

Anabaptist History (Day 15) the Munster Tragedy and Melchior Hoffman

by Dean Taylor

The sermon explores the life and teachings of Melchior Hoffman, a radical reformer and Anabaptist leader who played a significant role in the early history of the Anabaptist movement, and the impact of his teachings on the Munster Tragedy.

Duration: 1:29:04

Scripture: Proverbs 3:5-6, Matthew 26:39, 1 Corinthians 1:10, Galatians 1:8, Ephesians 6:17, Colossians 2:8, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, 1 John 4:1

Topics: "Church History", "Biblical Discernment"

Description

This sermon provides a historical overview of the Dutch Mennonites, highlighting the challenges and influences faced by different groups of people in various regions. It emphasizes the importance of judging beliefs and revelations using the Word of God to contend for the faith delivered to the saints. The sermon also delves into the tragic events involving Jan Matthias and Jan van Luyden, showcasing the consequences of straying from biblical truths and relying on personal revelations.

Transcript

Okay, well, I found this little summary here done, I think, by Christianity Today or something, and I have it on your paper there. And this is just to kind of remind us all, to give us a review, and to bring us up to date of when these things happen. Because we're going to now go to Holland and northern Germany, but we have all the Switzerland stuff, and then we went to Moravia and saw the Moravian Anabaptists.

But, of course, while all this was happening, the Dutch stuff was all happening, but I wanted you to follow a group of people instead of so much following an age, and so that's why we're following these groups of people. And you definitely get a different feel in these different groups of people. Some good things, some bad things, some challenges that each of these groups give to us even to this day.

So today we're going to start talking about the Dutch Mennonites, that's where we get the name Mennonite, from Menno Simons and all that. You know, it's funny, we're on the fourth week and we haven't even talked about Menno Simons yet. But it does give you an idea of how broad and how diverse even, well, not so much diverse, so broad the Swiss Brethren and the Moravian Anabaptists and all those had a lot to say even before these teachers from Holland began to intermix with these Brethren from the

Swiss Brethren and those down in the South.

The differences and the problems that they run into are also particular to their area. And if you thought the Swiss Brethren had some problems, wait until you finish today. And when we get to Menno Simons tomorrow, Lord willing, if we get to him, you're going to, usually people say, wow, he sure was awful tough.

I mean, towards the end of his life he seems almost, you know, pretty belligerent at times and all this. But hopefully today you'll get an idea of the desperateness of what was happening in Holland and how Anabaptism was started on a very bad foot up there. And if it wasn't for some of the good leadership of Menno Simons, the Phillips Brothers, and some of those, then it could have been a disaster just like the Moravian Anabaptists with Jacob Hutter took this and brought it into an organization that served the Lord.

But even more than the Swiss Brethren, you're going to see Holland had a tremendous challenge. So just to give you a little bit of timeline so that we can kind of get all back in sync here. I appreciated this.

It's not completely right. I noticed just this morning, but it's close enough. In 1521 they talk about Hubemeyer at Waldhut and he becomes a friend of Zwingli.

That was when he was in his peasant war stage. In 22, Simon Stump and Rubling, Challenges of the Paying of Tithe, Hubemeyer, 23, goes to these different things. We go right on into the beginning of the Swiss Brethren, 24, 25, and of course the big year there.

You see all that is mentioned in 1525, which is where we have the first baptism and all that exciting thing that we talked about in Zurich. 26, Grebel dies out from the plague somewhere. And 1527, we have the Schleithem agreement there, it's a brotherly union.

1527, also Felix Mons is drowned, although that's before the Schleithem, it's a little off there, but same year. Sattler burned, same year as well. And then this goes on.

So this kind of gives you an idea as you go through there. And I thought it was good. Hutt dies in Augsburg in 1527, that's Hans Hutt dies there.

Hubemeyer burned in Vienna, remember that? Over there in Nickelsburg, all the guys that were there and all that in 1528. The Moravian Anabaptist became the Hutterites around 1529. It goes into the different... Now we have Milkor Hoffman meets the Anabaptists in Strasbourg, we're going to talk about him in 1529.

Blaurock is burned in 1529. Hoffman baptizes 300 people, a revival, we're going to talk about that. And we go to these different things and now taking us into 1530s, 1533, we get into the Münster tragedy.

Again, just to kind of give you an idea of all these very early times of Anabaptist things that were going on. Menno Simon still is not really part of the scene. At this time, he's studying the scriptures, hearing some of this stuff, particularly hears this stuff from Münster.

Maybe one of his brothers are here mixed up with all this, his younger brother, it's thought. And so he begins to be aware of these things and challenged by these things. But if there's anybody to put the beginning spirit and attitude and ethos and feeling on the Dutch Mennonites, it is Milkor Hoffman.

Turn to page three of your handout. And there's a nice little picture of him in prison in Strasbourg. And looking there, he probably didn't look so nice and neat in his prison cell, but there's the picture that's typically shown of him.

Interesting guy, interesting guy, although quite a dreamer, quite a visionary. And he opened the door, a very dangerous door, the concept of that the scriptures are not complete and that we can get divine revelations. But we'll get to that.

Let's talk about him. Milkor Hoffman. Born in 1495, he received a good education and become a furrier.

I mean, you know, make fur coats and that type of thing, and that's what he did. From the earliest age, though, he was interested in the mystics. He liked some of those writings that were coming out of those times that you could get where people were deeper spirituality than just church dogma and things.

And he began to study the mystics, but then later he began to get involved and started to read the writings of Luther. He was very excited about the writings of Luther and becomes a very enthusiastic follower of Martin Luther. He starts to preach, becomes a lay preacher, begins to preach around, people get challenged one way or another.

But early on, Hoffman begins to be very concerned about end times events. Remember, there were some other people, and anybody can remember some of the other guys at this time who were involved with end times events, some of the radical reformers that came off of the Lutherans, Thomas Munzer was one in particular who led that big peasant revolt and was ended up being killed. Hoffman was involved with the end times events very early on.

He considered himself, he soon considered himself a prophet, called to testify of the imminent final judgment and stir people to repentance. Later on, he starts to follow Luther's teachings, tries to get in the circles with them, and he ends up becoming a preacher. Apparently, he was a very good preacher.

A layman, not classically educated, not classically ordained through the normal Lutheran channels, even the early Lutheran channels, but nevertheless, apparently a very good preacher. And he was bold. By 1529, he began to discuss some of his views, and he started to have more of a Zwinglian concept of the sacraments.

Which was even a lighter view. Remember, Martin Luther believed that the Eucharist, the communion, he talked about consubstantiation, but he still believed in a real presence in the communion. Zwingli argued that it was just a spiritual partaking, and Hoffman began to pick that up as well.

In 1529, when he was getting into some of the debates, and he brought some of the different lords of the area in there to discuss these things with him. He was pretty bold, and here's a quote that I found when they were surprised how bold he was. They said, If all the emperors, kings, prince, popes, bishops, and cardinals should be together in one place, nevertheless, the truth shall and must be known to the glory of God.

May my Lord and God grant me this. And that's the way he was presenting his case to these lords. So, even though this guy wasn't ordained formally, he was a pretty bold fellow right from the start.

And you've got to remember, all that we've talked about over these weeks, I think you start to have a better idea of just the somewhat chaotic nature of Europe at this time. It's 1529, remember? The Ottoman Empire is now already coming upon Vienna. Rome was sacked, destroyed, taken over for a while in 1527.

Luther is now gaining power all through Europe. Things are pretty chaotic everywhere. And so, you had a little more grounds to be a furrier and say some of these things to the lords at that time.

You know what I mean? The next morning after the debate, I found another interesting quote. And when they were talking to him and saying, they asked him, Well, where are your followers? Who are the people that believe like you and follow you? And he says, I know of no adherents. I stand alone in the word of God.

Let each do likewise. And so, he was immediately kicked out of that area and began to wander again. He ended up in Strasbourg.

Anybody remember who was in Strasbourg? Strasbourg was the Swiss area, or was the Swiss reformers there, Capito and Gussler and some of those people. And they held that zwingly concept of the Reformation. So, they thought he was a hero, even though he wasn't ordained.

Hoffman comes into town and they liked him. And he began to talk about things and started to grow there. And they liked his views of communion, that sort of thing.

In Strasbourg, he starts to meet up with the Anabaptists and some of the radical reformers. In particular, a very spiritualist kind of guy by the name of Schwegkfeld. Remember we talked about Schwegkfeld? And the thing here to underline is that he apparently took Schwegkfeld's view of Jesus' divine flesh at this time in Strasbourg.

This is important. Because this view took over all of the North Germany, Holland areas, Meadows, Simons, Phillips, and they all embraced this view for a while of this divine flesh. Do you remember what that is? That means that when Jesus came, he did not come, he was made human, they believed in the incarnation, he was completely human, he was completely divine, but they believed that he was like a new Adam, just placed in Mary and not took upon the flesh of Mary.

It would have been closer to Nestorians. That's why Nestorians didn't want to call her the mother of God, Theotokos, because he had that same kind of struggle. Some of it was scientific, some of it was intellectual, some of it was spiritual reasons, talking about a pure sacrifice, and they're concerned of our atonement being placed on a completely pure sacrifice.

Some of it came from some strange views of inherited sin and this kind of thing. But scientifically, the idea that they didn't have an understanding of genetics and that type of thing, so they had the concept that from the man's side, it's just placed there in the woman's side, and she's just a field. If you're looking at it scientifically from their point of view, if God gave the Holy Spirit, what part does the woman play in this anyway? They didn't understand the idea of the genetics of everything coming together, which is incredible, I think, that the scriptures testify of these lines, even though they didn't have that scientific knowledge.

We'll leave that here for now, but it's important because apparently, they became very convinced with this view. Menno Simons begins even placing his views, when he talks about different topics, he'll base it back to this idea of this divine flesh. But as he keeps going there, he starts looking through different things, look at the different Anabaptists, and they start to get more concerned.

He also starts to get more and more into his prophecies, and begins to talk about things that are in times, and he begins to get pretty serious about it, to the point where it's almost ridiculous. I guess it is ridiculous. Some of the different theologians there of Strasbourg, they advise him to stick to his furrier trade, and stop getting into theology.

He doesn't like that, so he keeps going, and somewhere in that time, we don't know from whom, he was baptized an Anabaptist, in the early Strasbourg people. And he left town. But right before he left town, he wrote a book on his end times prophecy, and this was the first of the left behind series.

It became very popular, it became very exciting, and in a world that everything seemed chaotic, to them, this idea of this end times being right now, here it is, can't you see it? Was very appealing. But a step further, it's one step to have some wrong views of end times, step further, he gave a lot of attention to different prophecies that were being said about him, and about other people, and I think this was his weakest point. He opened that gate, instead of the word of God being final, he allowed it to further revelations.

So that booklet started to travel around everywhere, but still now he was an Anabaptist, and so he was going to go preach. I guess maybe he thought Swiss was already covered, he heads north. He dedicates his book to the King of Denmark, you see I have it down there on the bottom of page 4, and so he heads up to this area, Denmark and all these different areas, and he begins to preach.

He even received a prophecy about what will happen from some of the different brothers there at Strasbourg, and the different Anabaptist prophets that were walking around, and some gave them, I'm afraid, some false prophecy. So as he's up there, and going up to this northern area, he ends up in a town on Imden. Get up your cup and cross book, and turn to page 138, Imden.

138 in the cup and the cross, and there's a nice picture there, and we can see, so here's Holland, and if you see now, take it all the way up, and they're kind of in the middle, on that little island there, formerly out of Holland, but for all practical purposes right there, Imden. And that's where he went to preach. And when he preached, this man apparently could preach, and people loved it.

And a revival broke out there in Imden, where all kinds of people were getting born again. The mayors were getting born again. All these people were getting excited, and there was a revival that broke out, and 300 people were baptized there.

It was impressive. Old Phillips even speaks of this time. I found a quote it says here.

Among these, talking about the people at this time, among these reformers and Anabaptist leaders, whom he had named, Milkor Hoffman stood out. He came from upper Germany to Imden to baptize around 300 persons publicly in the church, both burghers, burgermeisters and such, and peasants, lord and servants. That was from Old Phillips.

Another quote from him says, This Milkor was a fiery and zealous man, a very smooth-tongued speaker who was celebrated for his great calling and commission. And so, you know, here they had this thought now. Imden was here, it was receiving the gospel, and they had, though, one of the questions that has, had to be a question that radical churches have asked for through the years and a lot of times was, What do you do with these magistrates when they get born again? What do you do with the kings? Are we part of that kingdom? Do we now try to develop this through the politics of this world and this thing? Or are we to be completely separate and a whole new kingdom of God? Jesus said, if you recall, that the people of this world exercise authority over people and when they, oh, I'm butchering the scripture, that we will not rule like the Gentiles rule.

Jesus gave us the warning. And so we see that warning that comes up through history time and time again. I'm not sure how they responded.

It's interesting, even in the early church, Hippolytus, writing about in the year 250, a contemporary of Tertullian, speaks of what happens if these magistrates get born again, or want to get baptized, rather, and he speaks of them saying, well, if they continue to wear the purple, the robes, if they continue to have to keep these oaths, if they continue to have to be involved in any kind of execution, you will not allow them to be baptized. And so even by 250, even as far as 250, you see the church still struggling over these types of things. Well, somehow or another, he did get himself in trouble there in Emden, and he got kicked out.

But he left a person there, Jan Tripmaker, Wolterspoon, I'm a butcher of that name, Tripmaker, in charge as pastor of the newly formed congregation, and he headed back to Strasbourg. A success! Whoo! So now Holland, or the North, almost Holland, has received this message, this radical message, and they're responding to it. And during this time, there was no response.

Here in Germany, in Germany you had the lords who were protecting Luther and all these people with Luther's Reformation, and it was beginning to gain steam down here. But in Holland and all these areas, they were still oppressed, they were still beaten down during the times of the peasant wars, they were poor, they were miserable, they were frustrated, and now this was really the only other option that was given to them as a separate church. And so it took, and it took very quickly.

As he heads back to Strasbourg, he does publish a book. Hoffman publishes a book on the ordinance of God, and it's interesting that that book is free of crazy stuff. It doesn't get into, you know, weird prophecies and all this type of thing.

It's pretty normal. So this time, as he's in Strasbourg, he kind of hangs low and is quiet, and then he heads back up in 1531 to Holland, this time to Amsterdam, and baptizes 50 people in Amsterdam. And now in Amsterdam, the capital here of Holland has received this message, and it begins to grow more.

But something happens. While they're there in Amsterdam, the church is growing, and finally his man that he left there in charge and about several others, eight others, were arrested, taken to The Hague, and got their heads chopped off. Hoffman responded very shocked to this.

And so in his plan, he thought, what was such the big deal? Well, it was because of baptism, and they were saying they didn't want their children baptized, and so he said, okay, here's my suggestion. This is the way I look at it, Hoffman's saying. Jesus is coming back in a couple years, right? And he was so sure of this, that he said, I've got an idea.

Let's stop doing baptism. Let's stop doing communion. When Jesus gets here, we'll talk to him about it, and we'll settle this thing, this whole dispute once and for all.

It was pretty amazing. And so he was obviously a very sincere guy, but he literally called off all baptisms from his followers up there, and saying, Jesus is going to get here in a little bit. We'll talk to him.

We'll deal with this. And that was his attitude. Some did stop.

Some did not. Of course, you get into that kind of spiritualism where can you be a secret Mennonite and that type of thing, and that did follow the Mennonites here in the North for a while. More and more he

begins to preach the end is at hand.

The end is at hand. And now an old prophet, a freezing Anabaptist prophet, a false prophet, prophesied over him and said that he would be in prison for half a year, but then would be released to perform the function of Elijah and the return of Christ. And so he started to think, wow, I guess it's me.

It's me. I'm going to be this Elijah in Revelation, and I'm going to bring in this huge reform. Things were happening.

It was an exciting time, so it wasn't completely over the top, but it had some basis to it. He even then published a book of some of the prophetess in his church. A girl wrote a prophetess, and she said, Barbara Ribstock wrote a book or gave this prophecy, and he wrote it down and published it.

And she had this dream, and she said that she saw a white swan swimming in a beautiful river or water course, which swam, which the swan sung beautifully and wonderful. And that she interpreted that to apply to Milcore as the true Elijah. That swan, that's the true Elijah.

She had also seen a vision of many death heads on the wall surrounding Strasburg. Unfortunately, they'd stick the heads on there. And when she wondered whether Milcore's head was among them, and she tried to see, she became aware of Milcore's head, and as she gazed upon the head, the head laughed at her in a friendly way.

I mean, that's kind of strange, isn't it? I mean, that he printed this was even stranger, I think, but as she gazed upon it, the head laughed in her friendly way. Thereafter, she saw all the other heads come alive, one after another, and they all began to laugh. I mean, weird.

And there was other prophecies and things that, but I do believe the man was very serious, and for some reason, he even seemed to win the heart of the reformers there in Strasburg. They kind of tolerated him. I get the impression somehow, as weird as this guy was, there was something very sincere about him, something very amiable about him, that you kind of liked Hoffman, you know? I don't know.

I get that impression just because how lenient everybody was with him. Eventually, Hoffman completely accepted all of this from the Lord, and then another prophet was given him the idea that things were, this is it, things were happening. So he heads back to Strasburg with this idea that this would be the end of the world.

This time, he's kind of excited. One prophet says, you're going to go, and you're going to go into this prison, and there, when you get in prison, that's going to start off the events of the end times, so he's pretty excited. I've got to get to Strasburg to get arrested.

He goes to Strasburg. They kind of leave him alone for a few months. He doesn't go to the main churches or anything, but he goes to this goldsmith's house, and after he's in the goldsmith's house, all his people, his followers from Holland, all these people start following him to Strasburg.

He starts to get a little bit of a collection. Finally, the people say, okay, enough. And they arrest him.

Well, he was thrilled to death. That's exactly what he wanted to do. And so, there's this scene that they recorded about how he responded when he was arrested, and he thought, okay, this is it.

This is so great. It says, okay, here's the quote. Obe Phillips, again, writes of these events, and again, this is a contemporary.

Obe Phillips writes of these events. He says, thus through the mediation of this prophecy, that prophecy that he got that he's going to be it, Melchor removed to Strasburg and there began to preach and to teach here and there in the houses of the burghers, the mayors and such. Then, to be brief, the authorities sent their servants to take him prisoners.

When Melchor saw that he was going to prison, he thanked God that the hour had come and threw his hat from his head and took out a knife and cut off his hose. I guess the trousers, it says, were connected like to a sock, so he cut off his hose and cut the socks off his pants. At the ankle, threw his shoes away and extended his hand with the fingers to heaven and swore by the living God who lives there from eternity to eternity that he would take no food and enjoy no drink other than bread and water until the time that he could point out with his hand and outstretched fingers the one who had sent him.

With that, he went willfully and cheerfully and happily to prison. Wow. So ends Melchor Hoffman.

He's there and he ends up staying in there for ten years until he finally dies in prison. Poor guy. Poor wife and child, still there in Strasburg crying every night.

That was it. He gave us a strange legacy. He now still is writing letters.

He's kind of involved. I'm disappointed with his involvement with the Munster guys. And even though he's there, he still is able to write letters.

Now, one thing about him, he was non-resistant. And the idea of the meeting with the Anabaptists there in Strasburg, he did embrace the biblical well, he embraced a non-resistant view. Although the whole two kingdom thing is a little messed up with him.

You know, because Romans 13, he's thinking, well, with the new kingdom, when Jesus comes, it's going to be this. And so he kind of mixed up things in his writings. But nevertheless, he was strongly non-resistant.

And these people that he told up here, that they should love their enemies and not return evil for evil in that way. And so, but he kind of winked at it. Although he can't blame them.

I guess, well, he was in prison. And even John the Baptist, we remember, struggled when he was in prison like this. So he was in prison and wrote letters to the Munsterites a couple times, which he seemed to passively, at least, bless what they were doing.

Alright? So he also, he was powerfully shillistic. This word, shillistic, I have it written there. It comes from the ancient Greek word, you Greek scholars can give this to me, shillio, which is thousand.

And it's a strong belief and almost a radical weird belief. People take it to the extreme of the end times. People say if somebody has a shillistic belief or something, shillism is something.

And he certainly, yeah, gave that to the spirit of what was going on here in northern Holland and all that. He also, he also won a lot of converts. But he opened the door, I think one of the worst things, he opened the door to new revelations.

And that's a fundamental point. I mean, let me ask you, let me ask you. Do you believe, and I want to hear from you, do you believe that the Holy Spirit still speaks to us today? Well, amen, so do I. Well, if the Holy Spirit speaks to you today, do you ever think it's wrong? I mean, do you ever think that you can misinterpret what you think the Holy Spirit is saying to you? You do, alright.

Well, good. What is the main basis by which you judge these inner feelings of the spirit with, how do you gauge those? How do you judge those? What do you use to judge those with? Why not put the Scripture? The Word of God. Amen, they will never contradict.

Jude 3 says, Contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. The early church talked about a complete deposit. It's nothing.

Paul says, either I or an angel from heaven should come and teach you another thing. Let him be what? A curse. That's where we get that word anathema.

I wish they'd applied that when they started the all anathemas during that council period that we talked about. But this idea that we see in Thomas Munzer, we see unfortunately in Milkor Hoffman, the idea that you could receive these revelations began to be something in par with the Scripture, that you would print these bizarre dreams and things and compare it to the events of the times. And so I think that that was a dangerous door open at the influence of what's about to happen with the Munzer tragedy.

Take a three minute break, we're going to come back and we're going to talk about probably the worst and most chaotic scene in the Reformation time, the tragedy of Munzer. I don't believe. Okay, welcome back.

Alright, this next section's a bit shocking, some of it graphic. But it's brought up a lot in Anabaptist history and I want you to understand Munzer, the kingdom of Munzer very well because it comes up so often in Anabaptist history and I think you still to this day against Anabaptist people. So, Jacob brought up a good point during the break and I'm going to bring this to you now today.

What does it mean to be an Anabaptist? What does the word literally mean? Somebody say. Rebaptize. Okay, a rebaptizer.

Now, now what's the opposite of a rebaptizer? An infant baptizer, okay. That's where it came from. Now, is everybody who was an infant baptizer a Catholic? No.

Obviously Luther would definitely say no, right? All the reformers were infant baptizers. John Wesley was an infant baptizer. All these guys were infant baptizers.

And so, would it be right then to heap all of the Catholic doctrine on the reformers and call the reformers Catholics just because they baptize infants? Would that be okay? No. It's totally different. The whole way of thinking, their whole hermeneutic, their whole interpreting principles are different between a reformer and a Catholic.

I mean, a reformer would certainly say, right? Right. So, is it fair then just because somebody baptizes an adult to call him an Anabaptist? You see the point I'm trying to make? Okay, and for, instead of arguing over the semantic of the word, the point that I'm trying to make is after Munster, after all that happened in Munster, certainly both the Catholics and the Protestants used this tragedy to heap reproach upon the Anabaptist movement. And it worked.

And so, they were blamed for this. The Hutterites got this. The Swiss Brethren got this.

The different Dutch groups, the Russian Mennonites were all always compared. And even if you read literature today on the Internet and things like that, they all say, well, you know, they still had this and this attitude from Munster and different things happened because of it. Or they'll say the non-resistance of the Anabaptists was just a reaction out of a, kind of like a guilty conscience about what we're going to read in Munster.

But you remember, it's 1535. I mean, in 1525, ten years before this, Grebel was already writing and the Swiss Brethren were already writing about non-resistance. The Hutterites had already established their views on non-resistance.

There was already fights in Nickelsburg with Hubmeier over non-resistance. And the Schleithem Confession was already very clearly laying a line between the state and the church. So to say that what happens that today the heritage of Anabaptist doctrine is merely a reaction of Munster is ridiculous.

But nevertheless, it's said, and it's still said to this day. But I would like to say, okay, they did end up becoming re-baptizers in Munster, but the ethos and the center of what it was to be a Swiss Brethren and what Menno Simons eventually became is totally different. And it comes to this.

My target that I'm going to do all the five weeks. Jesus! Not just thinking about him, not just talking about him, but everything that's important to Jesus is important to us. And if it doesn't mix with the Sermon on the Mount, if it doesn't mix with what Jesus said Judgment Day would look like, if it doesn't circle around Jesus, it's not Christianity.

Period. And so, all different times, and we can get into the same danger when we get to extremes, we have to come back to the center and Jesus. In Munster, they didn't do that.

Alright. Now. So, building up to this time in Munster, this little area in north western-ish Germany, this little town was a very fortified town.

As you see the little picture that I drew on there, it had a particularly strong sense of double moats, walls, and it was a very strong town. Also, do you remember during this time that building up into the 1520s and such, the kingdoms, the Holy Roman Empire, and all these things, it wasn't one big country, but there were all kinds of little districts and things that they would go back and forth between the lords and all the different things of saying who owned it or who did this. And so, when the peasant revolt started coming into this, some of this got really stressed.

And another thing started to happen economically. Instead of your money being just made on your serfs, your peasants that are living on your property, and you could trade them and that kind of a thing, the peasants during that peasant revolt started to complain about this. But another thing that started happening is some of those peasants realized that if they spend their time at night sewing, making shoes, doing some woodwork, building some stuff, that suddenly they started to have a lot of money.

And some of these began to be merchants. So the increasing of these merchants beginning to have some money, some power, was starting to add tension to all that was happening in here. And so some of the districts had to really respond to the growing wealth of the merchants that were there.

Munster was one of those. And it was very prosperous and eventually got to the point during the peasant revolt that they ended up having some demands against the king and the lord of the area and they were given some sort of a council, a democratic sort of council that they were able to determine the laws of their city. Strasburg was another one of these.

And that made some of these cities a little more independent. They could make a little more laws on their own. They had a little more independence from their lord.

That's why Strasburg had more freedom. That's why Munster had some more freedom. And so this was some of the background that led to this.

One of those big merchants was a man by the name, look on page 10, of Nipperdoling. Bernard Nipperdoling. And 1527 he began to be sort of a leader amongst these growing merchants and peasants of Munster.

And he becomes a figure we're going to follow all through Munster we'll eventually see him hanging on the cages of St. Lambert's Church. Nipperdoling becomes one of the main players. And so this building, I want to just give you the tension.

So now we have the peasants and the growing of the merchants, Rome feeling already the trouble with all these different things going on and that's the tension that's there in Munster and basically all over Europe. And so if you could scratch out that section from there all the way to Bernard Rockman on your handout. I meant to scratch that out.

I'll repeat that here in just a second, but the timing is a little off. So scratch that section off. Another person that enters this area, another very important figure, is a preacher.

A Reformation Lutheran preacher by the name of Bernard Rothman. Good name to know. Very interesting fellow.

Bernard Rothman. Bernard Rothman was a talented speaker again, another good preacher. And he gained fame in 1531 when he began to be a Lutheran and began to preach and he was in one of the surrounding towns around there.

Moritz. In the town of Moritz he started some of this stuff that we heard in Zurich. Remember with St. Peter's Church there and the pastor there went in, they're called iconoclasts, means image breakers, went in there and just trashed the church.

He did this in a neighboring town of Munster in the town of Moritz. And it drew quite a crowd. Some of the people that talk about it, the first hand account said there was a mob and a rampage and they came into the church, they tore paintings off the walls, statues, crashed all the different things, threw it all out and burned the stuff and went around dancing and getting all excited about what was going on.

Again, feeling that great change was happening to our people and God was bringing in the Reformation into our town. After that he got into a little trouble, you can imagine. He left town and started to meet with Luther and Melanchthon and started to become a better and better Lutheran.

There's even records from Luther talking about him where they said, well, you know, he's okay. Or was it Melanchthon, one of those that said, we don't know if he could be very good or very bad. Maybe they saw

something within him that was a little too dangerous.

But nevertheless, he starts some of these Lutheran reforms in his area. He then came back and he came back to Munster this time with a punch. And as he's there, he's excited, he's bringing in the Reformation and he starts to bring in these, preaching these Lutheran doctrines.

And he's renouncing the monastery. Munster had lots of big monasteries. As a matter of fact, the name Munster, it's kind of a funny name, you know, like the Grossmunster, what the big monster.

What does Munster mean? It means monastery in German. It's the German word for monastery. And so this was a famous town of a big monastery.

Grossmunster would mean the big monastery. That's where the, in Zurich there. But here, so it was a monastery town.

But again, part of the stress of these peasants was that these monasteries owned the property. And so the church, let's say, would own this area. Let's say this is Munster.

And, you know, some of the lords were here, but the monastery didn't pay taxes to the city. And so that added to the strain and even the kings, you know, started to say, I don't know, I don't like this. And that's why they were so happy when the Lutherans started to say, I don't want to pay the monasteries.

I don't want to pay the bishops and things like that. And so that added to the tension. Well, Rothman is preaching against it and, of course, people start to complain.

At that time there was a bishop about ready to retire by the name of Von Wied. You see there on the middle of page 11. As he was challenged, he said to them, you godless oppressors.

He wrote this letter, and the ending is hilarious, but he wrote this letter and he said, after they told him to be quiet, stop this reform talk, stop this Lutheran stuff. He said, godless oppressors, escape the deserved punishment of heaven because my conscience is clear. I have no doubt that I can rely on God's mercy.

He will protect me and rescue me from danger when my enemies fall upon me like the lion. I know that at this moment I am surrounded by a pack of dogs and a horde of evildoers. And then he signed a letter from the humble servant of the merciful bishop, his soldier in Christ.

That was hilarious. Your most humble servant. You don't call somebody a dog.

Anyway, so, of course, needless to say, the bishop said, this guy has got to get out of here. And the stage is set for already big reformation problems in Munster. Got the picture? It's kind of what we saw in Wittenberg.

It's kind of what we saw in Zurich. It's kind of what we saw in different places. The stage is set in Munster, but Munster takes a different turn.

Alright, the bishop orders him out, and they had this, oh, and the council meets. Remember they had this democratic council I was talking about. The councils are like, I don't know, I mean, he has some good points.

Look at the monasteries that have been taking all our money. So the council is kind of back and forth on it. And Nipperdoling, that famous merchant there, finally says, enough.

They break off and go to Nipperdoling's house. And in his house, they began drawing up a declaration of independence, so to speak. And they began to say, this is why we must have a new council, we must have a new way, and we're going to declare our independence against the bishop.

And they did it. And Rothman became some of their Jefferson or something, of this new cause. Again, this is not so far an unfamiliar scene in Reformation history, right? I mean, it's not an unfamiliar scene in American history, even.

Alright. So, they meet. Now, this is where that date that I, right here on your paper, right, February 18th, 1522.

I'm not going to test you on this, but just to keep your sheet following. On February 18th, 1522, then, they storm St. Labert's Cathedral. And this was a big, beautiful cathedral.

It's still there to this day. It's one of the only lasting things through all the different times. And there they start trashing everything, just like he did in the other town.

Pulling down paintings, pulling down sculptures, taking ancient manuscripts and all the different things. And even Rothman took his own sermons, and they threw them all on a big fire and torched them and said, only the word of God shall be what we'll listen to. And just trashing all that stuff.

Well, as you can imagine, the bishop wanted him to stop, but he was protected now. Nipperdoling started to give him some armed guards, and so they had a little army, their own little monster army, and they began to protect him, so the bishops couldn't just come in and get rid of him like they would have done, you know, some of the Anabaptist people and that type of thing. Another thing that added to the problem was there was different bishops changing hands at this time.

That last one that he wrote a letter to was about ready to retire. He left it to somebody else. He died quickly, and now we came to another one, finally.

I have a picture of him there on page 12. The bishop lord of the area, Bishop Franz von Waldeck was his name. A bishop indeed.

Now, he was never ordained a priest. He bought his position. He had a few concubines.

He even had one of his children living there. He was not a godly man at all, and he just wanted his nation ran so he could make money and live his ungodly life undisturbed. He was even kind of a Lutheran.

He probably could have went Lutheran if it wasn't for this. He was trying to wonder how to do this, and he just now is coming to the whole thing and getting there anyway. So he's thinking, what have I inherited? The radicals gave them 16 articles of abuses of the Catholic doctrine, and so the gauntlet was tossed.

In other words, we're going to be a Protestant city. Waldeck called Charles V. Remember Charles V? You remember Charles V was that young little emperor who became emperor of the Holy Roman Empire during the time of Martin Lutheran was only, what, 19 was it during those times? Now he's about 30-something, and he has a little more experience, and Charles V says, yeah, you've got to get those guys out of there. You've got to get them out of there.

And so he wrote a letter rebuking Waldeck, saying, I think you're a Lutheran. Waldeck was doubting Charles V was doubting Waldeck, saying, I think you're a hidden Lutheran, and that's your problem why you're not responding fast enough. And I want them out.

And he says this, Charles V said, if they do not desist, there will soon be violence and bloodshed. Therefore, we earnestly desire that you, the bishop, remove the received excuse me, that you should remove the Lutherans and expel them from the city. The rebellious citizens should receive the appropriate punishment and be forced to acknowledge and obey their supporters so that they and the remaining inhabitants should be able to live quietly and peaceably.

Okay, well, the bishop says, you've got to go. What do the radicals do? Do they leave? Of course not. They don't leave.

They stay, and they ignore the bishop. So the bishop then starts a blockade. Now, this isn't a complete surrounding of Munster yet.

Munster yet. It's a blockade of their trade routes and that type of thing. And so, you know, let's see.

Let's see if I can I'm not a good artist, and my children laugh at me. When I was teaching biology class, you should have seen all my pictures. Okay.

Let's draw some castles here. What do you think? That's the, you know, and we'll draw a door. I don't know.

What do you think? Huh? Not bad, huh? Alright. So we'll make this Munster. And so here's the city.

They had a double moat, and there they are. And so they're waiting in there, and now the bishop is not happy. We'll draw him.

Very sad. He's saying, what do I do? And so he starts to blockade the trade routes and things that are coming into the city, and they're not happy about that. Not a complete seize at this time.

Munster says, no problem. Or it is a problem. They start bringing in mercenaries.

Remember those Swiss mercenaries? Those guys that are paid soldiers? They start bringing in 300 paid soldiers into the town, and now the stage is set for a bit of a showdown between the new bishop and the new Lutheran reformers there in Munster. And so they're sitting there. The bishop says, okay, let's talk.

Can we talk about this? But on Christmas night, 1532, Munster makes the first attack and sends 900 soldiers to attack the bishop's armies and their blockade sections, and almost grabbed the bishop himself, and he escapes, because he was somewhere doing something at the time. And so, but during this, the bishop finally says, okay, all right, all right, we'll come to some agreement. They met.

He didn't want to spend all the money. I mean, one thing interesting about medieval warfare, okay, one thing is interesting. It's not like America where everyone says, oh, let's go America go blow up Iraq or something like that.

And these lords had to pay for this. And so it came out of his pocket. So when they were deciding, who do I really want to spend the money on trying to get this place when I really don't like the Catholics anyway.

And so he begins to make this agreement with them. Believe it or not, even after this attack, he says, okay, a truce. Let's call a truce.

And he starts to make up this treaty, and they have this agreement, and he says, okay, we'll let you do this, we'll let you do that. He made a little agreement. You still have to swear an oath to me, but Rothman can't preach, and some of those things, and that was written in the treaty everybody was signed, and the little battle was over, sort of.

These radicals and Munster were excited. I mean, wow, we won. And what that meant to them, now baptized in the thought of end times, the world is ending, we just won.

I mean, we just whooped the Catholics. So this is it. So Rothman is starting to get into this whole end times thing and saying, this is great.

I mean, we've got to start telling people about it. This is going to be the new Zion. This is it.

Rothman believed it was going to be Strasbourg, and he kept telling people New Jerusalem is going to be Strasbourg. Now they're thinking, I think you were a little off there. It's Munster.

Munster is going to be the New Jerusalem. So Rothman begins to preach. He begins to tell people about all this, and he sends out tracks all over to the different people of the Dutch area, and saying, this is great.

He even then starts to start having a lot more Anabaptist ideas. He begins to preach against infant baptism, preach against wealth, preach against these different things, and starts to say that he's going to make this Munster a kind of a kingdom of God, although again, he's got all these armed troops and all these types of things anyway, and he starts to in his leaflets that he sends all over Holland and all over North Germany, he makes all these promises. We're going to live in this beautiful community of goods here, and here's what he promises all these people.

Quote, middle of page 13. The track said, the poorest among us who used to be despised as beggars now go about dressed as finely as the highest and most distinguished. By God's grace, they have become as rich as the mayors and the richest in the town.

People are going, wow, this is great. I mean, that's real. They're really doing the deal there.

He begins to make this promise, and people start to come. I mean, people start to come. Not only that, it starts to catch on in the different Holland areas, in the different places in North Germany, this whole message begins to take this, the whole Anabaptist message begins to take this perversion.

And people start thinking the end times is coming, Jerusalem is there, they're living in this equality, and look what happened. He says the beggars are looking like the kings. It's just this beautiful thing.

Pause here for a moment. You know, I remember John D. Martin in one of his sermons once talking about the idea that it's a shame that people like Karl Marx and Lenin and such, who at a time when the world was very stressed, began to give their perverted doctrines to the world. And he mentions once in a sermon, I remember, that he said, I think it was one-half to two-thirds of the world, in a matter of a few years, adopted their message like that.

There was some need, there was some crying out of the people, and instead of the kingdom of God, John D. Martin says, being given to those people, they sucked up this devilish anti-Christ system. Same kind of

thing happened here. A people who were just getting the scriptures, although most of them just had maybe like a concordance or a few things to read, were given these things, they were hearing about these promises and they thought, wow, and people started to come.

And it's kind of sad when you think about how some of them were so duped. But they came, they came. And when they started to come in, the new radicals started coming in, they began to have a new election.

There were still some people on the council that were a little bit moderate. You know, they kind of, you know. And so he said, they had a new election with all these new people and said, those guys out of it.

So now it was all just the strong Lutherans and these new radicals, which were not quite Anabaptists yet, they weren't re-baptized yet, but they were leaning towards that. At that point, then they start calling for different things, social reforms, and they closed the monasteries, and they start feeding the poor, they start closing schools that were in the monasteries, and start educating them in different ways. And there was some good, there was some good changes there.

And then they begin to start talking about re-baptism. I want to take a moment here too. You don't see in their writings they talked about the new birth.

They talked about re-baptism. That's a big difference. Menno Simons, we're going to see, certainly Conrad Grebel, you remember, certainly all the Moravian Anabaptists, they talked a lot about the new birth, and they talked about even the importance of the order.

What you get here in Munster and these radicals up here is re-baptism is almost a sign. They quoted Ezekiel. You remember when Ezekiel, when the angel comes down with the inkhorn, and he's supposed to put a towel on the heads of those that weep and mourn over the destruction? They took that, that baptism was this symbolic spiritual thing, that when the angels would come, they're going to see if you're re-baptized or not, and then you'll be in the new kingdom.

So they began to make these kind of prophecies. It wasn't based upon a ceiling after the new birth. Of course, how could they be talking about the new birth when they're in this type of thing? But it's an important distinguishing mark.

Just because somebody is re-baptized doesn't make them part of what we saw with the Swiss Brethren and what we're going to see coming out of Holland after this mess. So I'm just taking a moment there. After the preaching on this, the marks and all these type of things, 1,400 people enter into a mass baptism.

Not a revival, but a mass baptism. And so the whole town begins to turn Anabaptist. More changes, more different things, the bishop gets more concerned about this, and finally the bishop again says, this means war.

All this stuff, now everybody's doing this stuff, I'll draw a mitre instead of a crown. And so this means war, and so he wants them out of there. And begins to do things about it.

And so the bishop starts to prepare for war against Munster, but when they heard about this, these crazy guys, they loved it. Oh, the bishop's coming, he's bringing armies, he's bringing all these things, but what does that mean to the guys who think the world's ending? Well, this is great, see? This is what I'm telling you. This is the end times.

The bishop's coming, and it's kind of like, I don't know if y'all are old enough to remember the Waco thing. Do you remember hearing about the whole thing with the Branch Davidians and all that? Was it the Branch Davidians? Those guys down in Waco. And when you have a little compound, it's hard for the government sometimes to get you out of there, and that's what we're going to see here.

But they were saying things, too, like, we'll see, the army's coming, this just proves it. And that's the kind of way these Munster guys were doing. And so things were getting into a lot of stuff.

People were jumping up and down. Some of the reports, unless they're exaggerated, are pretty wild. I mean, people were running in the street, jumping off things, you know, just getting really excited there in Munster.

Alright. And then finally, when all this was happening, Rothman ran up to the nunnery, and some of those that were still left in the nunnery, and began to proclaim that right now, on February 6, 1534, this place will be destroyed. And so, they're all there, and at midnight, everybody's looking.

It's almost no longer the day. Everybody looks. And it didn't fall.

But the nuns were scared to death. They ran out of there, screaming. They thought the world was going to end.

And then when they said, well, doesn't that make you a false prophet? