

CONCERNING THE WAY

June 22, 2010

LESSON 105: A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CHURCH - PART 1



I thought it would be interesting to do a couple of studies on church history after the book of Acts. As I got into it, I realized it was going to be quite a challenge. In looking through my books and online sources I realized it was going to take a lot of time to distill 1900 years of history down into two lessons. It's also difficult to find good resources that aren't so slanted to the Catholic Church's history.

So, in this lesson, I've done my best to pull out important events from near the end of the book of Acts up to the Reformation. Next lesson we will look at the Reformation and history up to the 20th century. I hope this isn't boring to you, and may even spark some interest in some of these events to make you want to dig deeper.

64 Fire in Rome. Starting on July 18, a fire swept through Rome and burned up to 70% of the city over a period of a week. Some citizens accused the Emperor Nero of setting the fire. Nero pointed at the small group of Christians as the culprits (they were innocent). Nero had so many Christians horribly tortured that some Romans began to feel sorry for them.

66 Jews revolt against Roman occupation and regain their independent kingdom. Some evidence exists which suggests the Christians fled to Pella.

67 Probably in this year, the apostles **Peter and Paul were both martyred in Rome** under Nero: Peter was crucified upside down and Paul was beheaded. "Paul was beheaded on the Ostesian road. And Peter, having come to the cross, said: Since my Lord Jesus Christ, who came down from the heaven upon the earth, was raised upon the cross upright, and he has deigned to call to heaven me, who am of the earth, my cross ought to be fixed head down most, so as to direct my feet towards heaven; for I am not worthy to be crucified like my Lord. Then having reversed the cross, they nailed his feet up." (From Acts of Peter and Paul)

70 The Romans conquer Jerusalem, destroy the Temple, and kill or exile many thousands of Jews.

81-96 Domitian is emperor. He will begin the first direct persecution against Christians because of their faith.

95 The Apostle **John** is exiled on the island of **Patmos** because of the Domitian persecution. The early church fathers and other Christian writers testify that John wrote the book of Revelation during this time.

95 **Council of Jamnia.** The Council was a meeting of Jewish leaders who made several decisions which are referred to as the 18 Benedictions. The Twelfth Benediction reads in part: "And may the Nazarenes [Christians] and heretics perish quickly." So the Council drew a firm line between Christianity and Judaism. Any Jew who became a Christian was unwelcome in the synagogues.

96 Domitian died and **John** moved to Ephesus where he probably **died** around the year 100.

98-117 Trajan was Roman Emperor. There was some persecution of Christians, but not widespread.

In the year 37, Christianity consisted mainly of Jews who accepted Jesus as the Messiah. By the year 100, Christianity consisted mainly of Gentiles. This was due mainly because the travels of the Apostles increasingly focused on Gentiles, and because the Jews increasingly forced Jewish Christians out of the synagogues.

The time period from Jesus to the late First Century is known as the Age of the Apostles. The next era in Church History is known as the Apostolic Fathers. These Christians were the next generation of leaders and helped solidify the new churches and church leadership. They and their writings are important because they lived close to the events of the life of Christ and the apostles. The Apostolic Fathers produced works which helped determine how churches ran and even tackled some theological ideas, such as the Trinity, the deity and eternity of Christ, and salvation. Some of the Apostolic Fathers are Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Hermas, Polycarp, and Papias, and the writings of the Epistle of Barnabas, the Epistle to Diognetus, II Clement, and the Didache.

The next generation of Christian leaders, later in the 2nd century, are known as the Apologists. They defended Christianity against criticism and debated Christian doctrines with philosophers and emperors. Aberrations and corruptions of the faith began to appear in this era, such as Gnosticism, Montanism, and Marcionism.

late 90s **Clement**, the bishop of Rome (one of the Apostolic Fathers), wrote a letter to the Christians in Corinth: it is known as I Clement. While Clement's letter was never considered a part of the New Testament, a number of other books were considered but were not included. Early church leaders determined that these were not linked to the Apostles and, while they may have been useful, they were not considered inspired. To read some of these, go to www.ccel.org, click on "Church Fathers" on the left hand side, and then click on the different volumes listed.

late First Century Development of Christian Gnosticism and Docetism. Gnosticism predated Christianity and had many forms. It did have two constant ideas: (1) dualism, that physical-ness is evil while all things spiritual are good and (2) a hierarchy of gods, where the highest god can be thought of as the spiritually purest god (or the "good" god). Different gods or spirits exist, with a "lower" or even evil god being responsible for creating physical-ness (think "earth"). Gnostics wanted to communicate with this higher or good god in order to learn its wisdom.

Docetism is a take-off from Gnosticism. It taught that Jesus was a messenger sent from the highest god (or maybe a lower good god depending on the Gnostic system). So, Jesus came to teach wisdom from the highest god. And, since Jesus was a messenger from a pure spiritual god, that meant that he was spiritual and not physical. He appeared to be physical but was not. These two were considered attacks on Christianity because they denied the Trinity and the Incarnation. Basically, some people could not accept the idea that God had come to earth in physical form, and so they married the idea of Jesus with Gnosticism and came up with Docetism. These heresies appeared in the First Century (as shown in I and II John), but grew much stronger in the Second Century.

