

Bible Special 06-11-07b

Let's resume now. We're going to pick up where we left off last week, and yet we're going to step back in time a little bit, because we... I just wanted to remind us why we're even doing this study. Our Christianity is a vital and living faith, and it explains things that no other worldview even has a pretense or a hope of explaining.

But unfortunately, so many believers don't really know what the Bible teaches, which is what Christianity is about, why it is so important that we have the presence of God in our souls. What a privilege it is. People for 4,000 years longed for the day when they would have the connection to God that you and I just take for granted.

And it's a really important thing. But the Church Age began at Pentecost in 30-something AD, and it went all the way down to 1054. You have the Great Schism, and then in 1521 you have Luther and the Wittenberg Door and the 95 Theses and the Diet of Worms, and you have the Protestant Reformation beginning.

But that's not really where it began. Luther did not arrive at his understanding out of nowhere. God had already been plowing the ground and planting the seeds for that, and the people who did that plowing and planting and were influences on men like Martin Luther, their influence carried forward, and it's going to carry forward into our modern-day denominations, and so we need to know a little bit about them.

I'm only going to talk about three guys. There were many more, and it's a fascinating study. The history of the Church from 1200 and 1300 up to the present day is really fascinating, especially that first three or four hundred years, the 1200s, 1300s, 1400s, 1500s, and 1600s.

It's very fascinating, but we by no means have the time to study it. So I'm just going to give you a few key figures. The first guy is John Wycliffe.

John Wycliffe. You may have heard of the Wycliffe Bible Translators. Wycliffe lived in Yorkshire, England.

He was born there in 1324. Now, get a little bit of historical reference point here. I've given you those big dates.

We had the Great Schism when? 1054 A.D. This is 1324. So 270 years, is my math right on that? Just less than three centuries later, 1324, Wycliffe is born in England. His family is Anglo-Saxon and so on.

But what's important about Wycliffe is he got involved in the church and in church politics, in church state politics in England, and he was really upset at what the church was doing. Now, what church is it? You haven't had Henry VIII yet. You haven't had the Anglican Church come out yet, because it's the 1300s, 1350, 1366, around in there.

So this is still the Catholic Church. But you've got King Edward and you've got the Pope trying to do things in England, and this is some of the turbulence that's going to later lead to the splitting off of the Episcopalians, the Anglican Church. But Wycliffe is one of the first guys to really successfully argue about some of the Pope's abuses, some of the church's abuses in England, and he writes about it and he's very compelling and he's very persuasive.

A lot of people say, you know, that John Wycliffe is right. And he did this in the political realm. You have to remember that the whole church-state separation thing wasn't going on back then.

And church stuff was often political and political stuff was often full of religious underpinnings. So Wycliffe found procedures and ways of arguing and getting things to happen on legal grounds that pushed the church out of things that it shouldn't be in and so on. And this created tension because the clergy were trying to do one thing at the behest of the church and the government was going to do something else trying to get out from under the church.

And Wycliffe was very instrumental in this and he made very cogent arguments and he made points about this. And there were a lot of what they called ecclesiastical annoyances, the church meddling and messing around in things between England and France and so on. So there was a split and you had your papal partisans, you had your people who still liked the pope and wanted to do the church thing and you had these other people that were kind of wanting to do a reformation kind of a thing.

And he finally made a public declaration. He wrote a great work called the Summa Theologia. And in the first book of this, this is the summation of theology so to speak, in the first book of it he writes about the government of God and the Ten Commandments.

And he attacked the clergy being rulers of civil government. He said this is not right, this isn't what God meant in the Bible. He argued against the idea that the pope ought to be telling the king what to do.

He said look, spiritual things are spiritual, earthly things are earthly, and the king is above the pope. When it comes to people in the king's land, the king tells them what to do and the pope can't tell them to ignore the king. Collecting of indulgences, Wycliffe said back in 1360 and 1370, collecting indulgences is wrong.

