

Bible Special 06-11-01b

Let's pick up our study now. We're looking at the first major split in the Christian Church after the Great Schism of 1054. We're about 500 years after that, 400 and some change, 1521.

This is the Protestant Reformation. It's the biggest thing to happen in the Christian Church in the last thousand years. And Luther and his followers left the Catholic Church in droves, and you can tell that there was this sort of festering problem for a long time, and Luther was really just the straw that broke the back of that whole issue.

And so in the years after the Wittenberg incident and the Diet of Worms and so on, most of the Germans left the Catholic Church. There were a few little places around Austria or Bavaria where they stayed Catholic, but virtually all the German-speaking people just bugged out of the Catholic Church. So Luther is known as the father of the Protestant Reformation.

He's the father of Protestantism in general. And it's kind of odd because he never really intended to create a separate church, so to speak. He just really wanted the Catholic Church to reform.

And because of that, there are some things in Lutheranism that are very reminiscent of Catholicism. There are things that Luther didn't find a problem with in Catholicism that have come down in the Lutheran Church. So, first of all, you have this fundamental idea, the thing that separates the Protestants in general and Luther in particular, is this idea of sola scriptura, that's Latin for only the Scriptures, Scripture alone.

The Bible is divinely inspired. It is the final authority. And everybody can say amen.

The Bible is the final authority. No hat-wearing, robe-billowing person called a father or a friar or a bishop or a priest or a cardinal or anything, a pope, can tell you what you ought to be doing as a Christian. It's sola scriptura.

Well, you know that in that first thousand years, they had all of those creeds and those confessions that basically excluded out the heresies. Every time some heresy would pop up and they'd say, Jesus wasn't really a man. He was just an appearance.

He was a figment. He was kind of a mass hallucination of God. And he wasn't really human.

And so you had all of these heresies that attacked the humanity of Christ. You had others who said, well, Jesus was just a really nice rabbi, but he wasn't really the Son of God. And so all of these heresies, Arianism, Sabellianism, there's a million of them.

You can look up all of these isms. Not a million. There are dozens of them.

And so all of these different councils that we studied a couple of weeks ago met and said, that is not Christianity. And so what that basically did in the first thousand years was say, all of this

stuff is not Christianity. Well, after the Great Schism, you start having people focusing on what is Christianity? We know what it's not, but what is it? Particularly after the Protestant Reformation, 1521 and following, people said, okay, we're out from under the church and we're not going to listen to what the Roman Catholic Church has to say for what Christianity is.

So we're looking at the Bible. What does the Bible say? So the Lutherans kind of got a head start on this. And they looked at the writings of Luther and another fellow who is really famous and important in Lutheran circles.

And this is Philip Melanchthon. Melanchthon wrote a lot of the things that became the companion to the Bible for Lutherans. And all of this stuff is put in what is called the Book of Concord or Concordia.

This is 1580. Remember the Diet of Worms, 1521. Well, 60 years later, you have the Book of Concord.

This is the historic putting together of Lutheran doctrine. Now it has in it a lot of those creeds that we studied. Remember we studied the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed and the Athanasian Creed that were agreed on before the Great Schism that said, you know, Jesus is the Son and the Father is the Father and the Holy Spirit is the Holy Spirit.

We believe in the Trinity. We believe that Jesus was absolute deity and true humanity in one person. And all the rest of this was in those creeds.

So the Lutherans said, we still believe all of those things. We're not Aryans. We're not any kind of heretics.

The only detail in that is, remember me telling you about the Filioque controversy? And remember the Orthodox Churches don't go with the Filioque deal where they say that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son? Well, the whole Nicene Creed that the Lutherans accept has the Filioque, which basically means from the Son. Filios, like Philadelphia, brotherly love, Filioque. The Roman Catholics see it one way and the Orthodox see it another on whether or not Jesus sends out the Holy Spirit.