100 **John**, the last original Apostle, died around this year, possibly in Ephesus. The **Epistle of Barnabas** was written by this year. The **Didache** may have been written by this year. Both are works of Apostolic Fathers.

Irenaeus (*Against Heresies*, A.D. 185) says that John lived until the times of Trajan (who ruled from AD 98 until his death in AD 117). Irenaeus sat at the feet of Polycarp, and Polycarp was appointed bishop of Smyrna by John. So Irenaeus' testimony carries some weight. Clement of Alexandria says the same in his "*Who Is the Rich Man Who Will Be Saved*".

112 Letter from Pliny the Proconsul in Bithynia (Turkey) to the Emperor Trajan which tells us the Roman reaction toward Christians. In this letter, the emperor says "They are not to be hunted out. If they are denounced and convicted, they are to be punished, but he who denies that he is a Christian and proves it by supplicating our gods, although suspect in the past, may gain pardon from penitence." This will be the attitude of emperors to the Christians for the next 140 years; there was no systematic persecution of the Christians by the Romans until the middle of the next century. Some Christians were persecuted, but they were not sought out as a group until 250.

117 Development of Clergy: Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, in a letter to the churches in Smyrna, wrote "Let no one do any of the things appertaining to the Church without the bishop. Let that be considered a valid Eucharist which is celebrated by the bishop, or by one whom he appoints. . . . It is not lawful either to baptize or to hold an "agape" [Christian "love feast"] without the bishop; but whatever he approve, this is also pleasing to God, that everything which you do may be secure and valid."

From the time of Jesus to the end of the Fourth Century, Christianity developed as an institution. The three aspects which began to be a part of this institution were the **Canon, Creed, and Clergy**. The **Canon**, or Scripture, was the message given to the Apostles from God by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it was the standard by which to measure true Christian faith and practice. But who was to define and interpret the faith after the apostles died? Why, it couldn't be left to the common people! So the **Clergy** developed. And the Canon is long (Old and New Testaments) and so an abridged or shortened version of the major teachings was needed, this was the **Creed**. Why was an abridged or shortened version considered necessary? Two reasons: to quickly defend against heresies--once you have a Creed you can immediately see where a heresy is wrong--and to serve as a measure and instruction for people becoming Christians--do you accept all the teachings in this Creed, which is the teachings of the Canon in a nutshell? So, to protect against heresies and instruct the faithful, the Canon, Creed, and Clergy were developed. Now, this process was not decided early on, in other words, no one set down in the year 100 and said, we need the 3 C's, it just happened naturally.

By this time the church was predominantly Gentile, and they began to think of themselves as the true spiritual heirs of Israel. Theologians began to depart from the grammatical historical sense of the scriptures and interpret them allegorically. The church began to believe that God had permanently rejected Israel and that the church had replaced them in His plan and promises. This created more of a need for leaders who could "correctly" interpret scripture.

Gentiles began to appropriate things for the church that God had instituted specifically for the nation of Israel. Since God gave Israel a multitiered priesthood with one high priest at the top, Replacement Theology church leaders progressively built a multitiered priesthood for the church. It consisted of bishops, monarchical bishops, metropolitan bishops, archbishops, cardinals, and one high priest – the pope.

Since God gave Israel continuing blood sacrifices with animals, Replacement Theology church leaders progressively changed the significance of the church's communion service from a memorial of Christ's death for the sins of mankind (Luke 22:19) to a continuing sacrifice for sins. This new view claimed that in communion, the bread is transformed into Christ's flesh, and the wine is transformed into Christ's blood. This became known as transubstantiation.

125 The **earliest known fragment** from a New Testament book dates from around this year; it has been dated between 100 to 150. Parts of John 18:31-33 and 37, 38 were discovered in Egypt in

1920; it is known as P52. While not the original copy of John, it may have been a copy from the original.

130 Papias died in this year. Traditionally he was a disciple of the Apostle John and was a companion of Polycarp, who also was a student of John.

132 The Jews revolt against Rome and win their land back, gaining a brief period of independence.

135 The Romans recapture Jerusalem and force the Jews to leave. Except for a brief time in the early 600's, the Jews will not regain control of Jerusalem until the year 1948. This insurrection is significant for several reasons. Though the temple and Jerusalem had fallen to Titus in A.D. 70, it was the Bar-Kokhba rebellion in these years that ended all Jewish claim to Israel and Jerusalem for many centuries. It was a difficult war, and an angry Hadrian had Jerusalem plowed with oxen; deported many Jews or sold them into slavery; built a new city in Jerusalem's place; and he renamed Israel as Syria Palestina. He then began to persecute Jews, forbidding Sabbath observance, circumcision, and numerous other uniquely Jewish rituals.

140 Around this year, **Marcion** came to Rome. He came under the influence of a gnostic named Cerdo and so began an attempt to merge Christianity with Gnosticism. To Marcion the Old Testament represented the lower, inferior god of Gnosticism. Therefore, he rejected anything from the Old Testament. In addition, **he compiled his own "scripture"** which consisted of a stripped-down version of the Gospel of Luke and 10 letters of Paul (without any OT references or influences). Marcion's movement lasted for several centuries. This was an important movement for the development of Christianity, because it caused Christians to realize that they needed to put together the new Christian scriptures (which would supplement the OT) instead of letting someone else, like Marcion, do it. The process of deciding on the eventual 27 books which comprise the New Testament would take over 200 more years. **It's important to understand, however, that copies of the current books of the New Testament were already accepted and circulated throughout the churches. There was only disagreement for some years on a few books (like Revelation), usually because of questions about whether or not they were truly written by an apostle, thereby being inspired writings. Unlike what the fiction book "The Da Vinci Code" says, there was never any disagreements about which gospels were authentic. The four we have in our Bible today were accepted among all Christian churches by this time. Other spurious writings came later and were written and put forward as "gospels" by the heretical gnostic sects.**

150 Tatian compiled the Diatessaron, a biography of Jesus compiled from the Four Gospels. One importance of this work is that it signified that by this year Christians acknowledged only Four Gospels and no other.

