



The Christian Church Family Tree

A Study on the History of the Church by Dr. Harley Ihm

Lesson 5: The Nightmare Begins - The Rise of Rome and Islam AD 630-1000

A transformational journey would begin in a cave near Mecca in AD 610 as Muhammad ibn Abdullah retreated in prayer and meditation. He was looking for answers to faith and the nature of God when he was overwhelmed by a spiritual encounter and was suddenly speaking prophecy. He was illiterate, but for 12 years he relayed messages to Mecca where they were written down. People were amazed because the verses were far too powerful for an uneducated man to relate. His message was to submit to the one true God, care for orphans and widows, and fear hell. This was a time when the Arab world was filled with tribal warfare, animism and was ignored by both the Byzantium and Persian empires around them. They needed hope. Muhammad would become their prophet and Allah their hope.



1. Medina – AD 630

He was embraced by the Arabs in the city of Medina, so he went there. However, the Jewish population rejected his teachings. They said firmly that the age of the prophets was over. Muhammad's stories of Joseph and Noah contradicted the Scriptures. There were 1,000 Jews living in Medina. Muhammad has all the Jewish men killed and the women enslaved. He believed the Christians were equally as bad because they were turning the one true God into 3 Gods with the Trinity. They were worshiping images and they blasphemed the prophet Jesus by saying that He was crucified and that He was God's son. They reasoned that if God is One, He

cannot have a Son. He was an Arab reformer trying to call Christians and Jews back to the true path to the Creator, at least that's what Muhammad thought. Within 2 years Muhammad died, but he left a militant following and after 2 more years of terror, all of Arabia was conquered by them and was now Muslim. They believed Allah gave them victory and now they were ready to conquer the entire world for him.

2. **Al-lo-pen – AD 638** – Al-lo-pen was the Chinese name given to Persian monk who was a missionary to China. The Emperor T'ai-Tsung granted this Syrian brand of Christianity official toleration in 638. He said, "This teaching is helpful to all creatures and beneficial to all people." He instructed Al-lo-pen to translate the Bible into the Chinese dialect. However, some of the Buddhist ideas were incorporated into Christianity. Christianity would gain popularity but about 200 years later it would be declining. Still, in the 13th century Marco Polo claimed there were 700,000 Christians in his region alone.
3. **The Muslim Conquest** – Jesus tells us to be wise about the times we live in. We are supposed to know and understand what is going on around us. The church in these days was caught sleeping. The Byzantium Empire never knew what hit them. The Muslims attacked the Great Byzantium and the Persian Empires at the same time. Before the Christians even understood what in the world this Islam was, the Muslims had taken Persia, Mesopotamia, Palestine, Syria, Armenia, Egypt and Libya. Alexandria, Antioch, and even Jerusalem fell to the radical Muslims. The Byzantium and Persian Empires had been so busy attacking each other in a war that they had set themselves up to be conquered. The Muslims went on to conquer Afghanistan, Carthage, and were now moving toward Constantinople, the very heart of the Church. 700 years after the death of Jesus, the church seems to be on its last legs. In one century Muslims have seized most of Asia, except Asia Minor and North Africa.



4. **Constantinople**

The Christian Empire is shrinking at an alarming rate. The Muslims approach Constantinople in AD672. They find a surprise waiting for them. The Byzantines have made an incredible discovery. By mixing petroleum, sulphur and pitch (a resin from petroleum) in a copper tube you have a very effective flame thrower. They tried to conquer the area for 5 years and gave up heading for Europe.

a. **What important fact does the church today need to learn from this historical lesson?** (*We need to be loving and uniting or we are vulnerable. Every church split or verbal attack weakens our defenses against the enemies of the church. God calls us to let our gentleness be evident to all so we attract people like Jesus did. Even those who didn't understand longed to hear him speak and to spend time with him.*)

5. **Europe Conquest – AD 700-787** – Muslims spent the first 28 years of the 8th century conquering Spain. They then moved into what is now Russia and then moved on into France. In 722, Caliph Yazid declared all Christian icons in Syria to be destroyed. The strange thing was the Byzantine emperor, Leo III, jumped on this because he didn't like statues and paintings in the church. He was much like the Puritans who were very legalistic. Leo orders that all icons be destroyed. He sends soldiers to the gateway where they throw down a golden statue of Jesus and watch it smash. He orders the bishops to participate. However, it backfired. Devout Christian women attacked and killed Leo's soldiers and the city rioted.

