



The Forces that Shaped Us

A stylized globe with green continents and blue oceans, set against a dark blue background with a bright blue glow effect behind it.

**An Overview of Historical
Events that Shaped Christianity**



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Welcome to Forces that Shaped Us

Historical Events that shaped Christianity

The Purpose of this course is to introduce you to the Key events surrounding the rise and growth of Christianity throughout the world. Our own spiritual heritage has been shaped by people and events that have gone before us. Understanding key people and events, helps us understand what God is doing in our nation today.



When this course is finished you will have:

- **Discovered key events that shaped what we know as the church.**
- **A sense of your own spiritual heritage.**
- **An understanding of how God has been working throughout history.**
- **An understanding of how God is still working in the world today.**



NEW WINE

SESSION 1

The Church is Forced to Take On its Own Identity

Notes

Objectives of This Session:

- 1. To look at key events between AD 64 and AD 420.**
- 2. To see how events caused the church to launch itself as a force to be reckoned with.**

Important Dates:

- AD 64 - The Burning of Rome**
- AD 70 - The Fall of Jerusalem**
- AD 325 - The Council of Nicea**



NEW WINE

Introduction: AD 64 – AD 70

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Who Were the Christians?

According to the Jews, Christians were irritating renegades who had abandoned the ancient Law and were stirring up trouble in their midst.

According to the Christians themselves, they claimed to be followers of the Jewish Messiah. One of the first names the Christians took for themselves was “The Israel of God.”

According to the Romans, the Christians were simply another Jewish sect. There were many such sects and as far as the Romans were concerned this one was no different. That would all change beginning in AD 64.

For the first half of the first century, Christianity operated with a degree of freedom because they were under the umbrella of Judaism, which was a legal religion in the Roman Empire. As long as they were considered a branch of the Jewish faith, Rome was tolerant of Christianity’s growth. The second half of the first century saw dramatic changes in the identity and treatment of Christians. The Jews became more openly hostile to this renegade group, and the Roman empire began to recognize Christians as a distinct group.

Rome Burns in AD 64

In AD 64, Jews were already actively persecuting Christians to the point that believers were scattering abroad under fear of imprisonment and death. Although Rome was not officially paying any attention to this new religion, it was becoming noticeable that Christians were growing in number in many regions of the empire.

Rome caught fire and over the next 6 days, 10 out of 14 districts were consumed in flame. Nero was blamed for the fire, but it is likely that he was not responsible. He did, however, look for someone else to blame and his pointing finger found the Christians.

This event is so important because it marks the official recognition of Christianity as viable entity by the Roman empire (even though it was a negative recognition).



Christians Became Increasingly Unpopular

The beliefs of this new religion strongly countered many strongly held beliefs of the day.

- **Christians rejected all other gods.**
- **Christian customs were widely misunderstood.**
 - **Eating the body and blood of Jesus**
 - **Calling each other “Brother” or “Sister”**
- **Christians challenged the social order.**
- **Christianity was new and, therefore, automatically suspect.**

Jerusalem Falls in AD 70

Vespasian had been the commander of the Roman army attachment assigned to Judea during the Jewish rebellion. This had been going on for over 20 years and when a riot broke out in Jerusalem in AD 50, Vespasian prepared to lay siege to the city. Before he could finish the job, word came that Nero had committed suicide, so he returned to Rome and was made the next Emperor of Rome.

Vespasian did not forget his Jewish thorn in the flesh, however and in AD 70, he sent troops to finish what he started. On the 5th of August, the city fell and the temple was, once again, burned to the ground. The only thing left standing was the Wailing Wall.

The Jewish leaders became very cautious and refused to associate with any group that might get them into trouble so Christians were banned from the synagogues. By AD 90 the division between the church and the synagogue was complete.

Christianity grows on its own

With the burning of Rome and the fall of Jerusalem came persecution. The Christians continued to scatter all over the world and as they scattered, their numbers grew. The government and the religious establishments did not like this new, dangerous religion. Many people, however, began to love this new religion.

- **It provided clear moral guidelines**
- **It offered equality and respect**

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Genesis 12:1 – 3



• It offered a personal relationship with God **The Empire and the Church Begin to Change**

Notes

AD 90 – AD 250

Throughout the first century, the term “elder”, and “overseer” referred to the same role. A group of elders guided the church in a city. The meetings were held in homes and people were baptized at the point they committed their lives to Christ.

By the third century, practices regarding baptism began to differ between groups. New teachings and variations on the original doctrines began to emerge and spread. In response to these new challenges, the church began to centralize the leadership, putting one lead elder over groups of elders in a city or region. Some congregations owned their own buildings so that larger groups could meet together and many leaders began to require training for new believers so that they would not be easily deceived by dangerous new doctrines.