155 Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, martyred in this year. Polycarp at first fled his Roman persecutors but changed his mind and allowed himself to be captured. At his trial, the proconsul asked him to curse Christ, whereupon Polycarp replied "Fourscore and six years have I served Him, and he has done me no harm. How then can I curse my King that saved me." He was stabbed and burned to death. It is believed that Polycarp had been instructed by the apostle John.

155 The "First Apology" by **Justin Martyr** appeared; it was addressed to the Roman emperor Antoninus Pius. Justin later wrote "Dialogue with Trypho" while the "Second Apology" was addressed to the Roman Senate. Martyr, while a good apologist, was one of the first to take references to "the seed of Jacob" non-literally.

c. 155 Montanus came into prominence. He focused primarily on the Holy Spirit and taught that the age of the Paraclete had come and that the Paraclete spoke through him. He also taught that the New Jerusalem would soon appear. Montanus and two others, Maximilla and Priscilla, claimed to be able to forgive sins. This movement spread from Asia Minor into Europe and North Africa. It was eventually condemned as a heresy, but Montanism lasted for several centuries.

165 Martyrdom of **Justin Martyr**, one of the early Christian Apologists. He, along with other Christians, refused to sacrifice to the emperor and so were scourged and beheaded. In response to the command to sacrifice to the emperor, Justin replied that "No one who is rightly minded turns from true belief to false."

170 The early church believed in **premillennialism** and **Chiliasm**, that is, the belief that Christ would return to earth and establish God's theocracy as an earthly political Kingdom of God. Chiliasm was the predominant view of orthodox Christianity from the first to the third centuries. But even though Christ and his disciples taught this view, some leaders in the Greek church in the East began to reject Chiliasm as early as 170 A.D. Anti-Semitism was strong in the Eastern church. Gentiles increasingly called Jewish people "Christ-killers" and developed a strong bias against anything Jewish. The Western, or Latin church, held to Chiliasm longer than the Greek church in the East, being orthodox into the 4th century.

185 Development of Creed and Clergy: Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, wrote "Against Heresies," in which he makes an appeal to the **supremacy of Rome** for all Christians. Acknowledgement of Rome as the head of Christianity, though, won't happen for some time. He also included what could be an **early** form of a Christian creed. Irenaeus' book is a good glimpse of early church theology, like no other writing of its time. Irenaeus was a disciple of Polycarp, who knew John, so he's the strongest witness to the apostolic age of his time period.

193-211 Rule of **Septimius Severus**, Roman Emperor. He **attacked** Christianity by persecuting converts to Christianity. After his reign, Christians enjoyed peace until 250 (with some exceptions here and there).

197 In this year, **Tertullian** penned the most famous quote concerning the persecutions which Christians endured: "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." He was a prominent theologian from North Africa. But he also interpreted Jewish references in a non-literal way. He said that, in God's statements to Rebekah in Genesis 25:23, Esau represented the Jews, and Jacob, the younger brother, represented Christians, which meant that the Christians would overcome the Jews!

Tertullian described the **worship practices** of his church. This is an eyewitness account of how the church operated at the end of the second century.

"We are a body knit together as such by a common religious profession, by unity of discipline, and by the bond of a common hope. We meet together as an assembly and congregation . . . We pray, too, for the emperors, for their ministers and for all in authority, for the welfare of the world, for the prevalence of peace, for the delay of the final consummation [end of the world]. We assemble to read our sacred writings, if any peculiarity of the times makes either forewarning or reminiscence needful. However it be in that respect, with the sacred words we nourish our faith, we build our hope, we make our confidence more secure; and by repetitive reading of God's word we build good habits.

In the same place also exhortations are made, rebukes and sacred censures are administered. . . . the tried men of our elders preside over us, obtaining that honor not by purchase, but by established

character. There is no buying or selling of any sort in the things of God. Though we have our treasure-chest, it is not made up of purchase-money, as of a religion that has its price. On the monthly day, if he likes, each puts in a small donation; but only if it be his pleasure, and only if he be able: for there is no compulsion; all is voluntary.

These gifts are, as it were, piety's deposit fund. For they are not taken thence and spent on feasts, and drinking-bouts, and eating-houses, but to support and bury poor people, to supply the wants of boys and girls destitute of means and parents, and of old persons confined now to the house; such, too, as have suffered shipwreck; and if there happen to be any in the mines, or banished to the islands, or shut up in the prisons, for nothing but their loyalty to the cause of God's Church, they become the nurslings of their confession. . . .

One in mind and soul, we do not hesitate to share our earthly goods with one another. All things are common among us but our wives. . . .