He said it's simony. Remember Simon the magician who came to the apostles and said he wanted to buy the gift of God with money and so on? Well it's going to be called simony when you start trying to buy and sell church influence. It's simony.

And Wycliffe said this Catholic church thing of selling church influence is simony. So he attacked this and he wrote some other things. He wrote another great work called De Civili Dominio.

And he said this is what a good civil government ought to be. It ought to renounce any civil domination by the church. The government ought to separate itself from the church just as the church ought to separate itself from government.

He kind of argued both sides of it. He said to the church you ought to get out of that civil government. Then he went over to the government and he said hey government, you ought to get that church out of your stuff.

And so this was very influential. And it rang a bell that was heard throughout what we call Western Europe. Now this is important because of another guy.

That's John Wycliffe. There's a lot of other things we could talk about Wycliffe and the Bible and the Preservation of the Manuscript. We just don't have time.

But just remember the time now. You've got 1054 and the Great Schism. And then 300 years later you've got Wycliffe in the 1300s, the mid-1300s.

And he argues for the church stopping its excesses and getting out of the civil affairs of men and concentrating on theology and concentrating on spiritual life. Well, there was a guy in Prague. Where's Prague? What country? Czechoslovakia.

Prague, Czechoslovakia. If you junior high and high school gals haven't had that yet, you will. Prague is in Czechoslovakia.

Had one of the most renowned universities in all of the European region there. The University of Prague was just huge. It was like what we in America would talk about Harvard or Yale or Princeton.

It was big. Well, there was a man there named John Huss. And John Huss was a Czechoslovakian guy.

And his king was King Wenceslas. King Wenceslas. And King Wenceslas, under the influence of John Huss, I could tell you a lot about John Huss, but he came up, he got a theological education and so on, and he got the king on his side.

And John Huss had heard of the writings and the influence of Wycliffe over in England. And he said that Wycliffe knows what he's talking about. So now this is the early 1400s.

This is 40, 50 years after John Huss. I mean after Wycliffe. John Huss is in Czechoslovakia.

And so this is what was called at the time Bohemia. The Kingdom of Bohemia is where Prague and Czechoslovakia are now. So there were a bunch of people that got crossways with the church over there for the very same reasons.

John Huss was making a lot of the same arguments that Wycliffe had made. And it split the University of Prague and a bunch of the professors left. And the University of Prague kind of went downhill from there.

And they went and founded other universities like the University of Leipzig, that got its founding because of this schism, this split that took place. And so Wycliffe's ideas spread

through Bohemia and John Huss got a hold of them. Well, part of the reason that John Huss was upset is there were two guys both trying to be the Pope of the Catholic Church at the same time.

And each of them said, You're not the Pope, I'm the Pope. And the other guy said, No, you're not the Pope, I'm the Pope. Well, so there were these two guys.

There was Pope Gregory XII and Pope Benedict XIII. And each of them said the other guy was not the Pope. Well, King Wenceslas didn't like Pope Gregory, and so he threw in with Pope Benedict.

And he ordered all of his people to be followers of Pope Benedict. Well, all of the followers of Gregory didn't like that, and that's where you get this split. Well, they said, We've got to fix this.

We've got these two Popes. Nobody can make up their mind who's the Pope. So, you're both not the Pope.

We're going to elect a new Pope. Neither one of you is going to get it. So they had this thing called the Council of Pisa in 1409.

You know, the Leaning Tower of Pisa? Well, they said, We're going to elect a new Pope, and both of these guys are out. They elected a guy called Alexander V. But nobody liked Alexander V. They said, No, I'm sticking with Gregory. I'm sticking with Benedict.

So then you kind of had three Popes. Because a lot of guys said, We don't recognize this election in Pisa of Alexander. But John Hus and King Wenceslas said, Look, they met.

They voted. Alexander V is the Pope. So they transferred their allegiance to Alexander.

So they got the Archbishop there in Bohemia to do the same. And this Alexander V then issued a papal bull. And a papal bull is kind of like short for bulletin.

