

The Church in the Dark Ages and The Schism of 1054 800-1054

I. The Rise of Feudalism

The great empire of Charlemagne couldn't last under his ill equipped sons. When the central government could no longer effectively control the population, feudalism in one form or another was bound to arise. The decline of city life and trade after the fall of the Roman Empire forced people back to the land and farms to make a living. Why the big deal? A consolidated Empire meant open and free trade routes. Without the Empire, people were once again broken down into small segments of society in which they had to live.

These and other chaotic conditions of the 9th century encouraged the rise of feudalism in Western Europe. It put public power into private hands.

Here's how feudalism worked. It was the true pyramid scheme.
(see slide)

Kings were in charge of everything. He owned all the land and gave parcels of land to certain lords.

You had **Lords**, they were landowners in the land had political connections.

Then you had **knights** (see pic of knight) who were also given land in return for their protection. They had to give to the lord at least 40 days of military service per year. The knights gave protection for the lords above them and mostly for the serfs under them.

Then at the bottom were the **peasants or serfs**, (pic of different pyramid of feudalism) who became the economic foundation of feudalism, these were the guys who worked the land and grew the crops.

Sort of apart from this pyramid you had the **priests and clergy** who looked after the spiritual needs of the people, sort of, some of the time.

“Feudalism may be defined as a system of political organization based on possession of land for which one gave military and other services to the lord who granted possession of the land.” Earl Cairnes

Some lords may have several knights and several manors and serfs under them. That was good and bad. Good – more protection and more potential for money coming in. Bad – more guys to gang up on you if they didn’t like you and liked the big house you were living in better.

When feudalism worked right, it brought justice and law and order to society.

Why is this important for church history? You have to remember that by the 9th century, the Roman Church had become the largest land-owner in Italy and one of the major land owners in the rest of Europe. Remember owning land meant power and money. Power and money in combination with religion is often a dangerous marriage and history proved that to be true.

Sometimes, it was the priests or bishops who were the lords and sometimes they were the vassals now responsible to protect the serfs. It was a delicate relationship between the lord and the church or the church and the serfs.

The more the church got involved in secular business, farming, forming a military, political intrigue, the less she concentrated on what she was there for, the spiritual shepherding of people and the keeping of doctrine.

Another problem was that younger sons of nobles could gain land and prestige through service in the church. You can imagine the problems this caused.

Before we let someone in the church we want to know who they are and know their character and their Christian testimony. We want, to the best of our ability, the godliest men in the clergy.

That was not the case for them. Anyone could get in with enough money. Can you imagine the havoc that caused in the church?

Bottom line, the church was led astray from what she was there to do and for the next several hundred years we have this confusion as to who is in charge, the state or the church? Did God delegate power to the pope or the emperor?

II. Here Come the Vikings

If the rise of feudalism wasn't bad enough for the church the invasion of the Vikings didn't help much either.

(map of invasion of Vikings)

As you likely know, the Vikings came from what is now Sweden, Norway and Denmark and were a major threat to Western Europe from the eighth to tenth centuries. Any town or monastery along the coast or on the shores of a river could expect a visit from the Vikings. What did they want? Money and gold and jewels and churches and monasteries were great places to find them. They were ruthless. (see pic of invasion)

(Happy Vikings)

(Mean Viking)

(Viking ship)

One of the most devastating effects was that many of the rich art and writings of the church were utterly destroyed forever by the Vikings.

But, one of the byproducts of these invasions was that as the Vikings took slaves and brought them back to Scandinavia, they also brought Christians slaves with them. Christian slaves who were not afraid to share the gospel.

So, the gospel was going forth. Sometimes the gospel got places by people who willingly carried it there and sometimes it got there by unwilling participants. But, God was getting the gospel to the nations, sometimes whether they wanted it or not.

III. The Doctrine of the Mass

(pic of priest and Eucharist)

I wonder how many of you have ever attended a Roman Catholic Mass?

It's obviously very different from the service here at LG in so many ways. You can hardly find two elements that are similar and yet we both call ourselves the Christian Church.

Our prayers are different.

Sermons are different.

Setting is different.

Music is different.

Communion is different. At the heart of the Roman Catholic Church service is the Lord's Supper or the Eucharist. There would be no service without this. This is why you gather.

We've talked a little already about how the idea of the elements of communion or the Lord's supper were beginning to change from only symbols to more of a real sacrifice. The table was changed to an "altar" because some form of sacrifice was being held there.

In about 831 an abbot of the monastery of Corbie near the city of Amiens, in the north of France, a man by the name of Paschasius Radbertus, began to teach that by a divine miracle the substance of bread and the wine were actually changed into the body and blood of Christ. He didn't actually call this the doctrine of *Transubstantiation*, this is essentially what it was. He wrote a book called *Of the Body and Blood of the Lord*, which strengthened his views.

