

His-Story

Church history and why it matters to me

THE HIGH MIDDLE AGES PART I AD 1000-1299

Yield room for some little time to God; and rest for a little time in him. Enter the inner chamber of your mind; shut out all thoughts except that of God, and such as can help you in seeking him; close your door and seek him. Speak now to God, saying, I seek your face; your face, Lord, will I seek. And come now, Lord my God, teach my heart where and how it may seek you, where and how it may find you.

—Anselm, *Proslogion*, Chapter 1

I. Some background: the rise of Islam

*Out of Arabia, a forgotten corner of the world that had been generally ignored by both the Roman and Persian empires, a tidal wave of conquest arose that threatened to engulf the world. In a few years, the Persian Empire had vanished, and many of the ancient Roman territories were in Arab hands (Justo González. *The Story of Christianity*, Vol. 1. page 249).*

A. Mohammed of Mecca (570-632)

1. An Arab merchant with religious interests: influenced by Judaism, Christianity, and Zoroastrianism
2. Claimed to have received a message from the angel Gabriel (610 AD)
 - a. The existence of one God who is both just and merciful
 - b. He rules all things and requires obedience from all
 - c. Claimed he wasn't teaching a new religion but only a culmination of what the Hebrew prophets and Jesus had taught (believed Jesus was a great prophet but not divine).
3. Mohammed's teachings were not received well in Mecca (where the culture was more polytheistic)
 - a. 622 AD: Mohammed fled to Medina where he founded a Muslim community
 - b. Established the guidelines for worship, civil, and political life
4. Mohammed and followers launched out on a military and political campaign
 - a. First took control over Mecca
 - b. Mohammed decreed all idols must be overthrown
 - c. The source of divine revelation was collected and put in writing by Othman, the second leader to Mohammed (in the form of the Qur'an).

B. Islam spread from Mecca

1. Idol worshippers had to accept Islam or be killed
2. Because Jews and Christians were monotheists, they were tolerated (and not killed), though they were required to pay a special tax

C. Leadership after Mohammed

1. Successors to Mohammed are called *caliphs* (successors)
2. Immediate caliphs
 - Abu Bakr (632-634): Muslims gained their first victory over the Byzantine armies
 - Omar (634-644): Muslims invaded Syria, Damascus, and Jerusalem. Later took over Egypt, Alexandria, and Carthage

Notes

- By 732 Islam had control over all of northern Africa and Spain (except the northern tip of Spain); finally defeated by Charles Martel at the battle of Tours

3. Schism in Islam

- The problem of choosing a successor to lead
- Division between the *Sunnites* and the *Shiites* (still exists today)

II. Meanwhile in the Empire...

A. The East-West Schism (aka The Great Schism)

1. Growing differences between the Western Church (whose capital was Rome) and the Eastern Church (whose capital was Constantinople)
2. Cultural differences: Latin spoken in the west; Greek spoken in the east
3. Political differences
 - a. West: western empire being reshaped by new peoples, clans, and countries (Vandals, Visigoths, Gauls, etc.)
 - b. East: turmoil with the rise of Islam encroaching
4. Theological differences
 - a. Controversy on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit
 - b. Use of icons in worship
 - c. Decisions were made by the papacy many times without conversation between both sides (eastern and western)
5. Led to the Great Schism of 1054 thus creating two distinct churches: the Roman Catholic Church and the Greek Orthodox Church (or Eastern Orthodox Church)