And so, unfortunately, Alexander V said, Boo on Wycliffe. He said, This Wycliffism, Wycliffites, that's bad for the church because it's taking away our influence, taking away our sources of money. We're totally against Wycliffe, Wycliffites, Wycliffism.

So he put out this papal bull there in December of 1409. All the books of Wycliffe were to be given up, taken out of the libraries, piled up and destroyed. The doctrines of Wycliffe were supposed to be revoked.

Free preaching that wasn't coming out of the church was to be discontinued. Well, Hus said, Hey, wait a minute. I like Wycliffe.

Wycliffe is good. I'm with Wycliffe. So he went to Alexander V and said, Look, we pulled up stakes from this other pope.

We supported you. We put pressure on our bishop here and got him to go along. We're for you, man.

But now you're coming out against Wycliffe and you're putting us in a real awkward spot. So he appealed to Alexander V, but it was all in vain. These books, invaluable manuscripts of Scripture and of commentary and things that Wycliffe had written were all gathered up and burned.

And Alexander excommunicated John Hus and all of his friends and followers. Well, as it says in the history book, riots ensued in Bohemia. There were riots in Bohemia.

Well, the government, good King Wenceslas, he said, John Hus is my man, so boo on you, Alexander. And the power of John Hus and his adherents just kept on increasing. And the Bohemians, the Czechoslovakians, the Praguites or Praguians? Praguoids? What do you call somebody that lives in Prague? Praguians? Anyway, the people in Prague, the people in Bohemia, they said, Go John Hus.

We're with you. We're for you. So he kept preaching in a church building in Prague called the Bethlehem Chapel.

And he was bolder and bolder, and he just got louder and louder talking about the Catholic Church and saying, you know, I thought they were messed up before, but now I'm telling you, they are way messed up. So the Pope came back and said, well, guess what? I ban you. I ban your church.

I ban your people. I ban Bohemia. I just ban everything having to do with John Hus and the Bohemians.

And he put an interdict. It's called an interdict. We'd call it an interdiction or something, but it's like a royal papal decree out against the whole city of Prague.

Well, the Praguites said, do what you want. We're not listening to you anymore than you're listening to us. Well, the archbishop that they had pressured into going along with Alexander, and then he said, well, gee, thanks a lot.

Now I'm excommunicated and banned. He finally died in 1411. And then the religious movement in Bohemia kind of got a surge, because this guy had been kind of a stick in the mud.

He'd been very reluctant, and they had to pressure him to go along. Well, he's out of the way. And so when the next guy came in, they also had another pope.

By the way, the first two popes, Benedict and Gregory, when Alexander V got elected, they said, he's no pope. He's the anti-pope. And they called him the anti-pope.

Well, right around the same time that the archbishop in Prague died, Alexander died. And so they had to elect another anti-pope. And so they have John XXIII.

And John XXIII is the second anti-pope. You've still got Gregory and Benedict floating around. So he became the successor to Alexander V in like 1410 or so.

So anyway, John XXIII, he said, you know, there's too many popes, and I need to do something to distinguish myself. So he issued a crusade against King Ladislaus of Naples. Now, again, this is getting political, but you remember you've got Gregory XII.

Well, Gregory XII was hanging out over there in Rome, Naples, Italy. And so John XXIII said, I'm going to launch a crusade, and I'm going to snuff out this Gregory pope and start whittling down the number of popes. So his crusade came to Prague.

And, you know, any time you launch a crusade, you've got to have money. We learned this studying the book of Esther. Remember when Xerxes was going to go fight and redeem his father's good name after they got his helmet handed to him over there by the Greeks? And he had to rustle up a bunch of money.

That's why he was having all those banquets. And why Esther and Vashti, remember that whole thing? Well, when you launch a crusade, you've got to have money. So they were scouring the Catholic empire, the Catholic world, trying to drum up money so that John XXIII could go snuff out the Neapolitans and Gregory.

So these guys came to Bohemia. Sort of luckless, clueless, hey, let's go to Bohemia and see if we can get some money there. Well, the Bohemians were kind of in an uproar already over this whole thing.

So when they came there and they started preaching and saying, look, we'll sell you indulgences. We've got these indulgences we're going to sell. Well, this was just like pouring gasoline on the flames because Bohemia was full of Hussites.

And they hated the whole indulgence thing. And so this just absolutely put the match to the powder keg. And so Huss started just excoriating all of these indulgence preachers and John XXIII and the whole Catholic thing.

And the people were with him, but the people who were left at the University of Prague didn't want to go along. They were the academicians. Well, you know, we've got to be calm about this and let's have diplomacy and so on.

So there was a dispute and Huss delivered a big speech. It was called the Quaisto Magistri Johannes Huss de Indulgentesis or something, which is a Latin thing that says I'm John Huss and I say boo on John XXIII. Quaisto Magistri Johannes Huss de Indulgentesis.

And he basically took the last chapter of Wycliffe's book De Ecclesia and Wycliffe's book Absolution Epina et Culpa, which is all of this stuff Wycliffe had said this indulgence stuff really stinks. Well, Huss had a copy of Wycliffe's books and so he just took the last chapters of those two books, stuck it together and said here John XXIII, you know where you can put your

indulgences. So he published this as a pamphlet and he said no pope, no bishop has the right to take up the sword in the name of the church and go around hacking and slashing people because they won't buy indulgences.

People in the church should pray for their enemies and bless those that curse them. Man gets forgiveness of sins by repentance not through money. This was John Huss' teaching which he got from Wycliffe.

So Wycliffe, 1350s. Huss, 1410s. Well, the theological faculty at the University of Prague tried to rebut John Huss, but this was squirt guns against a blazing fire in Bohemia by that time.

And so a bunch of Huss' followers got together and took the papal bulls that had said burn all the Wycliffe stuff and they said well, we're going to burn the bulls. And so they took all the papal bulls and made a big bonfire out of those. And they said we should obey Huss instead of the church which they considered a fraudulent mob of adulterers and Simonists.

That's a quote, translated of course. I don't know how you say that in Bohemian. But in response, some of the Hussites, some of the low-ranking Hussites were rounded up who had called the indulgences a fraud.

Some Catholic church officials rounded up three of these guys and beheaded them for saying that the indulgences were a fraud. And these are considered to be the first martyrs in what became the Hussite church. So anyway, this was all stirring and blending around in Bohemia.

And that's in the 1400s. Well, that was one of the influences on our third guy. Our first guy, John Wycliffe, 1350s.

Our second guy, and Wycliffe is where? He's in England. And he's saying the Catholic church is bad news, these indulgences are wrong. John Huss, to an even greater extent, in Bohemia, Czechoslovakia, Prague, in the early 1400s is saying the same thing.

And a movement launches as the church is trying to attack the Wycliffeites. That just sets the Hussites on fire for the truth. Well, there was a Frenchman who was born in about 1510.

He's about 100 years after Huss. His name is Jean Chauvin. J-E-A-N-C-H-A-U-V-I-N C-H-A-U-V-I-N He was born in Picardy in France.

We know him as John Calvin. He was born in about 1509 or so. In 1523, his father sent his 14-year-old son to the University of Paris to study humanities and law.

And by 1532, he had a Doctor of Jurisprudence. He had a law degree from the University at Orleans in France there. He published a book shortly after that, which was an edition of Seneca.

Seneca was a Roman philosopher. He had translated and annotated and copiously published an edition of Seneca's work called De Clementia. Well, in 1536, he moved from France and went to Switzerland.

He settled in Geneva. And he became, although he was trained as a lawyer, he studied under some of the greatest lawyers and legal minds in all of France. And there was a movement in the law in France that was an early form of humanism.

It had been kind of like the Jews, the Talmud, Mishnah, where there's commentary upon commentary and you comment on the commentators. By the way, there's a lot of this in seminaries today where if you're going to talk about a verse out of the Bible and write a seminary paper on it, you have to find what the commentators say. And then you comment on the commentators.

And then if somebody commented on that commentator, well, you comment on the comment of the comment of the commentator. And you have to interact with, they call it interacting with the sources, interacting with the literature. Well, they've been doing this for years and years and years and they were kind of getting sick of it.

And so in law, they were saying, well, you're commenting on a lawyer who's talking about the law. Let's just go back to the law and figure out what it says. And so this was a movement in the law.

And it's really important to understand because this is how Calvin came to do what he did. Because Calvin was trained in the law and he got this kind of modern law education where they said, look, we're going to cut to the chase. We're going to go back to the source.

We are going to exegete the law. We're going to parse the text of the law. We're going to forget all this commentary and all these lawyers speculating on what it means.

Let's just go back and figure it out for ourselves. Well, so it was a historical and grammatical analysis of their law that he learned. Well, this was a very important part of his foundation because he would later start doing this with scripture.

And that's how you end up with Calvin's commentaries which are still in print and still widely distributed. You can get them on the net. They're free.

But Calvin's commentaries are extensive. And this is the approach that he used for scripture. Well, he was influenced by John Huss.

He heard about the Hussites and all the stuff that they had gone through in the previous century. And by the time he was 26 years old, he had already written and published his magnum opus called The Institutes of the Christian Religion which was his absorbing of the thinking of Wycliffe and Huss. And he had heard about Luther.

Well, what's the year for Luther in the Reformation beginning? 1521. Calvin publishes his Institutes of the Christian Religion in 1536 in Latin. And he translated it into French and published it in 1541.

And he continued to revise it and expand it and work on it. And the definitive editions are going to come out in 1560 in Latin and French. Well, he got exiled from Geneva because Geneva got swept by the same wave that had swept through Bohemia of anti-church, let's throw them off.

The Reformation was sweeping through Europe. And he said, yeah, I agree with that. And I like what John Huss has to say.

But I still think we ought to have a pretty strict form of government here. And so he got accused of being the new papacy. They were saying, you know, we got rid of one pope and you're acting like another one.

So he went to Strasbourg and ended up being very seminal in his approach to Scripture and figuring out what Scripture said and saying we're not going to listen in the same way that the law shouldn't listen to lawyers' opinions, it ought to go back to the law. We shouldn't be listening to church and priests and dogma. We ought to be going to Scripture and figuring out what it has to say.

So as his commentaries and as his institutes were published, this really became popular. People said, yeah, that's what we need to be doing. We don't need a new pope.

We don't need a replacement structure of men. We need to get into the Scriptures. And so this was a good, healthy influence.

There's a lot more we could say about John Calvin, but that is his major contribution. A lot of people associate the five points of Calvinism with Calvin. He didn't come up with those points.

They're based on him, but he was dead by the time the five points came up. There was a thing called the Synod of Dort, and that was where the five points were first put together, and it was 20 or 30 years after Calvin died. But here's the thing.

You see these elements of getting back to Scripture and throwing off a false human authority and a false mission for the church. The mission of the church is not to try to build the kingdom on earth by getting involved in civil government, and that's what the church was basically doing. The purpose of the church is to build kingdom citizens in the heart, to go to the Scripture and build us up in the faith, not to build the world up in some sort of a Christianized government.

Christianized civil government is not the goal. It should function on Christian principles, but it shouldn't be embodying Christianity. It should just establish the freedom for Christians and Christianity to flourish under its umbrella.

So that gets us up to the middle of that second millennium, A.D., and that's where we'll pick up next time, and we're going to see that as a result of Luther, Calvin, and some of these other important figures, you're going to have the major branches of modern Christianity form and flourish. Let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you that you have preserved the

truth of your word down through the centuries, and despite the distortions and the ambitions and the distractions that we as human beings have built into the church and have corrupted the church with, your word remains shining as a light and as a beacon and as a power to transform the individual human soul.

We pray that God the Holy Spirit will find us to be teachable students, that we will recognize that your transforming work is not aimed at society, but is aimed at our own heart. We pray that as a result we can live a life that is pleasing in your sight and that glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ. We ask it in his name.

Amen.