Gnosticism – Secret Knowledge

Gnosticism became a formidable doctrine during this time period. Gnostics taught the following:

- Everything physical is corrupt, only the spiritual is pure.**
- Certain persons can achieve secret knowledge of God that elevated them to a status above ordinary humans.**
- Christ never really became flesh. He temporarily used Jesus’ (an ordinary human) body.**
- Gnosticism became popular for many who had to make sense of physical tragedy i.e. Pompeii in AD 79, plagues, etc.**

The Church Tries to Respond to Doctrinal Challenges

As the church attempted to respond to the growing threat of alternative doctrines, the church began to rally around three things:

- 1. The Canon of Scripture began to take shape.**
- 2. A Rule of Faith was developed to ensure that new Christians did not succumb to variant teachings.**
- 3. A priesthood of overseers began to solidify.**



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As a result, the church greatly formalized beliefs and practices. A negative side affect was the decline of other important teachings, such as the priesthood of all believers. There was also undo emphasis being placed on non-essential matters. The reality of the Holy Spirit dwelling in each believer began to be de-emphasized.

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The Roman Empire Takes Action

AD 247 – AD 420

In AD 247 Rome held a great celebration to mark Rome's 1000th birthday. Because of the many immoralities associated with the celebration, many Christians refused to participate. Many Romans took note, and began looking for ways to discredit Christianity.

- **Christians were blamed for angering the Gods**
- **Emperor Decius began requiring certificates that citizens must carry to prove they had properly sacrificed to the Gods.**
- **Many Christians, some of them prominent overseers were imprisoned and tortured.**

Decius had begun a concerted effort to persecute Christians that continued after his death. Diocletian took power in AD 284 and continued to persecute Christians. His successor, Galarius was even more adamant about crushing the Christian faith. As Galarius neared death, he realized that the Christians would not abandon their worship, so he issued a decree allowing the free worship of Christ. Upon Galarius' death, Maxentius had power of Rome.

Constantine Ushers in a New Age of Christianity

Constantine led an army against Maxentius for control of Rome. Constantine believed that he had experienced a vision of a cross in the Sun. He saw the words, "by this sign, you will win". He believed that God told him to put place a christian symbol on the shields of his men, so they put the Greek letters XP (the first letters of Christ's name) on all the shields and added a cross to Constantine's personal battle-flag. Constantine marched into Rome in victory and became the Emperor.

Constantine, and his Co-Emperor Licinius, issued the "Edict of Milan" in AD 313 giving citizens the right to worship as they choose. He considered Christ his patron.

The Council of Nicaea July 4, 325 AD

- **During Constantine's reign**
- **Church leaders were now being called Priests**
- **Arius, an elder in Alexandria, fomented a controversy that Jesus was not God.**
- **Constantine called a council of every overseer in the known world to settle the question.**
- **In attendance: over 300 overseers, 2000 elders and deacons.**
- **The Nicene Creed was crafted and all but 2 signed it.**

Christianity, as a sanctioned religion enjoyed a time of growth between 300 and 400 AD. With this growth and acceptance came other things as well.

Application



Institutional Christianity, political authority, social pressure, and doctrinal compromise were all part and parcel with the privilege of being "state sanctioned."

No one longs for persecution, but history clearly demonstrates that hardship and persecution tends to produce a more focused, doctrinally congruent, and passionate church.

What should we learn from this? How should this affect the church in our time and place?



NEW WINE

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SESSION 2

The Church Continues to Change

AD 376 -664

Objectives of this Session:

- 1. To see how the “official” church evolved into the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches.**
- 2. To observe the constant movement away from a holy lifestyle as a Christian requirement.**
- 3. To recognize God’s commitment to preserve his church in spite of itself.**

Important Dates:

- AD 381 – The First Council of Constantinople**
- AD 431 – Emperor Theodosius declared Christianity the ‘Official Religion of the Empire’**
- AD 451 – The Council of Chalcedon**
- AD 553 – The Second Council of Constantinople**



Introduction:

"The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:44,45) . . . God calls leaders who will also kneel beside God's people and show them how to serve. God calls servant-leaders, not leaders of servants.

--Dr. Timothy Paul Jones

The Shift in Church Power

During the late 300's through the 400's, church leaders began to take on a great amount of political power. The leaders and the people began to see church leaders as "above" the average Christian, thus the distinction between clergy and lay people emerged and took root. During this period of time priests were given the added expectation of celibacy. As the Church increased its influence, Rome began to look to the Church to help govern the outer provinces over-run by barbarians. We also see the first organized "missionary" efforts of the church.