That was 831. The Church of Rome didn't officially accept the doctrine of transubstantiation until 1215 nor fully define it until the Council of Trent in 1545, but here is where it started.

It's important to understand that the Roman Catholic church believes that taking communion is a means of receiving grace. When you sin you lose grace and by taking communion you receive grace back into your account if you will.

When I came to know the Lord in high school and wanted to attend the Protestant Church where I had heard the gospel, my mom allowed it IF I first went to the Catholic service. Why? The other, Protestant service didn't count towards my salvation. In her mind, only by taking communion from the Roman Catholic Church was I making my Sunday worthwhile.

We'll talk more about the difference in communion from what we believe here in a minute and a lot more when we get to the Protestant Reformation in a few weeks.

IV. Monastic Reform

In the past few weeks we've talked about how prominent the monasteries became and for the most part, how truly spiritual they were. Good men and men flocked to monasteries and convents to serve God and learn more about the Scriptures.

That also began to change for the worse in the 9th and 10th centuries. Monasteries across the globe had become wealthy and corrupt.

(pic of monastery in Cluny)

However, in 909 a new monastery was started in the East of France in a city named **Cluny**. This particular monastery decided to cut itself off from the corruption of the church and chose instead to be self-governed. This turned out to be a good move. It worked so well that many of the Benedictine monasteries came over and by the 12th centuries there were over 1100 monasteries under the leadership of the abbot of Cluny.

This would be known as the **Clunaic movement**. One of the driving forces for them was an intense missionary zeal.

I say all this because; the movement that resulted from the impact of *these* monasteries would eventually result in the Crusades being launched against the Muslims in the Holy Land. That's next week!

V. The Great Schism of 1054

(pic of Rome and Constantinople)

We've talked in the past few weeks about why the church in the West grew to such power, while the church in the east didn't gain as much traction.

1. You may remember that one of the reasons was that as the Roman Empire was split into two regions, east and west. While there was essentially only one major city in the west, there were three or four in the east, Constantinople, Antioch, Alexandria and Jerusalem.
2. Another factor that led to the strengthening of west and the weakening of the authority of the church in east, is as the emperor in the west declined in power, the church gained in power in the vacuum. That didn't happen in the east. Under the east or Byzantine Empire, there was consistent authority as the Emperor ruled one after another. That meant the church in the East stayed in direct control of the state.
3. Where the people spoke Greek, so did the church. When they spoke Russian, so did the Church. When they spoke Coptic or Egyptian so did the Church. See how this is working? Linguistically, culturally, philosophically, and religiously, the state and church were tied intricately together in the East.

There were other things that had already begun to split the church in the west from the east.

4. A few hundred years earlier there was a big debate over **when to celebrate Easter**. The Church in the west decided to follow the Gregorian calendar while the East decided to use the Julian calendar. The other issue in celebrating Easter had to do with following the

Passover in the Jewish calendar. The west decided to do it one way and the east decided to do it another way. So most years the two big branches of Christianity celebrate biggest holiday on different days. As I mentioned a moment ago, another big difference was the language of the churches. For Rome, it was Latin. For the East, it was predominately Greek, then Russian and Coptic and Ethiopian, Armenian, etc. No doubt that different language and different cultures divide people.

5. The West may be thought of being more practical and less concerned about dividing theological hairs. The East, thought very philosophically (think Plato, Aristotle, Socrates) was very concerned about theology.

6. **Celibacy** was another issue. Marriage of all clergy below the rank of bishop was permitted in the East. In the West, no clergy could marry.

7. **In the east, clergy had to wear a beard**, not so in the west. (pic)

Why?

“You shall not round off the hair on your temples or mar the edges of your beard.” Leviticus 19:27

The clergy in the east also pointed to things in the Bible like: Nazarite vows of not cutting the hair... Samson had power when he had long hair, but when he cut his hair he lost his power. They believed that Jesus had long hair, as did Paul and all the apostles.

8. **The Filioque clause** has long been regarded as a major dividing point. The issue has to do with a phrase that the western church added to the Nicene Creed in the 5th century.

As you may remember, the Nicene Creed was originally written in 325 to combat the heresies on the person of Christ. They also threw in this little phrase about the Holy Spirit. Here is how it originally read:

And in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceedeth

from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spake by the prophets.

“who proceedeth from the Father,” – both sides agreed with that.

But in another council in Toledo (modern day Spain) in 589 the church in the west added the phrase **“and from the Son”**. And by the way, they didn’t ask the church in the east about it, they just did it. You can imagine the response from the east by changing something as revered as the Nicene Creed. That’s not far from someone changing the wording say John 3:16. Remember for the Orthodox Church, the creeds are on the same level as Holy Scripture. You just can’t change stuff without asking or having a really good reason to do so.