He is losing Christian subjects to Islam and now he has alienated the Christian subjects. At this time John of Damascus writes in defense of sacred art. He said that art was a powerful aid in worship. Icons are not worshiped, but the God of matter who became matter for our sake, inhabited matter and saved me through matter. Art was helpful, not sacrilegious. Leo calls a council to issue a ban on all icons. So, the Pope excommunicates Leo. Leo then goes on the war path and seizes the churches in southern Italy and tries to have the Pope assassinated. Now thanks to King Leo there is a new reason for Christians to be divided over trivial issues.



a. **The Hammer**

In the middle of France the Muslims ran into a new problem. They ran into Charles Martel known as "The Hammer." He had been uniting the Franks under his rule. He hired heavily armed Cavalry from Byzantium and Persia. These were the impressive warriors who would later become the knights of the middle ages. He took the land away from the churches who had taken the land away from the people to finance this war. It was really

just what goes around comes around. He invented the stirrups so people could hit their enemy hard without falling off their horses. In 732 they met and stopped the Muslim advance. The Muslims retreated to Spain and for the time being Europe was saved.

b. After this an alliance was formed between the Franks and Rome. To gain military support



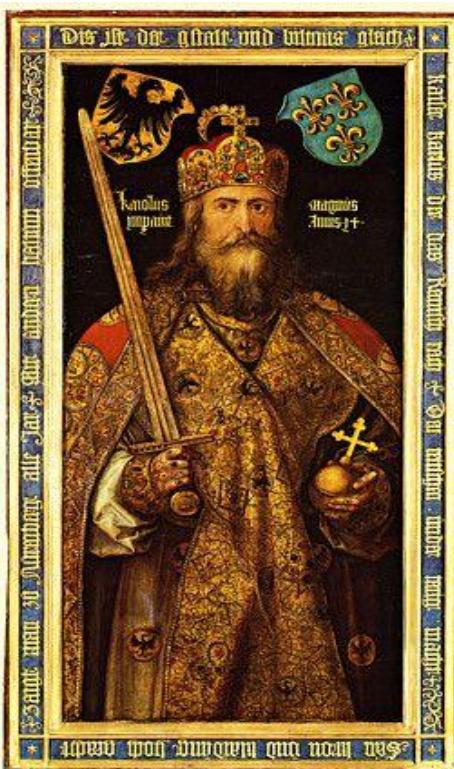
Pope Stephen II appointed the Hammer's son, Pepin the Short, to be King of the Franks. In return, Pepin's army drove the Lombards out of the land and the Byzantine Empire now belonged to the Pope. Pope Stephen II takes over a 200 mile strip of land in Italy from Ravenna to Rome. He is declared the King of this new papal state. They then pull out a 400 year old document written by Constantine that granted the Pope authority over all churches and 'imperial powers', not just in Italy, but all the west. It was a fraud pulled off that lasted for 800 years. It was called one of the greatest scams in history.

Question – This obviously wasn't from God. Why do you think the people and even governments allowed themselves to be misled? Does government have a role in faith?

c. **AD 787 – The Last World-Wide Council** – In 787 Irene called a council of 300 bishops to Nicea. The restored icons and the status quo. This last of 7 great councils defined the faith of the church. World-wide is really an exaggeration. At the 3rd council only 50 bishops showed up and most of them were from Egypt. Other councils that had an agreement of many more bishops were not accepted by the later church as ecumenical because their decisions were wrong. This was part of the politics that created strong divisions between the Eastern Church, who recognized 7 ecumenical councils as correct, and the Roman Catholic Church that recognized 21 councils being correct.

d. **Christianity in the Middle Ages** – The church calendar guided life. The annual feasts of Lent and Advent prepared for Easter and Christmas and were part of the law. To a poor people, feasts were wonderful times. They were always ready for anything with food. Therefore, many of the pagan holiday feasts were simply adopted and given religious meanings because festivals meant free food! Christianity governed the

entire life-cycle. Birth, coming of age, marriage and death. Each cycle was given a sacrament. Since the clergy were often the only educated people so they were able to write contracts, collect taxes and even read the news from the pulpits. In the middle ages, they began to baptize people into the church at birth and any moral or doctrinal deviation was punished ruthlessly. It became more about control than about Christ. Now let's back up just a bit.