But who has ever suffered harm from our assemblies: We are in our congregations just what we are when separated from each other; we are as a community what we are as individuals; we injure nobody, we trouble nobody. When the upright, when the virtuous meet together, when the pious, when the pure assemble in congregation, you ought not to call that a cult, but the court of God."

The Third Century

By the Third Century, two main stages of developing the Christian movement were over, the Apostolic Age, the Church Fathers, and third, the age of the Apologists was coming to a close. Christianity no longer had to defend itself as a viable movement, or even be concerned if it would last. It had spread throughout the Roman Empire and grown to an extent that it could be considered a free-standing institution which could weather any attack. There were still attempts, though. The emperor Decius, in 303, declared that all churches be destroyed. So, by the late 200s, Christianity had become so prominent that it had buildings in some cities.

200 Tertullian wrote "On Baptism" in which he mentions **infant baptism**. He wrote against it, yet the fact that he mentions it proves that by this year infant baptism, or pedobaptism, was widely practiced. Tertullian also wrote "On Modesty" in which he used the word "**Trinity**" to describe the Godhead. This is the first time that the word "Trinity" was used to describe God in a Christian sense.

236 Hippolytus, polemicist and bishop of Rome, dies. Mentored by **Irenaus**, he held to a literal interpretation of scripture, including prophecy. He wrote that the six days of Creation and the seventh day of rest was representative of the time of man and the kingdom age to come. Hippolytus was the first we know of that saw that there is a chronological gap (the church age) between the first sixty-nine weeks of Daniel's prophecy, in chapter 9, and the Seventieth Week (see Daniel 9:24-27). That final week he reserved for the "end of the whole world" and "the last times".

251 Cyprian, the Bishop of Carthage, wrote "On the Unity of the Catholic Church," which contained a definition of the Church: "He cannot have God as his Father who does not have the Church as his mother." In one of his letters he stated "**There is no salvation out[side] of the Church.**" So you can see that the church as an institution is veering off track by this time, going beyond what the Bible teaches, and assuming that the church is who determines whether you are saved or not. A personal relationship with Jesus Christ is abandoned, and your relationship with an institution is what matters. Increasingly, being a Christian didn't mean necessarily that you had

accepted Jesus Christ as your personal savior, but that you had aligned yourself with the Church, and followed it's doctrines, whatever they were.

The view of Christianity from sometime in the First or Second Century to the split between Catholics and Orthodox in 1054 was that of one Church which comprised all Christians. Or, to put it another way, if you were not part of the Church, you were not a Christian. Cyprian's definition of the Church above attempts to place all Christians under one banner. So by the mid 200s, the idea of one common Christian faith, i.e. the Church, was becoming the prominent view. By the mid-200s church leaders could make decisions which cut across all of Christianity. And in 325 a Council of church leaders would be called, the Council of Nicaea, which defined what one has to believe in order to be a Christian.

Cyprian, like Tertullian, interpreted Genesis 25:23 allegorically, saying that the Christians inherited the birthright that the Jews forfeited.

254 The theologian **Origen** died in this year. He was the first church leader of stature to challenge the premillennial orthodoxy of the early church. Completely dedicated to the allegorical method of interpretation like his mentor, Clement of Alexandria, Origen spiritualized virtually every Christian doctrine. Origen claimed that the word Israel in the Bible could mean the Church, not national Israel. **This has caused immeasurable damage to the way the Bible is understood, and has caused rampant anti-Semitism.**

257-8 Persecution by the Emperor Valerian. He forbid Christians to assemble and arrested many bishops.

The Fourth Century

Sometime in the 300s **Sinaiticus**, the oldest complete copy of the NT, dates from the 300s.

303 The Emperor **Diocletian** began a persecution of the Christians, who had become quite numerous by this time. He ordered that all churches be burned (this could have included house churches, which could have meant that people's homes were destroyed) and all Christian Scriptures be burned. Eusebius (born in 260 and therefore an eyewitness) wrote "We saw with our very eyes . . . the inspired and sacred scriptures committed to the flames in the marketplaces."

311 The Emperor **Galerius** issued an Edict of Toleration toward the Christians as he lay dying. Apparently he was so afraid of dying that he included this request: "In return for our tolerance, Christians will be required to pray to their god for us." He died five days later.

312 The emperor Constantine the Great, on his way to fight his co-emperor Maxentius, had a vision of a cross with the words, "In this sign conquer," written under it. He won the battle and attributed his victory to the Christian God. Becoming a supporter of the early church, in 313, he and his co-emperor Licinius issued the Edict of Milan, restoring Christianity to favor. Constantine and Licinius then rebuilt the destroyed church buildings of the early church and restored all possessions confiscated during the persecution.

313 The **Edict of Milan** is signed by co-emperors Constantine and Licinius and ends persecutions of Christians. It states in part, ""We therefore announce that, notwithstanding any provisions concerning the Christians in our former instructions, all who choose that religion are to be permitted to

continue therein, without any let or hindrance, and are not to be in any way troubled or molested." In 380, Christianity would become the official religion of the Roman Empire.

Constantine was received with great joy by the early churches, which were grateful that he had not only ended persecution but granted them favor. Roman citizens flocked into the churches, even though Constantine remained the head of the Roman pagan religion as well. Elements of paganism began to creep and merge into the church, although Catholics vehemently deny this.