- **Jovinian (a monk) objected to the clergy/layity separation. He was eventually excluded from fellowship.**
- **Ambrose (Governor of Milan) became an overseer before he became a Christian. (In the 370's)**
- **Theodosius, Emperor of the Eastern Empire, began to bow to the wishes of the Church Overseers, making the Church the stronger political force.**
- **Church leaders began to defy the emperors and demand their own agendas.**

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Prelude to the Middle Ages

The First Council of Constantinople

About the same time that Ambrose became an Overseer in Milan (Western Empire), Christian leaders in the Eastern Empire were dealing with a new doctrinal controversy.

- **Apollinarius taught that Jesus had a human body but no human mind.**
- **To resolve the controversy, Theodosius called the first Council of Constantinople (capital of the Eastern Empire) in 381 AD.**
- **In 391 AD, ten years later, Theodosius declared Christianity the official religion of the Empire.**

When Theodosius died, a power-hungry Eunuch was able to rule through Theodosius' son. In an effort to maintain control over Constantinople, the Eunuch found a popular church leader by the name of John Chrysotom and ordained him as overseer of the capital city. The Eunuch's attempt to manipulate through John backfired when John defied him and became a vocal advocate for holy living and pure Christianity.

Political control of the Empire bounced back and forth between Church and State right up until the fall of the Roman Empire.

The Fall of Rome and the Rise of Augustine

By the 400's, the barbarians had had enough of Rome. Many were willing to live in the empire and enjoy its benefits, but when Alaric the Goth asked the Western Emperor for farmland for his people (in AD 408), and was rejected, he didn't take it lightly. In 410, Alaric attacked Rome with his army of Goths. The Goths pillaged Rome for three days and the Roman empire fell. The fall of Rome marked the dawn of the Middle Ages.

At this same time, God radically changed the life of a young man from North Africa by the name of Augustine. When Augustine gave his life to Christ, he became a monk and soon became the overseer of Hippo, in N. Africa. In order to help Roman Christians cope with why Christ would allow a "Christian Empire" to fall, he

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wrote **“The City of God”**, pointing out that a human kingdoms cannot be the same thing as Christ’s kingdom and all earthly kingdoms will fall until all that remains is the Kingdom of God.

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The Un-phased Church

The power of Rome was broken, but that didn’t seem to phase the church leaders. From 428-460 the church ping-ponged back-and-forth between controversial teachings.

- **In 428 Nestorius became the overseer of Constantinople. He taught that Christ embodied two natures; human and divine.**
- **When Cyril, the corrupt overseer of Alexandria, heard Nestorius’ teachings, he accused Nestorius of splitting Jesus into two separate persons and condemned the teaching.**
- **In 431, the Eastern Emperor called a council in Ephesus to decide Nestorian controversy. The council turned out to be a circus of events, but Cyril won out and exiled Nestorius.**
- **Leo, overseer of Rome, could not make the council, so he sent a summary of his teaching, called a Tome, in which he taught that Jesus was two natures united into one person.**
- **Cyril’s teachings mutated into what became known as “One-Nature Theology”.**
- **The Council of Ephesus did not settle the controversy and sharp infighting continued until a new emperor called another council in the city of Chalcedon (451 AD). More than 500 overseers gathered to definitively answer the controversy by writing “The Two-Nature View”.**
- **One-nature theology became popular again in the Eastern empire, so the Eastern Emperor (Justinian) convened yet another council in Constantinople and supported the One-nature view.**



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The Rise of Missions

The order of Benedictine monks was established in 520 AD. Benedict's sister Scholastica established a convent near her brother's monastery at the same time.

Gregory, a Roman politician turned monk, endeared himself to Rome when he left his monastery to come help Rome during a plague. When the Roman Overseer became fatally ill, Gregory replaced him.

From an early age, Gregory had a desire to bring Christianity to the Anglo-Saxons. His opportunity came when, in 589, barbarians burned the Benedictine monastery down and forced the monks to flee to Rome.

Gregory liked the Benedictine Rule (guide for religious communities) and in 599 he commissioned 41 reluctant Benedictine monks to establish Christian communities in England. By Christmas of 599 10,000 English had been baptized. One such convert was the King of Kent. The capital of Kent was Canterbury, which became the center of English Christianity.

Where Were The Real Christians?

It is easy to see how the gospel can be lost when the church spends its time focusing on political power and control.

The grace of God can be seen, however, through glimpses of integrity and purity as was seen in John Chrysostom, and Olympias, a wealthy woman (an acquaintance of Chrysostom) that gave her wealth to advancing the Kingdom of God.

There were faithful men and women who walked in relationship with their Lord, even as the "Church" became mired in corruption and misguided power.