Is he sent by the Father and the Son? Is he only sent by the Father? Well, you know, this is splitting some pretty fine hairs. I mean, ultimately, if you understand what the Holy Spirit does, that's a relatively minor point. I'm not saying it's trivial or insignificant, but it's nothing to split your church over.

So anyway, the idea of that is the Western view. The Roman Catholic view is held by the Lutherans. And the Eastern Orthodox, of course, they go the other way.

So you have the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed, and then you've got some other things that were drafted by Luther and by Philip Melanchthon. These are some confessions and some catechisms that basically detail some more doctrines. I'm not going to

go into all that if you want to find out all the things that the Lutherans believe.

But here's one of them. They believe in the transubstantiation, just like the Catholics do, that the bread turns into the flesh of Jesus and the wine or the grape juice or whatever you're using turns into the blood of Jesus. They believe in that, just like the Catholics.

And they also believe that there is no such thing as the Millennial Kingdom. Because otherwise, you'd say, well, I'm kind of with those Lutherans because, you know, Scripture is the final authority and you don't have to listen to the church and all that. But they're real heavy on ritual and on liturgy, you know, repeating of the same thing time after time.

And a lot of them wear the little vestments and things like that. So that's about as much time as we have to talk about the Lutherans. Now, another important thing about the Lutherans is that they initiated what has come to be called the Presbyterian form of church government.

So before we go any further, I want to talk about two different ways that you can oversee a Protestant church. Now, if it's a Protestant church, what does it not have? There's no Pope, no Catholic priests and Catholic bishops in that, right? Protestant Reformation said goodbye, Roman Catholic Church. And they didn't jump over into the Orthodox Church and say, well, we're going to go with the patriarch of Constantinople either.

So now that they're out from under that, how are you going to run your church? Who's in charge? Okay. So what the Lutherans came up with is they said, we don't ever want to get into this Pope deal again. We don't want one guy or a hierarchy of single guys having all of that power and abusing it.

So what they decided to do is come up with a committee and it's called the Council of Elders. And this is the Presbytery. Presbyteros in Greek means these are your elders, your overseers.

So this is what the Lutherans kind of came up with. And so at the local level, you have what's known as a session. The congregation comes into session and you've got some people who are there as kind of the board of elders for the local church.

Then within a region, you have another board and they kind of oversee all of the churches in that region. And then above that, you'll have another. And so instead of a hierarchy of individual priests and bishops and a Pope, you have a hierarchy of these councils.

And it's real flexible. There's lots of different kinds of Lutherans. We won't go into all of it.

But just remember that there's two basic models. Actually, there's three, but there's two main models for church government. If you get out from under the Catholic Church, Presbyterian is committees and you can have committees above and below your committees.

OK, now. Right around the same time that Luther was saying goodbye to the Catholic Church, you have Henry VIII. Now, Henry VIII was a big time Catholic.

I mean, a big time Catholic. He wrote books on Catholicism. So, you know, not really a well-known fact about him.

But when he was in his early 20s, he wrote a book. I'm trying to find the name of it here. On Catholicism and ironing out some kind of a point.

But then once he got to be king and he was married to Catherine of Aragon and she didn't have any offspring, she didn't have any sons for him and he wanted an heir to the throne, he got all put out with her. But it was complicated because she had been his brother's wife before he married her. And so the Pope would not give him an annulment of that marriage so that he could go marry somebody else and have some children.

Well, this really annoyed him. And so he decided, well, the only way to get out of this... Oh, here it is. The book he wrote in 1521, by the way, the same year of the Diet of Worms.

Henry VIII wrote a book called Defense of the Seven Sacraments and he dedicated it to Pope Leo X. He said, Dear Pope, I wrote this great book and I'm dedicating it to you. I mean, he was like a theologian. And he was given the title Defender of the Faith by the Pope.