325 The Emperor Constantine called the **Council of Nicaea** (or Nicea), which is known as the **First Ecumenical Council**; this refers to the fact that it called all Christian leaders to gather together. This was the first of the twenty-one major Church Councils. Councils or meetings had been held before between several or a number of leaders, but this was the first one to include all Christian leaders. Around 300 Christian leaders attended from near and far; a "John of Persia" signed his name and wrote that he was head of all churches in Persia and India. One issue dealt with in the Council was a debate initiated by Arius, who denied the divinity of Jesus. Arius believed that Jesus was created by God and was therefore not eternal nor divine (on the same level as the Father). The debate was reduced to a choice of words: should the word "homoousios" (of the same nature) or "homoiousios" (of the similar or like nature; preferred by the Arians) be used to describe Christ? It was confirmed almost unanimously that Christ was divine, of the same nature as the Father. The Nicene Creed developed within the Council to defeat Arius' heresy. Arius, who attended, refused to sign.

Nicene Creed of 325:

"We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible. And in One Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, the only-begotten; that is, of the essence of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made both in heaven and on earth; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down and was incarnate and was made man; he suffered, and the third day he rose again, ascended into heaven; from where he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. And in the Holy Spirit. But those who say: 'There was a time when he was not,' and 'He was not before he was made;' and 'He was made out of nothing,' or 'He is of another substance' or 'essence,' or 'The Son of God is created,' or 'changeable,' or 'alterable'--they are condemned by the holy catholic and apostolic Church."

Another issue at the Council of Nicea was the official approval of "patriarchs." These were the bishops of Alexandria, Rome, and Antioch, who were given authority over very large provinces. This would lead eventually to the bishop of Rome becoming pope of the Roman Catholic Church in the west. The other patriarchs—several have been added since—are still leaders of the Eastern Orthodox Church, which is basically the Catholic Church of the east.

330 By this year, Constantine had rebuilt Byzantium (today's Istanbul) and changed its name to **Constantinople**.

Diocletian (emperor to 305 and died in 313) realized that the Roman Empire was too large for one person to control and so divided the Empire between the rule of two emperors; one controlled the western part of the Empire and one the eastern part. Constantine felt he was strong enough to rule the entire empire yet moved his capital eastward from Rome to Constantinople; this may have been because he was concerned about the stability of the eastern front of the Empire. The Empire vacillated between rule by one emperor and two until 394, when Theodosius became the last sole emperor of the entire Empire. Upon his death, the Empire was divided between Theodosius' two sons. This divide in the Empire reflected differences between the two halves of the Empire which

existed well before 394. Eventually these differences would help result in Christianity splitting into western and eastern Christianity: Catholicism in the West and centered in Rome and Orthodoxy in the East and centered in Constantinople.

337 **Constantine** died; he was baptized just prior to his death. Was this a deathbed conversion? Did he ever truly trust Christ? Only God knows. With Constantine, Christianity saw its first imperial protector. Because of this, Christianity itself changed in style. Christians were no longer persecuted during his reign, and so more people became Christian (at least in name), more resources were spent on building churches, Christians--no longer fearing for their lives--spent their effort in developing Christian thought and understanding through education and writing, and the church services themselves developed more elaborate ceremonies, such as clerical dress (vestments) during the service, incense, processions before and after the worship service, and choirs.

337-350 Rule of the Roman Empire fell to Constantine's three sons, Constantine II, Constans, and Constantius II. The different parts of the Roman empire fluctuated between Arian and Nicene belief.

340 **Eusebius** died. He is considered the father of Church History. He wrote the first comprehensive church history work, entitled "Ecclesiastical History" or "Church History," completing the final Book X in 323.

350 Constantius II becomes sole emperor of the Roman Empire. He was Arian; for an explanation, see the year 325. He ruled until 361. During his reign, Arian thought spread throughout Christianity. Jerome wrote, "the entire world woke from a deep slumber and discovered that it had become Arian."

One of the main ideas which frustrated people in the first 350 years of Christianity was the idea of the Incarnation, of God becoming human, and the Trinity, one God in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Many of the early heresies taught different versions of the identity of Jesus. **The cause of this confusion was the inability for some to accept that Jesus was God, even though the gospels and the epistles clearly present Him as divine.** Arius believed that Jesus, being called the "Son," was created at some point in the past by the Father. This idea appealed to some other people as well, so that even after the Council the Arian view only grew. A number of church leaders wrote against Arianism, including Athanasius, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzus (these three are known as the Great Cappadocians), and Ambrose. A second Council, the Council of Constantinople in 381, also attempted to end Arianism, but the heresy remained alive for several hundred years.

362 **Julius** (who had become emperor the year before) was not a Christian and reopened the pagan temples. He did not persecute Christians, though.

363 **Julius** died. **Jovian** became emperor and restored Christianity to its place of prominence in the Roman Empire. He died in the following year. All emperors from Jovian aligned themselves as Christian.

367 **Development of the Canon: Athanasius**, Bishop of Alexandria, writes a letter which includes a listing of the 27 books he believes should be in the new Christian scripture. This is the **first known written listing of the New Testament books.**

325-381 The problem was that now almost everyone was a "Christian," but there were much fewer that really wanted to follow Christ. Those that did want to follow Christ often formed communities of committed disciples, the first monks. Others simply left the cities to live alone in the desert. These were the first Christian hermits.