God always has a remnant, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.



SESSION 3

The Church in the Middle Ages

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OBJECTIVES OF SESSION 3:

- 1. To identify key events between AD 500 to 1291.**
- 2. To understand how the dark ages affected the church, and how the church affected the dark ages.**

IMPORTANT DATES:

AD 681 – The 3rd Council of Constantinople

AD 754 – Pepin’s Donation

AD 787 – The 2nd Council of Nicaea

AD 1054 – The Roman Church Excommunicated the Eastern Church

AD 1076-1123 – The Investiture Dispute



The Middle Ages

The Disintegration of Central Government

After Rome fell, the Empire lost its ability to hold itself together. The territories were too vast and spread out, and there was no one that could unite such a diverse, unwieldy collection of lands and people.

The Eastern Empire continued to crown Emperors and tried to maintain a semblance of central control, but the Western Empire quickly disintegrated into a chaotic, localized system of control.

With no central government, there was no system of money, no central army, no schools, no police, and no clear law. What grew out of this was a feudal system of governing. Land became the primary source of wealth.

Land owners set up their own private systems with their estates (manors) guarded by knights. Non-land owners (peasants) became completely dependent on the land-owners (lords) who used the peasants to work the land in return for subsistence living. Sometimes several lords would unite under one king, creating an independent kingdom.

The church had, by this time period, established itself as the mandatory channel to God's blessing. Even the feudal lords "needed" priests to guarantee their power and prosperity. Priests were literally hired to be a lord's personal connection to God. The priests, being loyal to the lord, would stress obedience to the lord of the manor instead of obedience to Christ.

The Dark Ages

This period in history became known as the dark ages because of the chaotic, hopelessness that pervaded much of the known world. Most people barely survived, living conditions were horrible, education was virtually non-existent, government was haphazard and self-serving and above all, there was no hope for a better future. What role did the church play? By-and-large the church was servant to the tyrants, and at times the church leaders became the tyrants.

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What is God's Commitment?

--To bless the peoples of all nations, tongues, & tribes. God is a good God and He desperately desires to bless people!

- ✓ **In the Old Testament times His blessings appeared as care for all of the external needs of life.**
- ✓ **Through Jesus, God still cares for all of the externals of our lives, but He goes on to offer the incredible gift of eternal life – intimate fellowship with Him, the life of God in our souls, and His own purposes and power operating in lives.**

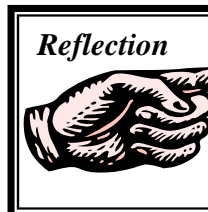
The Eastern Empire Has Its Own Problems

The Rise of Islam

In 610 AD Muhammad claimed that the angel Gabriel had entrusted him with a message from Allah, the only true god. Although he encountered strong resistance, Muhammad attracted a large following and eventually raised an army that, after his death, conquered Arabia, Syria and North Africa. Jerusalem fell to the Muslims in 638 and by 711, Muslims had conquered Portugal and Spain.

Smashers and Kissers

Meanwhile, the Eastern Emperor became involved in a rising controversy over the appropriateness of Christian icons. The Muslims, who refused to use icons, called Christians “idol-worshippers” and many Christians became concerned that the Muslims were right. Icon proponents became known as “icon-kissers” or iconodules and icon opponents became known as “icon-smashers” or iconoclasts.



The Church Responds to the Controversies of the Day

In AD 681, in response to the rise of Islam, the 3rd Council of Constantinople was convened to deal with the Monotheistic claims of Islam. Monotheism was rejected and the beliefs set forth in the Council of Chalcedon were reaffirmed.

In 787 the church convened the 2nd Council of Nicaea to address the icon issue. Christians were encouraged to revere, but not worship, icons. The council also denounced Adoptionism, which claimed that Jesus was not God’s son by nature.

Notes

Many Christians have been tempted to move beyond “revering” the Bible to worshipping the scriptures.

The only way to counteract the tendency to worship a substitute is to have a relationship with the “real thing”. Personally knowing Jesus is the cure for icon worship.



NEW WINE

The Franks Gain Power in the West

Back in 496, a Frank battle-chief named Clovis led his people to accept Christ. He even affirmed the Nicene Creed. As the Roman Empire crumbled, the Franks began to conquer much of the Western Empire, and because they were Christians, few church members resisted the conquest. By 600, the Franks ruled large portions of central Europe.

In 754 Frank King Pepin III gave all of central Italy directly to the Church. In return the Pope officially recognized Pepin's title and gave him the church's approval.