6. Charlemagne AD 787-897

“Without peace we cannot please God.” Remember that the Pope created an emperor, Pepin. His son Charles was the greatest king of the Franks. He became known as “Charles the Great” or “Charlemagne.” He lived to be 73. He was a great conqueror and ruled most of what is now France, Belgium, Holland, Germany, Austria and much of Italy. He imposed Roman Catholicism on all he ruled. He created a monetary system, the pound, shilling and pence. He established the regional parish system and created a unified liturgy for all churches introduced the Apostles’ Creed into the church service. He covered the empire with large estates with Benedictine monasteries. The clergy became heavily involved in government. The monasteries became rich and were training grounds for nobility. Monks employed peasants to do the farming they used to do so they could spend more time in worship and deeper study. They began collecting, coping and understanding the ancient writings of the Church Fathers and philosophers. With the cultural collapse of Europe, the monastery became the only schools and libraries.

- a. **Charlemagne and Pope Leo III** – Charlemagne needed the Pope and the Pope needed Charlemagne. Charlemagne protected the papal system and pushed Roman Catholicism. In return, the church legitimized Charlemagne’s wars of conquest to

keep growing his kingdom. It wasn't really clear who the true power was over the empire. Charlemagne believed he was responsible for all the affairs of his empire including the church. The Pope believed he was the final spiritual authority on earth over the church and the crown of the empire.



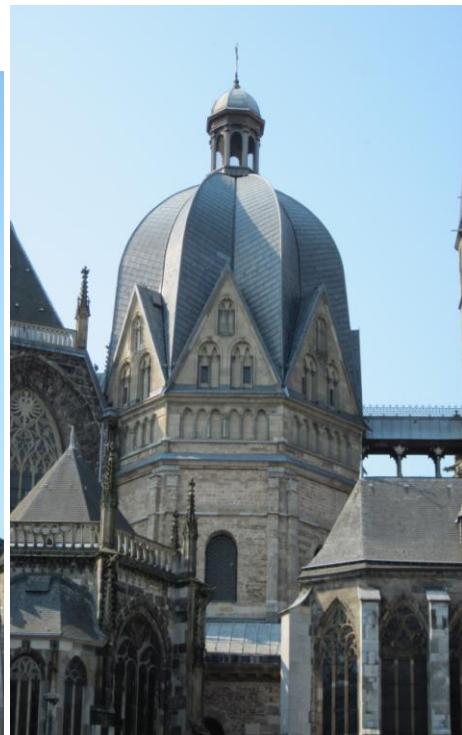
Pope Leo III

b. The Beginning of the Holy Roman Empire

Pope Leo III was not popular in Rome. In 799 he was accused of adultery and perjury. He was seized and they tried to gouge out his eyes and cut out his tongue. They locked him in a monastery but he escaped intact. He ran to Charlemagne who decided to put him on trial in Rome. Leo swore on the Gospels that he was innocent. So, Charlemagne returns him to power as Pope. Two days later, on Christmas Day 800, Charlemagne was at St. Peter's tomb praying. Leo burst into the room with his followers and crowned Charlemagne the emperor of the Roman Empire. This was the foundation of what would become the Holy Roman Empire, ruling for centuries to come. Charlemagne did not take the title, but those around Charlemagne claimed it was actually a well orchestrated stunt scripted by Charlemagne to advance his agenda of power.

c. The Octagonal Chapel – In Achen, Germany, which strategically borders Belgium and the Netherlands, and a city famous for its hot springs, Charlemagne built a great palace and the Dom (cathedral). It is an elaborate structure with a story floor gallery and marble brought from Italy. In the center is a huge 12th century chandelier. It has a magnificent altar known as the Pala d'Oro and the golden shrine containing some of Charlemagne. The rest are in the museum along with a great throne that over 30 German kings were crowned upon.