During the 4th century and throughout the Middle Ages there was great political power in being a bishop. So it was common for ambitious and unholy men to push their way into that position, or even to pay some important government official or bishop for the position. This led to great corruption in the church. In fact, it would be fair to say the Church fell during this period, and the testimony of the pre-Nicene churches has never been the same since.

During this entire time there continued to be "Nicene" and "Arian" bishops, depending on whether they supported Arius or the Council of Nicea. Most of the political intrigue and even violence during the 4th century was over this issue.

380 The Emperor **Theodosius I** decreed that **Christianity would be the official religion** of the Roman Empire. Inherent in this declaration was the concept of the Trinity, so this was a rejection of Arianism. It is noteworthy that Theodosius did not gain control over the entire Empire until 394, when he defeated the Western Emperor Eugenius.

381 Emperor Theodosius I convened the **Council of Constantinople**, the **second Ecumenical Council**. This was the second of the twenty-one major Church Councils. This Council was called to refute the ideas of Arius and Apollinarius. Apollinarians believed that, while humans have a physical body, soul, and spirit, Christ only had a physical body and soul. The spirit which humans have was in Christ the "Divine Logos." The Council developed a creed in response to this heresy. Today this Creed is (usually) known as the Nicene Creed. In addition, Constantinople was given "honorary precedence" over all churches except for the Roman church.

The **Creed** which came out of the **Council of Constantinople**:

"We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, Light of Light, very (or true) God of very (or true) God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man; he was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried, and the third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; from where he shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick (living) and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spake by the prophets.

In one holy catholic and apostolic Church; we acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen."

395 **Theodosius I** died. The Roman Empire split into eastern and western parts.

By the end of the Fourth Century, Christianity had a Canon (Scripture of Old and New Testaments), Creed (Nicene) and Clergy (priests, bishops, and "bishop of bishops" which we call the Pope). This completed the institutionalization of Christianity. In addition, Christianity was the official religion throughout the Roman Empire. But fifteen years later Rome would be sacked and the beginning of the Dark Ages would begin.

400 Augustine wrote **The Confessions**. Augustine became the bishop of Hippo and influenced the future direction of organized Christendom more than any person since the apostle Paul. Deep into the study of philosophy, he taught that the physical and material was inherently evil, and the totally spiritual was inherently good. This, of course, led him to reject Chiliasm as an earthly, political Kingdom of God. He believed that, for the Kingdom of God to be good, it had to be spiritual in nature. So he believed that the Millennium had to be some kind of spiritual state that the entire church entered into at Pentecost.

410 Rome is defeated and **sacked** by Alaric I, leader of the Visigoths. The last time Rome had been sacked was in 387 BC. Constantinople, the new capital of the Roman Empire since 330, would not fall until 1453 (to the Muslims).

418 Pelagius died sometime soon after this year. The year of his death is unknown, and could have been decades after this, this is the last year he was known to be alive. Pelagius is significant because of one theological idea: he believed that humans can make the initial step toward accepting God without any assistance or draw from God. He taught that man was free from original sin and able to come to God on his own. Augustine became involved in a long disagreement with Pelagius and his followers: Augustine believed that God has to initially draw humans to him and that humans can only respond, not initiate. What was the problem? Pelagius believed that humans have the responsibility of choosing good and evil and are not guided by the Holy Spirit or any other aspect of God. Therefore, the purpose of Christ was to give instruction and a good example, not to provide salvation. Pelagianism was condemned as a heresy by Augustine and others, and was eventually defeated in the Council of Ephesus in 431.

| Pelagian and Augustinian Views of Sin | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| Comparisons | Pelagius | Augustine |
| Effect of the Fall | Only Adam affected | All humanity affected |
| Original Sin | No | Yes |
| Hereditary Sin | No | Yes |
| Humans at Birth | Born Neutral | Born with fallen nature |
| Man's Will | Free | Enslaved to sin |
| Fact of Universal Sin | Due to bad examples | Due to man's innate sinfulness: man is "not able not to sin" |
| Turning to God in Salvation | Is possible independent of God's grace | Only possible through God's grace |

420 Augustine wrote **The City of God**. In this book, Augustine became the first person to teach that the organized catholic (universal) church is the Messianic Kingdom, and that the Millennium began with the first coming of Christ. Augustine's allegorical millennialism became the official doctrine of the church. Throughout the middle ages, the Roman Catholic church adopted, maintained, and strongly advocated Replacement Theology and Augustine's Amillennial view. Because of that, it developed into a powerful religious-political machine that dominated every aspect of life in Western Europe – even to the point of setting up, dominating, removing, and humiliating kings and emperors.

420 Jerome died. He translated the Bible into Latin; it is known as the **Vulgate** and was the official version for European Christians until the Protestant Reformation of the 1500s.

430 Augustine died. The Vandals were at that point besieging Rome, although they wouldn't take Rome until 455.

Through involvement with the Donatists and Pelagius, Augustine developed theological ideas which

would greatly impact Christianity, some positively and some negatively. His allegorical Amillennialism has been the doctrine of the Catholic Church and many protestant churches down through today. Among his other ideas: the validity of a rite of the church does not depend on the spiritual purity of the clergy but on the church in which it is performed; the concept of a just war; and the initiative to respond to God must initiate from God, humans are not capable of responding to God from their own initiative--this was an early form of predestination.