A "New Evangelistic Method" Takes Hold

Around 780, Pepin III's son, King Charles came up with a novel strategy for evangelizing his enemies. When he would conquer a tribe or territory, he forced everyone to be baptized or die. This new missionary method appeared to be remarkably successful, with more than 90% deciding to be baptized. Charles wasn't bluffing, either. When some Germans refused his invitation, Charles decapitated 4,500 heads in one day - and then returned to his camp to celebrate Christmas. By 800, Charles controlled all of what we know as France and Germany.

The Rise of the Holy Roman Empire

The Church continued to grow in political power to the point that many believed if they could control the church, they could control the everything. In 799 several Italian nobles tried to install a puppet pope. The effort failed and Leo III became pope instead.

The Italian nobles did not take defeat well and they tried to have Leo's tongue cut out. The nobles also wrote letters to King Charles, accusing Leo of mismanaging the Church's money.

An injured Leo was taken to King Charles for refuge and on December 23, 800, King Charles declared Pope Leo III innocent of all charges. Two days later, Leo crowned Charles Augustus, "supreme and peaceful Emperor." For the first time, the church had created an emperor, and Charles saw himself as guardian of Roman Christianity. Later generations would refer to King Charles as Charlemagne (Charles the Great).

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NEW WINE

Corruption at the Top

Between 880 and 980 the Roman bishops office saw a series of corrupt popes. John XII was a classic example. Before he took office, he made a toast to the devil, and after he took office there was no change in his evil lifestyle.

This high-level corruption would dominate the church for 100 years

The East and West Part Ways

Up till now, Eastern and Roman Christians had quarreled for centuries while still viewing themselves as one body. Three events were about to occur, however that would permanently divide the East from the West.

- **AD 867 - Photius, bishop of Constantinople defied the pope over a controversial addition to the Nicene Creed.**
- **AD 1054 - Humbert, envoy of the pope, accused Eastern Christians of allowing priests to marry, re-baptising Roman Christians and deleting "and the Son" from the Nicene Creed. He wrote these accusations in a "bull" and refused to take it back.**
- **AD 1204 - The fourth crusade went amok and crusaders sacked Constantinople. The Eastern church never forgave the Roman church for the atrocity.**

The end result was a complete break between what is now known as the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church.

The Crusades

In medieval times, many Christians believed they could prove their worth to God by going on a Pilgrimage (usually to a local shrine). The supreme pilgrimage led to Jerusalem, which was controlled by Muslims. Some Muslims began to take advantage of the pilgrimages to Jerusalem by exacting high tariffs.

In 1095, Pope Urban II, preached what must have been a powerful sermon calling on all Christians to "destroy that vile race from their lands!"

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NEW WINE

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The response surprised even Urban II. Men from every class, every walk of life joined in the loosely organized crusade to free Jerusalem. There were eight major attempts to rid the Holy Lands of Muslims and Jews – eight crusades lasting over 150 years.

The Crusades represent the dark ages in the fullest. The Popes had promised immediate and full absolution for all who participated so there was literally no concern for Christianity as a way of life. The teachings of Jesus were “beside the point.” Wanton destruction of life, rape and pillaging were the hallmarks of the Crusades. There seems to be little remaining of the first century church. The world has yet to recover from this dark image of the Church.

The Cultural Impact of the Crusades

All of the travel to the east had an interesting effect on Western Europe. Exposure to a wide range of art and architecture began to inspire new commitments to art and spiritual expression. It is this influence that led many church leaders to begin building Cathedrals that would “point the people to God.” Sacrificial giving (often forced) from the peasant population paid much of the construction costs.

And Yet Hope Remains

During this dark period of time, there were many Christians who did not subscribe to the Crusading philosophy. Many of them became monks/nuns or established their own orders. Many gave their lives to Christ in radical ways, counteracting the savage path on which the church currently traveled.

Here is a short list of a few important people who lived during the time of the crusades and yet they tried to live lives of service, spreading the love of God.

- **Hildegard published “Know the way” in AD 1151**
- **Waldo gave up his wealth and established the “Poor Folk of Lyons” in 1173**
- **Francis of Assisi was a crusading knight that repented and completely denounced violence. Started the Franciscan Order.**
- **Thomas Aquinas began his masterpiece, “Summation of Theology” in 1266**



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SESSION 4

The Coming of Renaissance and the Seeds of Reformation

1300-1500 AD

OBJECTIVES OF SESSION 4:

- 1. To understand the impact of Renaissance on the church.**
- 2. To identify how God set the stage for the Reformation.**

IMPORTANT DATES :

AD 1311-1312 – Council of Vienne

AD 1414-1418 – Council of Constance

AD 1438-1445 – Council of Florence



Who's In Charge?