So what did the council in 589 change? So now it read this way.

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

That little phrase is called the filioque clause. The word filioque is a Latin word that literally means “and from the Son.”

There’s much controversy over what was meant here by this phrase.

For instance, you could turn to passages like John 15:26 and John 16:7:

“But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.” John 15:26

“Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.” John 16:7

It’s clear from John 15:26 that the Spirit “proceeds from the Father”.

You could make a point in this regard, that the Holy Spirit comes from, or is sent by Jesus by looking at these two passages. When did this happen? At Pentecost. So what's the problem? The Holy Spirit comes or is sent from the Son.

(V. The Great Schism)

But remember, the Nicene Creed in this statement is talking about the *nature* of the Trinity, and the phrase was understood to speak of the eternal relationship between the Holy Spirit and the Son, something the Scripture never explicitly discusses. It does talk about the relationship of the Father to the Spirit (Jn. 15:26) but Scripture is silent about the relationship of the Son to the Spirit.

Let's be clear that the word "proceeds" never was thought of in a creative way, in that the Holy Spirit was created by the Father and or the Son or both. It was a word that expressed how they eternally related to each other.

The East rejected this idea as not being biblically supported and they stand by that to this day.

What's the correct position? It's complicated and difficult to understand but Protestants have generally sided with Rome on this one and stand by the addition of the phrase "and the Son" as the Holy Spirit eternally relates to both the Father and the Son.

I must say that in recent days, like in the last six months, there has erupted amongst the leading theologians a renewed and very heated debate about the nature of the eternal relationship between the Father and the Son and I have to imagine that this issue with the Holy Spirit will soon come into the conversation as well. I know that much of what the controversy is stemming from is the interpretation of the Nicene Creed. Some modern theologians feeling as if they are sticking to it and claiming that others have strayed from it. This controversy is far from settled.

All of this came to a head in 1054 over what appeared to have been a relatively minor matter.

The Patriarch in Constantinople condemned the church in the West for the use of unleavened bread in the Eucharist. Apparently the West had been using unleavened bread for the last 300 years or so but the Patriarch thought it was time to make a stand.

The Pope, a Leo IX, sent three men to Constantinople to resolve the issue. (pic of men sitting together)

Unfortunately, the more they talked the more they disagreed.

Finally on July 16, 1054, the delegation from Rome put a decree of excommunicated on the Patriarch and his followers. What did the Patriarch do? He excommunicated the Pope and all of his followers. This is what we know as the Great Schism and the two churches have never been together since.

In fact, the mutual excommunication was officially in place until December 7th, 1965 when Pope Paul IV and Patriarch Athenagoras (see pic of them) made amends. Sort of. Not really. Nothing really changed. They don't look very happy.

Then here's the latest Pope, Francis looking a little more happy with Patriarch Bartholomew, of the Eastern Orthodox Church, in Constantinople.

Pope Francis with Patriarch Kirill of the Russian Orthodox Church.

The Eastern Orthodox Church has largely remained the same for nearly 1500 years or so.

VI. The Differences Between the Three Churches

Apostolic Succession

Eastern Orthodox – Important part of their beliefs

Protestant Church – Idea is rejected. What is stressed is the succession of the teaching of the Apostles.

Roman Catholic – Agrees with the Eastern Orthodox.

Composition of the Bible

Eastern Orthodox – 66 Books plus Deuterocanonicals (Apocrypha)

Protestant Church – Only the 66 books

Roman Catholic – Agrees with Eastern Orthodox

Celibacy of Clergy

Eastern Orthodox – Clergy up to Bishops can marry

Protestant Church – All clergy can marry

Roman Catholic – No clergy can marry

Eucharist

Eastern Orthodox – The priest calls down the Holy Spirit and the bread and wine turn into the body and blood of Christ. The precise way this happens is a mystery.

Protestant Church – The bread and wine do not change in substance and are only symbolic.

Roman Catholic – Agrees with the Eastern Orthodox except that the priest acts in person of Christ and the elements change in substance and become the actual body and blood of Christ. They transubstantiate (the outward appearance stays the same but the substance changes).

Distribution of the Eucharist

Eastern Orthodox – Only members can participate. Both bread and wine.

Protestant Church – All those who profess Christ can participate. Both bread and wine.

Roman Catholic – Only members can participate. Until recently, only the bread.

The Holy Spirit

Eastern Orthodox - Proceeding only from the Father.

Protestant Church – Proceeding from the Father and the Son.

Roman Catholic – Same as the Protestant view.

Marriage and Divorce

Eastern Orthodox – Only exception is adultery.