431 Council of Ephesus. This was the third of the twenty-one major Church Councils. Convened by Emperor Theodosius II in response to the Nestorian Controversy. Nestorius' ideas were condemned and he was excommunicated. He believed that Christ consisted of two separate Persons, one Divine and one Human, in one body. The Church belief was that Christ was one Person, fully God and fully human, in the one body. In addition, the Council gave approval to refer to Mary as "theotokos," "God-bearer." Pelagianism was also condemned at this council.

433 Patrick lands in Ireland and converts King Laoghaire to Christianity.

451 Council of Chalcedon. This was the fourth of the twenty-one major Church Councils. Convened by Emperor Marcian in response to the Eutychian (also called Monophysitism) Controversy. Eutychius was removed from his position of leadership over a large monastery in Constantinople and exiled. He believed that Christ only contained a Divine Nature. This was a direct contradiction of the Council of Ephesus, which stated that Christ was fully God and fully human. In addition, the Western representatives rejected the idea that the head of the church in Constantinople be given the title "Patriarch" and that it be made second in authority to the church in Rome.

The Chalcedon Definition affirmed that Christ is "truly God," "perfect in Godhead," the Son of God who was "begotten of the Father before the ages." Yet he is also "truly man," "perfect in manhood" and was born of the Virgin Mary. The deity and humanity are "not parted or divided into two persons," but Christ is "one person and one being." Nor are his deity and humanity to be blurred together. "The difference of the [divine and human] natures is in no wise taken away by reason of the union, but rather the properties of each are preserved." Thus Christ is "made known in two natures [which exist] without confusion, without change, without division, without separation."

455 Rome is again defeated and **sacked**, this time by the Vandals. They were Arian.

460 St. Patrick died. Although born in Britain, he was sent to Ireland as a bishop and remained there his entire life.

461 Pope Leo I, the Great, died. He is credited with consolidating the power of the papacy during the time of turmoil following the fall of Rome, which he was a witness of. He enlarged the authority of the papacy into Northern Africa, Gaul (France), and Spain.

476 The **Western Roman Empire** comes to an **end** when Odoacer, a German general, forced Romulus Augustus, the last Emperor of the Western Roman Empire, to resign. Odoacer became the king of Italy; he held Arian beliefs. The **Middle Ages** are considered to have begun in this year.

496 Clovis, the Frankish (French) king, was baptized. 3000 of Clovis' soldiers were also baptized.

The Medieval Church (590 – 1517)

This period is also called the Dark Ages because of increasing corruption in the church. This corruption eventually sparked the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century by Martin Luther, John Calvin, and others. Many of the Catholic doctrines we are familiar with today developed during this time: purgatory in 593, prayers to Mary, saints, and angels in 600, kissing the pope's foot in 709, canonization of dead saints in 995, celibacy of the priesthood in 1079, the rosary in 1090, transubstantiation and confessing sins to a priest in 1215, and the seven sacraments in 1439.

The Roman Catholic church increasingly moved away from Augustinian doctrine (except for Amillennialism). Man was viewed as cooperating with God in both salvation and sanctification. Works became an important part of salvation and sanctification, especially with the adoption of the seven sacraments. The authority of the papacy also emerged during this time, and they began to be called "the vicar of Christ." Everyone, including kings, was required to submit to the pope in both religious and political matters.

590 Gregory the Great becomes pope - John Calvin admired Gregory and declared in his "Institutes", that Gregory was the last good pope. He is considered a saint in both the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox Churches, and the patron saint of musicians, singers, students, and teachers.

"A system of writing down reminders of chant melodies was probably devised by monks around 800 to aid in unifying the church service throughout the Frankish empire. Charlemagne brought cantors from the Papal chapel in Rome to instruct his clerics in the "authentic" liturgy. A program of propaganda spread the idea that the chant used in Rome came directly from Gregory the Great, who had died two centuries earlier and was universally venerated. Pictures were made to depict the dove of the Holy Spirit perched on Gregory's shoulder, singing God's authentic form of chant into his ear. This gave rise to calling the music "Gregorian chant". A more accurate term is plainsong or plainchant.

*Sometimes the establishment of the Gregorian Calendar is erroneously attributed to Gregory the Great; however, that calendar was actually instituted by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582 by way of a papal bull entitled, *Inter gravissimas*." Wikipedia*

622 Muhammad's hegira: birth of Islam – Muhammad leaves Mecca and goes to Medina to escape persecution, from where he united the tribes of Arabia into a single Arab Muslim religious group.

630's Muslims conquer Persia, Egypt, Armenia, and Levant (modern day Lebanon, Israel, and part of Syria and Turkey)

725 Emperor Leo III begins crackdown on the of icons in the church

787 Second Council of Nicea – the use of icons in worship was authorized

800 Charlemagne becomes emperor - he is regarded not only as the founding father of both French and German monarchies, but also as the father of Europe: his empire united most of Western Europe for the first time since the Romans.

1054 East and West split (The Great Schism), with the capital of the Roman Catholic Church at Rome and the Eastern Orthodox Church at Constantinople. Relations between East and West had

long been embittered by political and ecclesiastical differences and theological disputes.