So, anyway, his wife wouldn't have any heirs for him and he couldn't get out of this marriage. So finally what he did, to cut a long story short, is he just said, well, we're disconnecting ourselves from the Catholic Church and we're going to have the Church of England. Well, it disconnected and got out from under the Pope, but that didn't change its basic structure.

And so what you have then is the Anglican Church. Anglo, Anglican means England. Basically, England is from the word Anglo, Anglo-Saxon and so on.

So, you have the Anglican Church. It is also called the Episcopal Church. Now, why is it called Episcopal? Episcopos is the word translated in the King James, Bishop.

Scopus means to scope, to look over, to oversee. And Epi is over or upon. So Episcopos is overseers.

So you get these two different models of church government. The Anglican Church is set up an awful lot like the Catholic Church. You've got the Archbishop of Canterbury.

He's the top dog. He's the big cheese. He's the highest you can go in the Anglican Church, but he's not a Pope.

And he doesn't have the same kind of authority in the Anglican Church that the Pope has in the Catholic Church, but he is the de facto figurehead of the Anglican Church, the Archbishop of Canterbury. And then you've got bishops in the Anglican Church or in the Episcopal Church under that. So they've got this bishop and priest sort of a hierarchy.

Some of you are too young to remember, but back in the 1980s, do you remember when they had the whole thing of apartheid over in South Africa? And there was a guy over there that

became famous. He was called Desmond Tutu, Bishop Tutu. Remember him? He's a black man in South Africa.

He was the first bishop of that deal, and he's not a Catholic. He's Anglican. He was the first Anglican bishop to be appointed down there in South Africa.

But see, he's a bishop, Bishop Desmond Tutu, but he's not a Catholic. He's Episcopalian or Anglican. So Henry VIII got that thing started, and it started just almost simultaneously with the Protestant Reformation.

So you have the Catholic Church having two big blows to its ego and to its organization, because you've got all the Lutherans and the German-speaking people splitting off, and you've got England splitting off. And that gives you your Lutherans and your Protestants in Germany, and this quickly spreads to Switzerland, by the way. And Switzerland is, you're going to have Zwingli, a guy named Zwingli, who's going to take off and get a big bunch of Protestants going in Switzerland.

And then you have the Anglicans. So this leads to two different kinds of church government. Now, there's going to be some funny intertwining of these later on, because there are Methodist churches that are basically theologically descended from Luther and the Protestant Reformation, but they became heavily influenced by the Anglican or Episcopal Church, and the United Methodist Church has got an Episcopal form of government.

They've got this hierarchy of single individuals who occupy positions, and it's kind of a weird deal. And how that came about is that the Methodist Church is founded by John Wesley, and John Wesley was, guess what, an Anglican priest. John Wesley came out of the Anglican Church.

He and his brother Charles, that was their tradition. So the Methodists come out of the Anglican thing, but they adopt a lot of the theology of the Lutheran and Reformed Protestant Reformation, and then they take that form of government that's still left over from the Anglicans. Alright, so where are we? We came down to the Great Schism, you've got the Orthodox in the East, you've got the Catholics in the West, 1521 Protestant Reformation, and just a few years later you have Henry VIII saying, well, all of us in England are leaving you Catholics in Rome and having the Anglican Church.

So the Anglican Church likes to say, well, we really go back further than that, because we had Christians here in England way, way back with the Venerable Bede and St. Alban and all the way back to like 400 or 500 A.D., even to 300 A.D., there were Christian missionaries in the British Isles, in what at that time was Britain. And the Celts, there was a Celtic Christianity that was floating around at that time also. But in reality, their actual roots are Henry VIII.

So, they've got the Book of Common Prayer, and they said, well, you've got to conform, we're just localizing the power, but it's still kind of the Catholic Church, and the Church is dominant, the Church is powerful. They passed this thing called the Act of Uniformity in around 1549,

1550. And they said, everybody here in England is going to do it the same way.

Here's your Book of Common Prayer, and this is the way you're going to worship. And Thomas Cranmer, you might have heard of him, he's a real famous guy, he was the Archbishop of Canterbury at that time. And he basically wrote the Prayer Book, the Book of Common Prayer.