While the general populace of Europe became increasingly hungry for renewed relationships with God, church leadership continued in corruption and power-mongering. The 14th century brought even more confusion to an already befuddled church environment.

- **1294 Celestine is selected as Pope, but can't stand the politics, so he quits after 5 months.**
- **Boniface VIII takes over and tries to invest himself with authority to crown kings and depose them. France didn't go for it and exiled Boniface.**
- **For the next 72 years Popes try to rule from Avignon, France. It was a loosely governed period of time characterized by an "anything goes" mentality.**
- **The black plague struck Europe between 1347-1350, which wiped out 1/3 of Europe (an estimated 23,840,000 people).**
- **In the late 1300's, The "Great Papal Schism" arose when the Italian Cardinals and French Cardinals each elected separate Popes, one in Rome and one in Avignon.**
- **In 1409, Cardinals from Avignon and Rome tried to end the schism by electing a new pope together, but neither of the other two popes agreed to be deposed so there were now three popes. Each pope excommunicated the other two (and their followers).**
- **Cardinals attempted to end the schism again at the Council of Constance in 1415 when they got rid of all three popes and selected Martin V as the new "one" pope. By 1450 the schism was no more.**

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Key People during this time of Ecclesiastical Confusion

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- **John Wycliffe defined church in terms of the people rather than the governmental leaders. He died in 1384.**
- **Jan Hus joined in with Wycliff's beliefs and was banned from preaching in 1407. Hus didn't obey. Hus agreed to appear before the Cardinals at the Council of Constance. They condemned him to death in 1415.**
- **Around 1374 several Dutch Christians formed the "Common Life Movement" in an effort to renew a the emphasis of living daily in God's power. Thomas A'Kempis, the most famous member of the Common Life Movement wrote "The Imitation of Christ."**
- **In 1428, a peasant girl named Joan convinced a French Prince to let her lead an attack on the English. She led the army to several victories that formed a geographic arch across France, thus she became known as Joan of Arc. An Inquisition burned her at the stake in 1431.**

The Birth of Renaissance

By AD 1453, Constantinople was all that remained of the ancient Eastern Empire. The Ottoman Turks, Muslims, conquered the city in May of 1453 and wiped out the last remnants of the ancient Empire.

- **The Hagia Sophia (great Byzantine cathedral) was instantly transformed into a Mosque (the Aya Sofya) and remained so until the 1930's.**
- **Hundreds of Eastern scholars fled west, carrying with them ancient Greek manuscripts.**
- **These manuscripts sparked a renewed interest in ancient Greek rhetoric, art and writing.**
- **This became the spark that birthed the Renaissance.**
- **The Renaissance brought with it a humanistic mindset, focusing on practical language and actions.**



NEW WINE

The Spark of Reform

- **The Popes supported the classical books and Renaissance art but did not realize it would bring a renewed interest in the scriptures.**
- **In 1453, Gutenberg developed the printing press and bibles became available to the common citizen.**
- **With the Spanish Inquisition raging, and Bishops reaching a new level of corruption, something had to change. The seeds of reform had been planted by the Renaissance mindset and individuals like Jan Hus and John Wycliffe. Major change was inevitable.**
- **In 1516, Erasmus began to sound a call for changes in the church. He published the Greek New Testament so that Christians could read the apostles' words in their original language.**

The Stage has been set for what has been called the Great Reformation.

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Application



There have been many who have gone before us. They have sacrificed and risked their lives for the sake of the Gospel. We have such a rich history and great witnesses calling out to us to run the race, but the real question is:

- *Will we get in the race and make our contribution?*
- *Who will be the next Patrick, Wesley, Zinzendorf?*
- *Will our nation see breakthrough?*
- *Who will give their life for the Cause of Jesus Christ?*



NEW WINE

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SESSION 5

The Great Reformation

AD 1500-1600

The Birth of Protestant Christianity

OBJECTIVES OF SESSION 5:

- 1. To examine the key people of the Reformation.**
- 2. To see how God continues to stay involved in history.**

IMPORTANT DATES:

AD 1517 – Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses to a Catholic church door.

AD 1524 – Felix Manz, a student of Zwingli, and his followers, openly criticized infant baptism. They became known as Annabaptists.

AD 1526 – 6000 copies of William Tyndale's Bible are published in Worms, Germany.

AD 1530 – Luther's followers published the Augsburg Confession. This was a result of failed attempts to join Luther's and Zwingli's movements.

AD 1534 – John Calvin begins to rise in prominence as a protestant.



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Notes

Introduction

The word Reformation is used here because the people involved were trying to bring changes into the Catholic Church, not break away from it. The fact that it brought about Protestant Christianity is a commentary on the church's inability to accept the needed changes.

The Renaissance brought a renewed interest in the study of scripture. The increase in study brought questions about apparent inconsistencies between scripture and the teachings of the church. Certain people began to boldly make their concerns known. The church, on the other hand, was not good at tolerating dissent.

Martin Luther

Martin Luther was a young German lawyer in 1505 when he was literally struck by lightning in a storm. In gratitude for his life being spared, he became a monk, but his monastic journey was filled with frustration. He became an anguished man, plagued by his own sinfulness and mad at God for not allowing him to overcome it.

Luther became a biblical scholar and avidly studied the scriptures. When he got to the book of Romans and the epistles, what he found there rocked his world and forever changed his life. Here are two of his conclusions that put him at odds with the Church:

- 1. Justification is through grace alone by faith in Jesus. We cannot earn our salvation by works to any degree.**
- 2. The sale of indulgences is wrong and an offense to God.**

Luther became so disgusted at the practice of selling indulgences that he challenged the proponents of indulgence to a debate by nailing a document with 95 theses (topics for debate) on the chapel door at the Wittenberg castle.

Luther's public denunciation sparked a chain of events that quickly set him in the middle of heated controversy and political maneuvering. The end result was rejection, and Martin Luther was destined to stand in opposition to the Church Authorities, marking his as a "protestant."



Ulrich Zwingli

Not long after Martin Luther nailed the 95 Theses on the Wittenberg Chapel door, another group of Christians from Zurich, Switzerland, defied the teachings of the church. Ulrich Zwingli, a priest, led his people to question many of the same things that Martin Luther addressed. The followers of both Luther and Zwingli had many things in common.

John Calvin

In 1534, John Calvin began to distinguish himself as a young “protestant.” A young lawyer, he was already on the run from the French Government for aligning himself with teachings from Luther and Erasmus. Calvin is best known for his specific teachings on predestination and the irresistible grace of God.

William Tyndale

William Tyndale rocked the Church in England when he, against the Bishop’s wishes, translated and published an English New Testament. In 1526, 6,000 copies of his New Testament covered England and quickly became a thorn in the bishops’ sides.

Tyndale lost his life when King Henry VIII read one of his tracts denouncing the King’s attempts to dispose of Queen Catherine.

Perspective on the Reformation

By the 1500’s, a new boldness was rising to the surface of many scholars and clergymen that were coming face to face with the abuses of the church. The corruption in the echelons of the Catholic Church was well known and although the church had not softened on its policy of mandatory assent, this new generation of leaders just weren’t disposed to sit down and shut up.

The time in history was ripe for revolution, and even though the men who brought it about had only the intention of bringing reformation, they were, never the less, thrust, by destiny, into the “movement making” business. As a result, new churches were born.

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Besides Luther, Zwingli, Calvin and Tyndale, other early Protestant leaders included Cranmer in England, Martin Bucer in Strasbourg, Philipp Melancthon (Luther's closest colleague), Peter Martyr from eastern Europe, and John Knox in Scotland.

The first generation of Protestants spoke (almost) with one voice when answering several foundational questions that apparently had been neglected or abused by the church for so long.

- **What must I do to be saved?**
 - **Protestants – trust by faith in the free grace of God.**
- **Where can I find secure religious authority?**
 - **Protestants – the Bible is the sole authority for life and godliness.**
- **How should the church's spiritual interests be balanced by the need to live in the world?**
 - **Protestants – the church is a fellowship of priests with all believers being called to be Christ's agents in the world.**

By the way, the call for reform was eventually heard by the Roman Catholic leadership and during the second half of the 16th century, there were many changes. Some of them focused on routing out corruption and bringing integrity back to the church. The reforms however, also took on a reactionary form so that many of the "changes" were designed to counteract the teachings of Protestantism, not embrace them.

What would it take for you to decide that you must stand up and publicly speak out for what you believe?

Application



The leaders of the Reformation were able to change their world because they knew that they could not keep silent. They didn't start out with intent to start a new movement; they just acted on their commitment and passion. God took care of the rest.

Look around you! Where does your passion lie? How are you going to change your world?



Session 6

The Awakening of Evangelical Churches

AD 1600-AD1800

OBJECTIVES OF SESSION 6:

- 1. To see how the church responded to the “Enlightenment.”**
- 2. To understand how the evolution of the post-reformation church has impacted our beliefs.**

IMPORTANT DATES:

AD 1620 – Separatists travel to America on a ship named ‘Mayflower’.

AD 1722 – Count Nikolaus Zinzendorf, a Pietest, became patron for the Moravian Movement.

AD 1738 – John Wesley began a movement that became known as the Methodists.

Notes



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Notes

Introduction

Much of what we know as Christianity today is a direct byproduct of the Reformation. The Lutheran Church, Puritans (Congregationalists), the Anglican Church, Anabaptists (Mennonites, Quakers, Amish); all are direct descendants of the Reformation.

The enlightened thinking of the 16th Century began to gain more and more influence over the Protestant church leaders. Scientific observation and reasoning became the standards for judging truth. No longer could tradition be trusted to steer our course.

This emerging mindset pushed many to hold up scripture as the standard for all teachings and traditions. However, things did not stop there. Soon scripture was being put to the test. For many, the ability to rely on reason and scientific study began to replace the need for God and his saving Christ. God himself came under scrutiny as the world of rampant superstition and blind belief began to fade away. This changing worldview prepared the way for the modern age.

Religious Freedom in America

In 1620, some English Separatists went to the Americas on a ship named the Mayflower. They formed a colony at Plymouth, Massachusetts but were eventually absorbed by a Puritan colony in Massachusetts. There were several groups trying to find a place to practice their beliefs in peace. America presented a wonderful opportunity, but it was a very costly experiment. Because of physical hardships and internal strife, Puritan faith almost did not survive the “new world.”

Christianity in Europe

The church in Europe was becoming more fragmented and the political entanglements were becoming more complex. Many Protestant groups were gaining the support of their respective governments, and persecution of dissenters was alive and well in the Protestant movement.

Amidst the growing complexity of the various faces of Christianity throughout Europe, revival broke out.



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The Awakening

The following events and people present a picture of revival and awakening that sparked the rise of evangelical churches we are familiar with today.

- **1734 - Jonathon Edwards - the Northampton Awakening.**
- **1722 - Count Nikolaus Zinzendorf and the Moravian Movement.**
- **1738 - John Wesley began a movement that became known as 'Methodist.' His brother Charles wrote some of the World's best known hymns.**
- **1740's - George Whitfield became a powerful catalyst for revival in England and the new American colonies.**

As John Wesley's Methodist Church began to grow in number, disagreement began to arise over Calvinistic vs. Armenian teachings. This disagreement would spawn several different evangelical church expressions.

The Secularization of Europe

Even during the Reformation, the worldview of the masses was becoming more rational-oriented. As the Roman Catholic Church continued to lose its ability to control governments and suppress dissenting groups, Christianity began to lose ground as a viable answer to life's problems.

The rise of passionate evangelicals was a timely answer to a dying religious climate, but on the whole, Europe was rejecting anything that could be related to "The Church" as people had known it for centuries. Most of the evangelical revivals were happening in Great Britain and in America. Europe as a whole was experiencing only pockets of renewal and revival.

Since enlightened thinking suggested that man had the capability to solve his own problems through proper reasoning, the church quickly became irrelevant in the minds of many. The truth was, many people were only part of the church for political reasons and once there was no political advantage, there was no reason to remain connected to the church.

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The Rise of Post-Modernism.

This generation is a “hinge” generation. We exist between modernity, with its stress on reason, modernism, science and technology and post-modernity with its stress on holistic approaches, subjectivity and non-rational approaches to life.

Post Modern Thought

In order to help understand post-modern thought M.P. Gallagher in a book called “Clashing Symbols” published by DLT in London (1997) lists the ten commandments of Postmodernism. They are:

- 1. Thou shalt not worship reason. (All reality is open to many conflicting interpretations)**
- 2. Thou shalt not believe in history. (Everything happens by chance)**
- 3. Thou shalt not place hope in progress.**
- 4. Thou shalt not believe in “big stories”. (Christianity is invalid because it attempts to encompass all aspects of life)**
- 5. Thou shalt focus on self. (Hedonism)**
- 6. Thou shalt not agonize about values.**
- 7. Thou shalt not trust institutions.**
- 8. Thou shalt not bother with God.**
- 9. Thou shalt not live for productivity alone. (Leisure is more important)**
- 10. Thou shalt not seek uniformity.**

We can immediately see the challenges facing Christians as they proclaim the absolute truth about the only true God in a postmodern world. It is a final frontier that we must and are crossing.



The Challenge Before Us

How do we pierce through a mindset that sees no need for God, or the church? How do we combat a popular mentality that believes God is opposed to everything they value (art, free expression, sophistication)? How can the church avoid getting caught in the traps of division and disagreement that tend to prove the skeptics right?

Keys for the church in Europe will be:

- **Strong, yet nurturing church government.**
- **Demonstrations of power that set people free.**
- **Unity that outlasts controversy.**
- **A spirit of acceptance and cooperation.**
 - **With local governments**
 - **With other churches**
 - **With local communities**

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