1088 Christianization of Russia

1095 First Crusade begins – during the time of the crusades, which lasted about 200 years, thousands of Jews (and Muslims) were killed, their possessions looted, and homes destroyed, as so-called Christian Crusaders marched across Europe. A famous Christian monk, Duns Scotus, told the king that it was his duty to take Jewish children from their parents, teach them Christian beliefs, and use any means necessary to force the parents to take Christian baptism.

“The Crusades were fought mainly by Roman Catholic forces (taking place after the East-West) against Muslims who had occupied the near east since the time of the Rashidun Caliphate, although campaigns were also waged against pagan Slavs, pagan Balts, Jews, Russian and Greek Orthodox Christians, Mongols, Cathars, Hussites, Waldensians, Old Prussians, and political enemies of the various popes. Crusaders took vows and were granted penance for past sins, often called an indulgence.” Wikipedia

1099 Crusaders take Jerusalem - The Jews and Muslims fought together to defend Jerusalem against the invading Franks. They were unsuccessful though and on July 15 1099 the crusaders entered the city. They proceeded to massacre the remaining Jewish and Muslim civilians and pillaged or destroyed mosques and the city itself. Jerusalem was recaptured by the Muslims under Saladin, Sultan of Egypt, in 1187, after nearly a century under Christian rule.

1175 Waldensian movement begins – the Waldenses broke from the Roman Catholic Church and experienced much persecution. The Catholic Church declared them heretics—the group's main error was "contempt for ecclesiastical power"—that they dared to teach and preach outside of the control of the clergy "without divine inspiration." In the 16th century the Waldenses joined the Reformation and adopted Calvinist doctrines.

1215 Magna Carta - a charter establishing the rights of English barons and free citizens, granted by King John at Runnymede in 1215 and regarded as the basis of civil and political liberty in England

1272 Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae* - was intended as a manual for beginners as a compilation of all of the main theological teachings of the time. It summarizes the reasoning for almost all points of Christian theology in the West.

1291 End of crusader presence in holy land – this was the final crusade, which ended in failure.

1298 A horrendous holocaust against the Jewish people took place in Germany and Austria, and then spread to other parts of Europe. In six months about 120 Jewish congregations with about 100,000 Jews perished.

1302 *Unam Sanctam* proclaims papal supremacy - laid down dogmatic propositions on the unity of the Catholic Church, the necessity of belonging to it for eternal salvation, the position of the pope as supreme head of the Church, and the duty of submission to the pope in order to belong to the Church and so attain salvation.

1336-1337 Two German noblemen with 5,000 peasants slaughtered thousands of Jewish people through various forms of torture and execution in Bavaria, Bohemia, Moravia, and Austria.

1348 The Black Death plague struck Europe, destroying many thousands of people. An insidious rumor developed that claimed the Jews started the plague by poisoning the wells and rivers of Europe in order to eliminate Christians.

1380 Wycliffe condemned – John Wycliffe, English theologian, is sometimes called “The Morning Star of the Reformation”, and was the first man to translate the Bible into English. He was one of the earliest opponents of papal authority.

1415 Jon Huss burned at stake – Huss, another predecessor of the Reformation, spoke out against indulgences and the crusades.

1431 Joan of Arc martyred - a national heroine of France and a Catholic saint. Joan was a peasant girl who led the French army to several important victories during the Hundred Years' War, claiming divine guidance, and was indirectly responsible for the coronation of Charles VII. She was captured by the Burgundians, sold to the English, tried by an ecclesiastical court, and burned at the stake when she was nineteen years old. Twenty-four years later, Pope Callixtus III reviewed the decision of the ecclesiastical court, found her innocent, and declared her a martyr.

1439 – Council of Florence – the seven sacraments of the Catholic church are officially acknowledged

Spiritual Effects of Medieval Sacraments (according to the Catholic Church)

| Sacrament | Effect |
|------------------------|---|
| Baptism | Regeneration; confers spiritual life |
| Confirmation | Strengthens spiritual life |
| Eucharist | Nourishes spiritual life |
| Penance | Restores spiritual life if lost through sin |
| Extreme Unction | (Anointing of the sick) Heals the soul, sometimes the body |
| Holy Orders | Creates rulers of the church |
| Matrimony | God’s blessing on the family; children produced; heaven filled with the elect |

1453 Fall of Constantinople, end of Eastern Roman Empire – The Muslim Ottoman Empire conquers the city.

1456 Gutenberg Produces the First Printed Bible - Using his revolutionary invention—printing from movable type—he made the Scriptures potentially accessible to every person, which was one of the causes of the Reformation. People could now compare Catholic Church doctrines and practices to what the Bible actually said.

1479 Establishment of Spanish Inquisition – a tribunal established in 1478 by Catholic Monarchs Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella I of Castile. The main purpose was to ensure the orthodoxy of recent converts, especially those Jews, Muslims and others coerced on pain of death to adopt the Christian (Catholic) religion.

In Seville, Spain, Gentiles could be excommunicated from the church if they did not submit names of “guilty” Jews to the Catholic inquisitors. Jews could be guilty if they believed in the coming of a Messiah to administer God’s rule over the world, had circumcised their children, given Jewish names to their children, or followed Jewish dietary laws. Many Jews were burned alive, died in prison, lost their property, or were driven out of the land. It was not completely abolished until 1834, during the reign of Isabella II.

1492 Columbus discovers the New World