And he had gotten some ideas from Calvin and Erasmus and some other people, and so this kind of mixed together. And so the Church of England moved into kind of a Calvinism, they're kind of a mix of a Catholic-Calvinist stew, because of Cranmer and others. So the Book of Common Prayer comes out in the 1550s, and then right there in the middle of this, Queen Mary comes.

And if you're familiar with British history, you know that there's a big Protestant-Catholic, Anglican-Catholic thing going on at the time. Well, after Henry's death, his son, Edward VI, came on the throne. He was there for just a few years, and then he died.

Well, then Queen Mary came in, and she was a staunch Roman Catholic. And so she went around massacring, slaughtering, and getting rid of all of the Protestant and the Anglican stuff that she thought was heretical. But she was only there for a little while, and then she died.

And ultimately you have Queen Elizabeth, and you have the Elizabethan Age, Queen Elizabeth I. And she re-established the Anglican Church as kind of a Reformed Catholic Church, and put a lot of this Protestant Reformed Theology into it. And that's where you get your, you can either call it Anglican or Episcopalian, but that's what that is. Episcopal Church, and the form of government, the Episcopal form of government is this hierarchy of single people.

Now, this gets us down to the Presbyterians. By the way, those Acts of Conformity and all that in the Anglican Church, there were people that said, well, we're not a whole lot better off in this Anglican Church than we would be if we were in the Catholic Church. We've still got this all-powerful Church telling us a bunch of stuff that we don't think they have the authority to tell us.

And they said, we want to get back to a pure, now pay attention, we want to get back to a pure Christianity. We want to purge out all of this church dogma, and all of this accretions of traditions, and your Acts of Uniformity, and your Book of Common Prayer, and all the rest of it. We want to get back to a pure Christianity.

What would you call somebody that wanted pure Christianity? Puritans. The Puritans come out of the Anglican Church, come out of the Episcopal Church and say, you're beating me down just like the Catholics did a couple hundred years ago. And we've got to get rid of all of this.

And that's going to be the people who are going to get driven out of England, because they're agitating, and they're disaffected, and they're unhappy, and they're going to say, you know what, we've got to get out of here and go someplace where we can practice Christianity the way we think the Bible teaches it. That's why you've got your Puritans coming over to America. Now, who remembers the year of the Jamestown Colony? 1607 or so.

You've got the Jamestown Colony. And you think, well, see, America started out with the Pilgrims in 1620, and the Roanoke, and all these other things in 1607 in Virginia. And so you've got these sort of Protestant, Puritan, Quaker, and different kinds of Christians coming over, and starting up, and the Christianity that began in this continent was of that brand.

By the time, and what's not so well known is, by the time of that first English colony in 1607, and later on the Pilgrims, and Plymouth Rock, and all that, the Catholics had been in this continent for over a hundred years. In Mexico, there were already two seminaries going by 1607, and a huge Catholic church. You've got those Dominican and Jesuit priests running all over the area in Southern California, and in a swath across through South Texas, and all up and down the coast of California, and down into Mexico, setting up missions.

You know, San Luis Rey, and San Luis Obispo, and all up and down from San Francisco down to San Diego. There's like, I forget how many missions that were all set up. How many? Yeah, there's 21.

I started to say 21, and then I was thinking, well is it 51? There's 21. There's 21 different missions, and a lot of these go all the way back to the 1500s. And there were Catholics running all over the area, and there were a lot of Jesuit and Dominican priests who were evangelizing the native Indian populations, and converting them by the thousands.

Not necessarily teaching them a lot, but converting them. So Catholicism was the first big wave of Christianity to hit the North American continent, followed later by this Northern and Western European influx out of Reformation largely. And you're going to have a lot of your Dutch Reformed, and the Puritans, and others coming across at that time.