B. The Crusades

1. The hopes of the crusades ("goals" more or less)
 - a. To defeat the Muslims threatening Constantinople
 - b. To save the Byzantine Empire (what was the Eastern Roman Empire)
 - c. To reunite the eastern and western churches
 - d. To win back the Holy Land
 - e. To convert Muslims to Christianity
2. What led to the Crusades
 - a. Growing concern for the growth of Islam – especially encroaching on Constantinople
 - b. A difficult time in Europe: failing crops, disease, and debt made many restless for new adventure
 - c. Pope Urban II, at the Council of Clermont (1095), proclaimed the great enterprise of the first crusade, to which participants cried "Deus vult" (God wills it).
 - *I say it to those who are present. I command that it be said to those who are absent. Christ commands it. All who go thither and lose their lives, be it on the road or on the sea, or in the fight against the pagans, will be granted immediate forgiveness for their sins. This I grant to all who will march, by virtue of the great gift which God has given me.* –Urban II
 - Papal incentives
 - § Indulgences (reduced time in purgatory) and forgiveness of sins
 - § Immunity from taxes and payment of debts
 - § Free transportation (usually by sea)
 - § Protection of land and family while fighting

- d. For centuries, Christians made pilgrimages to the Holy Lands and considered it one of the highest acts of devotion: thus the Crusades, in retaking Jerusalem, fulfilled two acts of devotion
3. The first Crusade
 - a. Formal leader –named by Urban II– was Adhemar, Bishop of Puy; other leaders: Godfrey of Bouillon, Raymons of Saint-Gilles, Bohemond, Tancred, and Peter the Hermit (who led a rag-tag army from Europe)
 - b. Leaders converged in Constantinople
 - c. Campaign
 - With help from Byzantines, they captured Nicea and overtook it
 - Marched on Antioch and captured it, but not before enduring many sufferings while crossing Asia Minor
 - § Division in the ranks caused some to abandon the quest
 - § Crusaders about to be defeated outside the gates of Antioch as they were running out of supplies
 - § An Armenian Christian opened a gate and let crusaders in
 - § Crusaders overtook the city as the Turkish defenders retreated into a citadel
 - § Four days later a large Turkish army arrived, trapping the crusaders inside
 - § *Then someone said he had a vision, that the Holy Lance with which Christ's side had been pierced lay buried in Antioch. Led by the seer, they dug where he told them. And they found a spear! Convinced that this was the Holy Lance, the crusaders resolved to continue their enterprise... They sallied against the much larger Turkish army. Their standard was the Holy Lance, and they were possessed of such frenzied zeal that the Turks broke and ran, and the crusaders helped themselves to all the provisions that the Turks had brought with them. They also captured many women who had been left behind in the Turkish camp, and an eyewitness boasting of the holiness of the Christian army said: "We did nothing evil to them, but simply speared them through."* (Justo González. *The Story of Christianity, Vol. 1. page 294*).
 - d. Bishop Adhemar died of a fever during the siege, and after much bickering Godfrey of Bouillon was named the new leader
 - e. Entered Jerusalem on June 7, 1099
 - f. After a long siege, Jerusalem finally taken by the crusaders on July 15, 1099

There followed a horrible bloodbath. All the defenders were killed, as well as many civilians. Women were raped, and infants thrown against walls. Many of the city's Jews had taken refuge in the synagogue, and the crusaders set fire to the building with them inside. According to an eyewitness, at the Porch of Solomon horses waded in blood. (Justo González. *The Story of Christianity, Vol. 1. page 296*).
 4. Subsequent Crusades
 - a. Enthusiasm for the crusades remained strong until around 1250 with new dreams of expanding Christianity
 - b. Total number of crusades was seven or eight (depends on who you ask)
 5. Final results of the Crusades
 - a. Muslims, who were divided during the first crusade, developed unity that eventually overcame all crusading armies

- b. Constantinople survived until the 15th Century before being overtaken by the Ottoman Turks
- c. The Fourth Crusade reunited the Western & Eastern Church temporarily, but in the end created more hatred and hostility than before
- d. The Holy Land was controlled by the crusaders for about 100 years before coming under Muslim control again

Notes

III. Why this segment of history matters (or *should matter*) to me

- A. How does this lesson enhance your knowledge of God?
- B. In what new ways are you challenged in your own walk with Christ?