The following are pictures taken at the Octagonal Chapel in Aachen:





Statue of Charlemagne



Charlemagne's Royal Crown



Death Mask of Charlemagne



Charlemagne's Royal Portrait



- *The Great Hall with the Great Chandelier*
- *Intricate Mosaic Tiled Arches*
- *Mosaic Tiled Floor*



Gold Coffin Containing Some of Charlemagne's Remains house within the Octagonal Cathedral

- d. **Charlemagne's grandchildren** – After his death the Roman Empire was divided up between his three legitimate grandchildren. One got Germany, one got France and lucky number three got the left-overs that Germany and France were still fighting over. They needed armies so they leased land to any useful warrior and made him a royal official, called *dux*. He would lead a regiment on horseback and pay rent and taxes to the king. They in turn leased part of the land out for the lower cast to farm for them and started a caste system. So, they paid rent, farmed and had to fight whenever needed. They in turn leased some of their lease out and so on down the line until there was a pyramid that became the feudal system. These *duxs* eventually became the dukes, the hereditary nobility of Europe who often had more power than the kings. During this time the Vikings were attacking them from the north and began slave trade with the captured and the Muslims were attacking from the south. The Muslims began to copy the raiding tactics of the Vikings and in 846 broke into the great churches of St. Peter's and St. Paul's in Rome seizing the holiest ornaments and sailed off with them.
- e. **The University of Constantinople** – In AD 863 the Byzantine army drove the Muslims out of Constantinople and founded the University of Constantinople and launched a cultural renaissance. The pope was excommunicated and now Rome and Constantinople were becoming natural enemies.

7. Light in Darkness AD 897-1000

a. In 897, Pope Formosus stood trial for perjury, covetousness and unlawful. The problem was he had been dead and buried for nine months. His bitter enemy and successor was Stephen VI. He had him dug up, dressed in full regalia, set him on the throne to stand trial and then screamed at him to answer the charges. When the Pope refused to answer, he was found guilty, stripped, fingers cut off and thrown into the Tiber River. The same year, the Pope's body resurfaced and started performing miracles. Stephen VI was strangled to death. In 904 Sergius III killed to rival popes to take the throne and began ruling all bishops with terror tactics. He revoked the ordinations of everyone Pope Formosus had ordained and turned the church into complete chaos. Pope Sergius allied himself with Rome's new warrior lord, Theophylact and his more powerful wife, Theodora, and had a child by their 15 year old daughter. He had complete and ruthless power.



Painting of Formosus' Trial

b. Vladimir I



Vladimir I was a Russian Viking leader was looking into Christianity. His grandmother converted, his father rejected it on the grounds that any man who was baptized would be laughed at. He investigated Islam, Judaism and Roman Christianity. He liked none of them. He sent comparative religions experts to a service in Constantinople. They were so overwhelmed by the beauty of the service that they came home saying, “In that place, God lives among men.” The emperor needed help from the raiding armies. Vladimir offered to conquer them IF he could marry the emperor’s sister. That was an outrage because Vladimir was a pagan barbarian with four wives and 800 concubines. The emperor Basil agreed but only if Vladimir got baptized, which he did in 988. He took his baptism seriously and dumped all the other women and wives. He then threw the biggest idol in the country off the hill. He began to fill Russia with churches and monasteries. The churches were established with Slavonic liturgy and scriptures, which is how Russia got its alphabet. He organized a social welfare system and abolished torture, mutilation and the death penalty.

8. **The Millennium** – On New Year’s Eve AD 999, large crowds gathered outside the papal palace. They were actually united. They came to celebrate the millennium and await the end of the world assuming that the 1,000 year rule of the saints talked about in Revelation was fulfilled and the judgment scene would begin any moment. At midnight, it didn’t happen so the pope blessed them and sent them home to wait a little longer. As if the last 1,000 years was a rule of saints would easily be debated. Popes were using their power to affect nations, gather money. Positions could be bought in the church. Celibacy of priests has been ignored. Pope Benedict IX becomes pope at age 11 who will eventually provoke a civil war in Rome to straighten out the people who dare point out his violence, drunkenness and sexual offences.