Well, this is the background. This is the foundation, because what we're moving into now is the proliferation of Christianity and the denominations that characterize it in America. So do you feel like you have a pretty good fix on the general background, the big trunk of the tree, and the major branches that lead up to about 1600, 1700, when America is starting to get populated and get off the ground? You have your Catholics, you have your Great Schism, you have the Reformation, and out of the Reformation you have the Lutherans, which have a Presbyterian form of government, a congregational form of government also emerges out of that, where congregations say we're going to have a committee of elders, but we're not going to have anybody above us.

We're autonomous, we're independent, we're just a group, and nobody's going to tell us what to do. And then you have others that are, well, we'll have a committee at the local level, and we'll have a committee at the regional level, and we'll have a committee at the country level, and we'll have a committee at the grand denominational level. This is also developing at that time on the model of Catholicism, on the model of Anglicanism, but not letting that authority reside in just one man.

We'll put a Presbyterian form of government. The Episcopal form of government is what you

have with the Anglicans. So when you look around at a denomination today, there's two basic areas that you can analyze them.

One is, what is their structure? They call it church polity. How are they sort of politically formed? What kind of government does the church have? Are they part of a hierarchical denomination? And if so, is that denomination made of committee upon committee upon committee? Are they independent, or are they affiliated? Are they regional? You've got synods that are up, you'll have a session, and then you'll have a presbytery, and then you'll have a synod, and then you'll have the basic Lutheran biggest level you can get to. Or are they, is their ecclesiastical structure more on the Episcopal model, where you've got priests and bishops going up, like your United Methodists, your Catholics, and your Anglicans? Are they on the Brethren model? The Brethren model is going to come out of the Puritans, and out of those who wanted to throw off the Episcopal form of government, and were influenced by the Presbyterian model.

They said, well, we like this idea that no one guy is going to be in charge, but we don't want a hierarchy of committees, so we're just going to be one group with one committee, and that's it. In the same way, you're going to have a tradition grow up where there is a church that's under one man, and they say, this is the pastor, this is the shepherd, and it's kind of an abbreviated Episcopal model. And there are some churches, some of which we know well, that are really an Episcopal model that stops at one level, just like the Brethren churches are a Presbyterian model that stops at one level.

So this is the church government analysis. That's one way to look at a church. How do you organize? What's your authority structure? The other is, what is your theology? Do you believe that the church has an equal authority with Scripture or not? If not, you're probably Protestant.

If you're Protestant, then are you out of the Reformed understanding, and Luther and Calvin and Zwingli, the three big lights of the Protestant Reformation, were all big believers in the sovereignty of God. And so it'll flow out of that. Or, do you believe in something else? More of a balance with free will and that sort of thing.

So, we've looked at the structure and how these church governments have sort of developed, and we've gotten ourselves all the way up on the threshold of the United States of America, right around 1600, with the strands of Christianity coming down to that point. Next time, what we're going to do is look at what happened in the United States. How did we get the mix of denominations that we have today? We'll refer back a little bit to the roots in Europe and so on, but we're mainly going to look at what do we have by way of Baptists and Methodists and Presbyterians and so on in this country today.

That'll take us just a couple more weeks, and by the end of that, you'll have a pretty good idea, when somebody says, I go to thus and such a church, of kind of what their historical background is and what the emphasis might be in that church. Okay? And, last but not least, we'll find out where we came from and how we ended up being Grace and Truth Bible Church. But we'll close tonight in a word of prayer.

Father, thank you for the light of your word that shines on our path, and regardless of the ebb and flow of history and the ideas that hold sway in various times and places, that sure light shines like a beacon in our souls, and under the ministry of the Holy Spirit, we can grow in grace and knowledge of our Savior, claiming your promises, receiving your grace, and looking forward to the day when the Lord Jesus returns for us to take us to himself. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will constantly remind us of this great opportunity that we have to reflect that light and to shine as lights in a dark place. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen.