

(Christian History) 6. Important Events and Challenges

by David Guzik

The Christian Empire Period was marked by significant theological debates, including the Arian heresy and the dispute over Jesus' humanity, which were settled by the Councils of Nicaea and Chalcedon.

Scripture: John 1:14, Acts 1:9-11, 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, Philippians 2:6-8, Colossians 1:15-17, 1 Timothy 2:5-6, Hebrews 1:3

Topics: "Church History", "Arianism Debate"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the Arian debate that took place in the early fourth century. He highlights the marketing skills of Arius, who was able to popularize his theological ideas through catchy jingles and slogans. The speaker also mentions Gregory of Nisa's observation that the Arian debate was a common topic of discussion among the people of Constantinople. The sermon emphasizes the importance of theology in that time period and contrasts it with the lack of interest in spirituality and theology in the present day.

Transcript

In this lecture on the history of the Church, we want to consider more in the period of the Christian Empire, of course, the third of the three periods that we've sort of studied this far, and in this period of the Christian Empire, which of course spans an impossibly long time. You realize that I put this from the conversion of Constantine basically until the Protestant Reformation. And really, that's not good history.

I apologize to you for making such a broad section. If I was doing a better job in these lectures, I would divide that up into two or three or maybe four different passages. Sometimes we talk about the early Middle Ages and the later Middle Ages and so on and so forth.

But just for the sake of time and for getting at our subject and the big concepts, we're considering the period as a whole. We talked about some of the general trends and characteristics of the Christian Empire period. First, that Christianity became officially allowed, then officially supported by the Roman Empire.

Secondly, we talked about the phenomenon of Christianity retreating to the monastery and sort of the good and the bad and the useful about the monastic movement. And then thirdly, we looked at the emergence of the Roman Catholic Church and the institution of the papacy. That was the subject of our

last lecture.

In this lecture, we want to take a look at some of the important events and challenges of this period of the Christian Empire. Although we must admit that we're talking about a huge period of time, right? I mean, 1,200 years approximately in the history of Europe. And as I'm going to tick off five or six important events and challenges, please understand that this is a woefully short list.

I almost apologize for bringing it to you, but I'm just picking out, in my estimation, what are maybe some of the five or six most notable things for us to consider. First of all, towards the very beginning of this Christian Empire period, you could say that somewhat it began even before in the later part of the early church period, was this whole phenomenon of the Aryan heresy and the Council of Nicaea. So, you know, we've been talking about the later Middle Ages, all the way up to the year 1300 and sort, with Unum Sanctum in our last lecture.

Now I want you to rewind about a thousand years into this very time of the conversion of Constantine and when Christianity's social status and standing first changed within the Roman Empire. They had this very significant challenge of the Aryan heresy, and it was responded to by the Council of Nicaea. The Aryan heresy began in the early fourth century with a popular elder, what we would call a pastor of an individual congregation, but a popular elder or pastor in the Christian community at Alexandria, Egypt.

Arius, the name of this man, he called himself a Christian, but he emphasized ideas in Greek philosophy and theology, ideas that said that God is completely unique and unknowable. Maybe you're familiar with the idea of the transcendence of God, right? That God is beyond us. Well, if that is emphasized to the point that is emphasized in some aspects of Greek philosophy, you come to the basic idea that God is unknowable to man, right? God is completely beyond.

And then he said that because Jesus lived as a man, and because Jesus could be known, it meant that Jesus could not be God. Arius believed that Jesus was like God, the most God-like of all of God's creatures, but that ultimately, Arius believed that Jesus was simply the highest being in the universe next to God, right? Not God, but the highest being in the universe next to God. Now, Arius' teaching had a great appeal for many reasons.

First, it was consistent with some deeply ingrained ways of thinking found in Greek culture. Secondly, in Arius' teaching, Jesus was more like one of the divine human heroes of Greek mythology, right? Think of the heroes of Greek mythology, right? Like Hercules and other people who are sort of human, sort of divine. In Arius' theology, this is what Jesus kind of like was.

So it appeared to be deeply ingrained ways of thinking in Greek culture. Secondly, Arius was an excellent preacher and communicator, right? And sometimes the most dangerous thing in the world is a wrong message in the mouth of a powerful communicator, right? Third, Arius was very good at what we would call today, marketing. He even put some of his central ideas into what we would call jingles, which were on the lips of even the common man.

I find it fascinating to think about this, that in this period of the early 4th century, people really cared about theology. And Arius knew how to market his theology to people and put it on their lips. You know, they made up little songs, little ditties, like commercial slogans and little songs that would reinforce these doctrinal ideas and everybody had them on their minds.

Gregory of Nysa, again from the years 330 to 395, he spoke on the popularity of the Arian debate. He says, if you ask anyone in Constantinople for change, he will start discussing with you whether the son is begotten or unbegotten. If you ask about the quality of the bread, you'll get the answer, the father is greater, the son is less.

If you suggest taking a bath, you'll be told, there was nothing before the son was created. Do you see what he's trying to explain to you? These theological debates were on the lips of everybody. Now I just have to say, I read that and it makes me pause and say, what a different world we live in today, right? I mean, today the things of theology, the things of spirituality, the things of God, they are in no way on the lips of common people.

But there was a time, and here he's talking about the time, where if you hopped into a taxi, of course I'm putting it into the modern age, where if you hopped into a taxi and said, you know, take me to such and such an address, the taxi driver would say, hey, what do you think about this whole theological debate? You know, do you think that Jesus is God or not? You know, you'd go to get your hair cut. And the barber would say, you know, I was really thinking about this whole issue, this theological thing. I mean, these things were on the lips and on the minds of people.

Well, when Alexander, who was the Bishop of Alexandria, condemned and excommunicated Arius, it furthered a huge controversy. Therefore, the Emperor Constantine called together a church council at Nicaea in the year 325 to decide the issue. And you have to say, this must have been an amazing thing, because you have this great controversy, this popular, this eloquent, this, you know, dynamic pastor of Alexandria, Egypt, is excommunicated by his bishop.

And this starts a huge debate within the body of Christ, within Christendom. And again, as we talked about before, Constantine says, well, it shouldn't be this way. I'm going to step into the middle of this great controversy and see if I can fix it.

It's really amazing to think about this. More than 300 bishops from churches all over the world gathered at Nicaea for this conference. Now, I got to say, you know, sometimes you wonder, you know, what would it be like to be getting a time machine and go back to different times and different places in the history of the church.

If I could get into a time machine, one of the places I would want to go is to the Council of Nicaea. And let me explain to you why. It's because, remember, this was just after, this was in the recent memory of, times of severe persecution in the church.

Basically, the Council at Nicaea was a gathering of heroes of the faith who had suffered under persecution and who had stood strong for Jesus Christ. There were so many there who had suffered and been tortured for Jesus that it added a special dimension to the conference. These 300 bishops from churches all over the world gathered together at Nicaea.

Well, when they were all gathered there, Arius appeared before the Council and he made his case. Arius claimed that Jesus was a created being and capable of change. So he could not be God, but the Council rightly rejected Arius' teaching.

I guess you've got to say, you've really got to admire the Council of Nicaea for a lot of reasons. I think that when we think about it, for many, many reasons, the Council of Nicaea is very worthy of our praise. It's

really one of the high marks in church history.

Because here's this great matter of theological debate, and what do they do? They allow the chief spokesman for this point of view, Arius himself, they invite him to the Council and they basically say, Okay, Arius, you persuade us if you can. Most of the people here don't agree with your teaching, but we're going to allow you to make your case to the best of your ability. If you can persuade us, you so do it.

And so Arius tried, right? He made his case, he basically said that Jesus was a created being, he was capable of change, therefore he could not be God, but again, as I said, the Council rightly rejected the teaching of Arius. They then went on to make an affirmative statement about the nature of Jesus, saying that he is, and I'm going to quote here, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one substance with the Father. Now one very critical phrase in this statement was the ancient Greek word, and I hope I get this right, homoousios, or homoousios.

Again, I don't know if I'm pronouncing them correctly, I'm just trying to say that those two words that look very similar, and are only different by a couple letters and a slightly different pronunciation, mean an entirely different thing. You see, one means, is of Jesus of the same substance, or is Jesus of similar substance of the Father? Now there's a big difference between the two, right? One is saying that Jesus is God, the other is saying that Jesus is like God. There was a lot riding on one letter between the two.

Is it going to be O, or is it going to be I there? The one letter between the two makes a huge difference between the two, and the Council rightly and biblically determined that this homoousios is wrong, because Jesus is not of similar substance to the Father, he is homoousios, that is, of one substance with the Father. So the Council voted against the Arian heresy, and he and his heresy were rejected. Only two bishops out of the more than 300 were gathered, only two of them voted against Arius, and those two and Arius were put out of the Church and declared heretics, because they would not change their beliefs once they were declared heretical.

Well, therefore the Nicene Creed was formulated in the year 451. And as you can see, it's a longer creed than the Apostles' Creed, because it's trying to sort out with greater specificity the idea of who Jesus is and how he relates to God the Father. And so therefore we read, We believe in one God the Father, all-sovereign, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

Next, And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages, light of light, true God of true God, begotten, not made, of one substance with the Father, through whom all things were made, who for us men and for our salvation came down from the heavens and was made flesh of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became man and was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate and suffered and was buried and rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures and ascended into the heavens and sits on the right hand of the Father and comes again with glory to judge the living and the dead, of whose kingdom there shall be no end. Now, you get the feeling of this, right? It's the same basic structure as the Apostles' Creed, but obviously it's much more detailed trying to answer these theological questions. Now, let me ask you a question here.

Do you think that people only thought correctly, and we would look at this and say, this is correct. This is true biblical doctrine. Do you think that people only thought correctly about the nature of Jesus starting at the Council of Nicaea? No! Of course they thought correctly about that beforehand.

Then you say, then why was this necessary and why was it so laboriously formulated at the Council of Nicaea? It's because it was being questioned and it was under threat. You see, you have this very interesting phenomenon through the history of the Church, where the Church will turn its focus on certain theological issues and deal with them. It's not that nobody thought about Jesus Christ God before the Council of Nicaea, but at this time, for this reason, it became the theological focus of the Church.

And as the Church focused on it theologically, it came up with the correct statement reflecting true biblical theology about who Jesus is. Well, going on, the Creed says, And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and life-giver, who proceeds from the Father, who with the Son is worshipped together and glorified together, who spoke through the prophets, in one holy catholic and apostolic Church, we acknowledge one baptism unto remission of sins, we look for a resurrection of the dead and the life of the age to come. Well, this was a very good statement of theology.

And it was an excellent job by the Council of Nicaea. Again, if I get my time machine and have ten selections, that's probably going to be in the top ten things that I'd like to go back and take a look at in Church history. But you see, what happened with Arius? Do you think Arius just said, Oh, they say I'm a heretic, OK, I'm going to stop preaching.

Is that typically how it works in the Church? No. Arius now could say even more probably, Well, now I'm a martyr. Now I have the truth.

You know, now I'm persecuted for my beliefs. And he went on teaching his stuff just as strongly as he ever did before. As a matter of fact, Alexander, the bishop who first had to deal with Arius, had died.

And his successor named Athanasius had to deal with Arius and the Arian heresy. But here's the problem. Listen, people didn't stop believing in Arianism just because the Council of Nicaea condemned it.

Remember, Arius was a brilliant communicator and he was a very clever marketer. He was able still to get a big following and Athanasius had to battle against this Arian doctrine even though so much of the world agreed with it and subsequent emperors to the Emperor Constantine were Arians. Of course, the famous statement of Athanasius is that people came and they told Athanasius, they said, you know, Athanasius, you should change your beliefs.

The whole world is against you. And Athanasius very boldly, he said, no, the whole world isn't against me. He said, it's Athanasius against the whole world.

That sort of became a phrase, Athanasius contra mundum, Athanasius against the world. It just shows, you know, that this was a man who said, I don't care how popular Arianism is, it's not the truth of God and we're not going to stand for it. He's the one who succeeded Bishop Alexander in the city of Alexandria.

So this was a huge thing settled at the Council of Nicaea, although we have to say, even though it was theologically settled at the Council of Nicaea, it took many years for Arianism to finally die out. And then we can say that in the 19th century, Arianism once again reappeared because if you ever look at the Jehovah's Witness doctrine of who Jesus is, it's pure Arianism. They echo almost exactly all the arguments that Arius made.

Well, that was one thing, the Council of Nicaea and the problem of Arianism. The other thing that we want to examine together here is the dispute about the humanity of Jesus and the Council of Chalcedon. In the first half of the 5th century, so fast forward about a hundred years from the time of Nicaea, there arose

another doctrinal challenge.

This time, the debate was over the nature of Jesus' humanity. You see, everyone had come to the agreement that Jesus was God. Well, I say everyone, there were still pockets of Arianism, but you know what I mean, the majority of the opinion of the church was that Jesus was God, correctly so.

But then the debate was, what was the nature of his humanity? You see, in some places, the deity of Jesus was emphasized so much that they essentially denied that he was human. There was a tendency to allow the deity of Jesus to, so to speak, swallow up his humanity. Some people taught that Jesus was God on the inside with a human shell, which would mean that Jesus wasn't truly human, but that he only looked human.

This view was taught by a man named Apollinaris and was known as Apollinarianism. Another challenge was known as Monophysitism, coming from Mono-, One-, and Physis-nature. This teaching said that Jesus' human nature was lost in his divine nature.

So there arose a big controversy about what is the connection, what is the relationship between the human nature of Jesus and the divine nature of Jesus. So the Council of Chalcedon was called in the year 451 to settle the issue. Again, it was held amidst a huge amount of political infighting and backbiting.

400 bishops gathered to decide the issue. Now, I have to admit, if you take a look here at the Council of Nicaea, it's like an all-star team of the survivors and the courageous sufferers of the persecuted church. But fast forward a hundred years later to the Council of Chalcedon, where the church leaders have been living in favor and in support from the Roman Empire for a hundred years.

Do you think it's still as cutting-edge and godly and all that? No. It had a lot more political infighting and backbiting than the previous Council of Nicaea had had. Well, the Council of Chalcedon gathered together and they settled on this definition.

They said that Jesus is, and I'm quoting here, recognized in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation, the characteristic property of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person. Basically, what they said was that Jesus was fully man and fully God. He didn't lose his humanity in his deity and he didn't lose his deity in his humanity.

The Council of Chalcedon declared that Jesus was God and man, one being with two natures, divine and human. One nature was not absorbed into the other, nor was he really two persons as if somebody had a split personality. In fact, I think this is fascinating, the Council of Chalcedon used the very same word rejected at Nicaea.

And I have to say they did it wisely because what they were reacting against was a Jesus-only doctrine. Do you know what the Jesus-only kind of doctrine is? This kind of, well, I'll just describe it, it's a Jesus-only doctrine. It basically says that God was the Father, that he became Jesus, and that now he's the Holy Spirit.

That there is no trinity actually, it just describes three different phases of the same person. Well, the Council of Chalcedon rightly rejected that and came back to the word that was rejected at Nicaea because it emphasized the point they wanted to make of similar substance, emphasizing that God the Father and God the Son are not the same person, right? They're both equally God, but they're not the same person. And again, as much as the Council of Chalcedon was not as glorious as the Council of Nicaea, I think we

have to give some high marks to the people of the Council of Chalcedon because they realized that a word might be appropriate in one creed that's not appropriate in another creed, right? They weren't just going to argue over words, they were getting at the real meanings of the words.

So, this was a wise thing, again, at the Council of Chalcedon. So, we have the Council of Nicaea where they debated the deity of Jesus Christ, they had the Council of Chalcedon where they worked through the issue of the humanity of Jesus Christ, then next we come to our third important event and challenge of the period of the Christian Empire and that's tension between Rome and Constantinople. We saw that on previous times when we took a look at the map, right? The Roman Empire established two capital cities in the early 4th century and there was a natural competition between the two, but between Rome, the western capital, and Constantinople, the eastern capital, right? This is the Roman Empire in the year 400, you can see that it is pretty much a united empire even though they had administratively divided it between east and west, but yet it was still somewhat of a united empire in the year 400.

But, the division came between east and west and the centers of power were Rome in Italy and Constantinople in Asia Minor, actually right on the edge of Asia Minor. This struggle between the western capital Rome and the eastern capital of Constantinople really engendered sort of a division between the church and many things divided the western and the eastern branches of Christianity. The west used Latin as its primary language, the east used Greek.

They did communion a little bit differently, they used different dates for Easter, they celebrated mass differently. In the east, clergy could marry, clergy could wear beards. In the west, clergy were expected to be celibate and expected to be clean-shaven.

Over the centuries, the divisions developed to the place where in the year 1054, the head of each, the head of the western church, whom we would call what? The Pope, right? The head of the western church in Rome excommunicated the patriarch of Constantinople and said, you're not a real Christian. Well, what did the patriarch of Constantinople do? He excommunicated the bishop of Rome and so you have this same practice of them excommunicating one another. This rivalry was so bitter between the two that when Islam finally conquered Constantinople, actually very late, Constantinople held out against Islam for a long time, they did not conquer Constantinople until the year 1453.

Some eastern Christians said, we would rather become Muslims than become western Catholics. That's how deep the divisions were between the eastern church and the western church. Which sort of brings us on to our next category.

We've talked about three already. Here's our fourth. We talked about the Aryan heresy in the Council of Nicaea.

We talked about the dispute about the humanity of Jesus in the Council of Chalcedon. We talked about the tension between Rome and Constantinople and this division between western Christianity and eastern Christianity. And now we're talking about the emergence of Islam and the Islamic invasion of Europe.

You know, in 662, the followers of Muhammad were a persecuted band of visionaries in Arabia. A hundred years later, they controlled all of Arabia, all of North Africa, all of the Palestine region, all of Persia, all of Spain, parts of India, and they were threatening France and northern Europe. This is remarkable to see from a historical perspective, the spread of Islam.

If you take a look here on the map, this green portion that's noted on the map covers this area of Islam. You can see it covering all of the Middle East here area and then sweeping up over North Africa in this mighty way. But look at the difference between 700 and 800 where you have it not only sweeping even more here but coming up here into Spain and the European peninsula in this mighty push by Islam.

And so this was a very aggressive spreading of Islam by the sword. Christian communities in these lands were often persecuted or assimilated by their Islamic conquerors. Over and over again, this was the pattern.

Let's not forget that these areas under the days of the Roman Empire and beyond were predominantly Christian, right? There was a time when almost all of these areas were dominated by Christianity. And when Islamic people came in, basically, largely, you had to submit to Islam or be killed. Now they didn't necessarily require conversion.

You could remain as a Christian and live in an Islamic area but you had to accept a status that was lower than the Muslim people in your area. You had to pay a special tax, your church meetings were strictly regulated and most of all, you were absolutely forbidden to evangelize. Absolutely forbidden.

The only people that you could lead to Christ were your children. That was it. So that was the only way the church could grow in any way was by having more and more children.

So you see that these Christians in these lands were often persecuted or assimilated by their Islamic conquerors. Now a turning point in this whole Islamic invasion when it was sweeping aggressively through up here and up through Spain into, actually over the Pyrenees, into France and it certainly had the potential and the dynamism to sweep up into France and to invade Western Europe as a whole not only Spain. The turning point was in the year 732 at the Battle of Tours.

There, a Frankish force defeated a Muslim army. Now this map reflecting the year 800 reflects what it was like after the Battle of Tours where the Islamic armies were beat back to this line of the Pyrenees Mountains which separates Spain and France. But you can see by this Muslim Spain how much it was encroaching up into France and into Italy and the certain momentum was to lead them even beyond.

This little incursion up over the Pyrenees and into France had great potential for being the launching pad for an Islamic invasion into the rest of Europe. But again, the critical turning point was in the year 732 at the Battle of Tours. There, a Frankish force defeated a Muslim army.

Now it was somewhat of a small battle but it turned back the expansion of Islam into Europe and it put a man named Charles Martel into prominence establishing what's known in France and in European history as the Carolingian line. The Carolingian line was especially noticeable for the grandson of Charles Martel whom we know as Charlemagne the same one who was crowned by the Pope. It's a very interesting battle.

In the year 720 Islamic armies crossed the Pyrenees to what today is southern France and they won one big battle at Narbonne and then lost another. But they were very wise in their military structure and their leadership. They had a very good retreat from the battle and under good management it left them able to fight another day.

Their leader was known as Abdul Rahman and he brought his force of perhaps 15,000 warriors up through southern France into a place between Poitiers and the shrine of Martin of Tours in this general area of

southern France. This place, the St. Martin of Tours was a place renowned for its spiritual associations and it was only 200 miles from Paris. Charles, who without the official title was practically the king of the Frankish kingdom he used a force with both French and German soldiers or in those days Germanic tribes and we know very little of the details of the battle but it took place on a Saturday somewhere in October of 732 and they stood very strong against the Muslim invaders and turned them back.

Charles was given the nickname Martel which means hammer and if the Islamic forces and Abdul Rahman would have won that battle European history would have been very very different but this Islamic tide was turned back at that point. Next item on our list for important events and challenges of the period of the Christian Empire are the Crusades. Actually the Crusades began in the year 1096 so from the year 1096 to 1248 that's approximately 150 years there were actually seven different Crusades each with the supposed goal of protecting pilgrims and recapturing the Holy Land from the Muslims or at least in weakening Islamic influence in that part of the world.

Many people are confused about the Crusades and there's a huge misconception about it. A lot of people think that the Crusades were an effort on behalf of European Christianity to defeat Islam and to gain territory from them. That's really not how it started at all.

It all started with a man known as Peter the Hermit who had been on a pilgrimage to Palestine and he experienced cruel treatment from the Muslims. When Peter came back to Europe he decided to use all of his influence to stir up the Christians against the Muslims. So he saw the Pope who at that time was Urban II and the Pope approved the first Crusade.

A Crusade is a war on behalf of the cross. Peter got on his donkey and traveled from city to city throughout Italy and France stirring up passion for the war. Finally in the year 1095 Pope Urban II gave an impassioned appeal for his army to march to the Holy Land and to win it back.

This is what he said A horrible tale has gone forth an accursed race utterly alienated from God has invaded the lands of the Christians depopulated them by the sword plundering and fire tear that land from the wicked race and subject it to yourselves. And then the people cried out in response Deus Vult, Deus Vult which means God wills it, God wills it. Now notice this as the Crusades went forth it was most notably just a matter to address the mistreatment of Christian pilgrims in the Holy Land.

But it flowed from there into being something much, much bigger. Especially when to motivate soldiers Pope Urban II promised that fighting in the Crusade would earn you time off of purgatory. We're going to talk more about that in a future session but just put that in the back of your mind.

There was a spiritual reward promised to those who fought in a Crusade. Well, when they fought the Crusades there was actually limited success for quite a period of time. The Crusaders went in and conquered and you can notice on the map these small red areas on the coast of Palestine they were actually able to occupy land and to defend it against the Muslim invaders for some period of time.

The Crusaders ruled Jerusalem and other notable cities but eventually the areas fell to Islam again. In the judgment of most historians the Crusaders were only able to succeed because the Muslims didn't really take the threat very seriously. Once the Muslims really took it seriously and assembled serious armies against the Crusaders to drive them out they were able to do it because it was very difficult for these Europeans to travel this great distance and effectively fight a war so far from their foreign land.

But for a period of time there was a kingdom of Jerusalem a Crusader kingdom. There was a principality of Antioch again ruled by the Crusaders. These were areas that were occupied by the Crusaders.

Over time they shrank they weren't able to hold the whole area they were beat back to the area right by the coast and then eventually they were pushed out altogether. Let me share with you two of the biggest misconceptions about the Crusades. Number one the first misconception is that the Crusades were offensive wars against a peaceful Muslim Middle East.

You know there were the Muslims in the Holy Land not bothering anybody just being peaceful and good and those horrible Christians came from the West and attacked them. That's not the truth. Indeed they were exactly the opposite.

They were defensive wars they were fought in direct reaction to Muslim aggression against Christians visiting the Holy Land. Secondly the misconception is that the Crusades the purpose of them was to expand Christianity that had nothing to do with the reasons for the Crusades. They were not fought to expand Christianity they were fought to make the Holy Land safe for Christians to visit and to live in.

We have to say that when you study the history of the Crusades and it's a fascinating subject and worth going into in some detail you do find a very interesting phenomenon of what is known as the Children's Crusade. This was a very tragic event when some of the Crusades turned out to be unsuccessful. There were actually two Children's Crusades that thought that they could change it in the early 1200s.

One of the Children's Crusades began when a 12 year old boy named Stephen of Cloyes inspired some 30,000 children to march to the Holy Land to make a spiritually powerful supernatural conquest by those who they believed were pure in heart. They said, hey it's a spiritual battle so we need children who are spiritually pure in heart. I don't know how many children they know but they said these spiritually pure in heart children will go and with spiritual power they will defeat the Muslim foes.

Many of the 30,000 children died on the way others lost faith when the sea did not part for them as they expected and most of the remaining children died at sea were slaughtered or were sold into slavery. There was another Children's Crusade in the spring and summer of 1202. First of all, in France a 12 year old shepherd boy named Stephen claimed that he saw a vision of Jesus telling him to lead an army of children to Palestine and then in Germany near Cologne a 10 year old boy named Nicholas claimed a similar vision.

So again, they made this mighty march to the Holy Land as I just described for you and there's estimates that from between 10,000 and 50,000 children participated in the Crusade almost all of them were either slaughtered or died along the way or were sold as slaves. Their misguided faith cost many of the French children their lives and nearly all of the Germans. So that's enough with the Crusades the next and final topic that we want to talk about in this particular class is the Mongol invasion.

Here we're fast forwarding to the year of approximately 1242. In the year 1242 the most fearsome army ever to invade Europe turned back to the east after easily conquering almost all of Eastern Europe in 1241 and setting their sights on a drive all the way to the Atlantic. You know we think and talk sometimes about the medieval period as the dark ages and I think unfairly so.

They're usually not as dark as people say they were. But let me tell you what would have been a true dark ages for Europe would have been if the Mongols would have successfully continued their advance

westward. They swept all across Eastern Europe and were coming into Vienna.

They were just a few hundred miles outside of Vienna. As a matter of fact scouts from the Mongol forces would have come to the outskirts of Vienna to plan it out for a future battle. Now what was very interesting about the Mongols was that they were incredibly impressive as an army.

Basically for this period of time in the 13th century they conquered everybody. They just defeated everybody and defeated everybody easily. And they came up to Vienna and when they conquered a city basically they slaughtered everybody in it.

There are records of them conquering well let me explain to you that's not exactly how they did it. They would come to a city and they would basically call out to the city and call on it to surrender. If the city surrendered they would come out they would depopulate everybody out of the city they would sell the people as slaves and they would go in and they would totally destroy the city.

If they didn't then they would go into the city and basically just slaughter everybody. There are Mongol battles where they killed a million people in their conquering of cities. And basically they were anti-city they were anti-urban they hated cities.

And so they would destroy them because they were basically rural people you know people who lived on horseback and in fields. So as they swept all the way eastern towards Western Europe they came to the outskirts of Vienna but they stopped there and yet before they could advance even further upon Vienna the leader of the Mongols back in China back in that region of Central Asia he died and the Mongol leaders had to be recalled back to that area because by their laws and customs that's how they elected a new leader was by having all their people come back and elect the new leader. That was about the only thing that saved Vienna from this horrible conquering from the Mongols and if they would have conquered Vienna it's very conceivable they would have just continued to sweep through Western Europe.

And let me tell you again European history could have been very very different because it's very hard to argue that anybody could have stopped the Mongols in their conquest. If they would not have turned back of their own accord because their leader died back in Central Asia who knows what would have happened. Well again these were tremendous conflicts tremendous influences that lay over Europe during this period.

In our next session we'll continue to talk about a few more of these great influences and these great things that sort of set the framework for the Reformation as we'll talk about that in some future sessions. But this whole period of the medieval age I don't think it would have been a very good time to live. You don't want to paint the picture worse than it was, right? To call them the dark ages is probably too severe.

But yet there's no denying that it was definitely a step back in culture, in society, in law, in art, in literature, in education in all these great areas of society definitely a step back and Europe was trying to find its way still after the fall of the Roman Empire. I find it very interesting that in 800 when Pope Leo put the crown upon Charlemagne's head he called him the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. Now what's interesting is it wasn't the Roman Empire at all, right? It didn't have the same geography it didn't have the same structure it didn't have the same law it didn't have the same other features as the Roman Empire but you can see this returning characteristic over and over again where it's like they hungered for a return of the glory of the Roman Empire.

It's as if after Rome fell Europe missed it very greatly until the period that we call the Renaissance when they came back and very actively looked back to classical culture from both Greece and Rome to try to regain some of that glory of the classical times.

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