoxy was affirmed.

Excerpt: “This is a season of confession: confess what thou hast done in word or deed; for forgiveness is ready for those who repent.”

3. Epiphanius of Salamis (c. 315–403 AD)

A Palestinian monk and later Bishop of Salamis (Cyprus). He wrote the *Panarion*, a massive catalogue of heresies, and *Ancoratus*, a summary of Nicene theology. He fought Arianism, Gnosticism, and Origenism with intense zeal.

Excerpt: “Heresy is a serpent with many heads; when one is crushed, another arises. But the antidote is truth, the teaching handed down from the apostles.”

Aspect	Cyril of Jerusalem	Epiphanius of Salamis
Born	c. 313 AD	c. 315 AD
Region	Palestine / Jerusalem	Palestine → Cyprus
Focus	Catechesis and Sacramental Theology	Heresiology and Doctrinal Purity
Major Work	Catechetical Lectures	Panarion
Style	Pastoral, liturgical, instructional	Polemical, detailed, combative
Controversies	Arian Controversy	Origenist Controversy
Legacy	Shaped catechetical instruction	Preserved record of early heresies

Reflection Questions

1. What does Cyril's focus on repentance and catechesis reveal about early Christian priorities?
2. How does Epiphanius's zeal for orthodoxy reflect the challenges of the post-Nicene era?
3. In what ways do both men balance teaching and defending the faith?
4. What can modern churches learn from Cyril's approach to preparing new believers?

5. How might Epiphanius's aggressive stance against heresy be both a strength and a weakness?