Protestant Church – Divorce is discouraged but allowed as a sign of human weakness. Some hold divorce is allowable only for adultery and abandonment.

Roman Catholic – Marriage is an unbreakable contract and remarriage is only allowable with special dispensation.

The Immaculate Conception and Assumption of Mary

The Immaculate Conception is not the Virgin Birth of Jesus as is commonly thought. It is the view that Mary was born sinless or “Immaculate” when her mother St. Anne gave birth to her.

The Assumption of Mary is the view that Mary went straight to heaven largely in part because she remained sinless in her life and was the Mother of God. She was “saved” but not like we are. She was “saved” by being given grace so that she would not sin in the first place. The Franciscan theologian Dans Scotus gave the illustration of someone falling into a ditch. You could either save them by throwing them a rope and getting them out of the ditch, or you could warn them about the ditch in the first place. Both are saved from the ditch. Mary was saved by given the grace to never “fall in the ditch” of sin. So she was technically ‘saved.’ – “My soul rejoices in God my Savior.”

Eastern Orthodox – Yes to the Assumption of Mary but do believe that Mary experienced physical death. Rejects the idea of the Immaculate Conception. Also denies that original sin is passed from generation to generation.

Protestant Church – Both are denied. Stress that only Christ was sinless.

Roman Catholic – Both are dogmas of the church. They have not yet decided if Mary experienced physical death.

The Position of Mary

Eastern Orthodox – Mary is elevated as Theotokos (God-bearer). She is first among the saints and ever-virgin.

Protestant Church – She was a godly woman chosen to bear the Messiah. Her perpetual virginity and intercession are denied.

Roman Catholic – Similar to the Orthodox Church but they prefer the phrase, “Mother of God.” Also strongly believe that she should be prayed to and intercedes for the saints.

Authority of the Pope

Eastern Orthodox – He is to be honored but exercises no jurisdiction. He is on the same level as his Bishops.

Protestant Church – Who? He exercises no authority over the church.

Roman Catholic – He is the “Vicar of Christ” and is the visible head of the church and spiritual successor of St. Peter. He holds the “keys of the kingdom.”

Infallibility of the Pope

Eastern Orthodox – Rejects Papal infallibility. They do recognize the first seven ecumenical councils (325-787) as being infallible.

Protestant Church - Rejects Papal infallibility. The only source that is infallible is the Holy Scriptures.

Roman Catholic – The Pope speaks “ex cathedra” when he speaks of doctrine and morals and when he does he is infallible.

Purgatory

Eastern Orthodox – There is an intermediate state but it is not a place of cleansing of sin, that takes place only on earth.

Protestant Church – Purgatory is rejected. Christ's work on the cross is sufficient to remove the penalty for all our sins.

Roman Catholic – An intermediate state of cleansing and preparation for heaven. This is where unremitted sins can be punished.

Sacraments

Eastern Orthodox – There at least seven. The list is not fixed.

Protestant Church – There are two, baptism and communion.

Roman Catholic – There is a fixed list of seven sacraments.

Saints

Eastern Orthodox – A special group of people who are venerated. They can be prayed to and do intercede for believers.

Protestant Church – All true believers are saints and only Christ intercedes for believers.

Roman Catholic – Very similar to the Orthodox Church. Rome would also add that for a person to become a saint there must be at least two verifiable miracles that have occurred because of the intercession of that person.

Salvation

Eastern Orthodox – Salvation is “faith working itself in love” and is seen as a lifelong process. The goal of every Christian is to obtain “*theosis*” or union with God.

Protestant Church – Salvation is the free and unmerited gift of God to man through Christ’s work on the cross and resurrection. In Christ alone is a person justified before God.

Roman Catholic – Salvation is by grace, initially given through infused righteousness at baptism. Salvation is maintained through the participation of the sacraments.

Importance of Scripture

Eastern Orthodox – There is one source of divine revelation: Tradition. Scripture and the writings of the church fathers and councils hold equal standing.

Protestant Church – Scripture alone is the final authority on matters of Christian faith and practice.

Roman Catholic – The Holy Scriptures and Tradition (writings of the church fathers and the Pope) are equally authoritative. They reject the idea of Scripture Alone.

On one hand its sort of discouraging to see all the differences. On the other hand, after 2,000 years and all that the church has gone through, it’s actually pretty amazing that we’re still here and agree on as much as we do.

What do we still agree on?

God Created the Heavens and the Earth

Jesus is fully God and fully human

The Trinity

The Virgin Birth of Jesus

The Infallibility of the Scriptures

Salvation is found in Jesus, not in any other man

The Bodily Resurrection of Jesus from the dead

Jesus is coming back to judge the living and the dead

Jesus said he would build his church the gates of hell would not stand against it. And he is building and keeping his church.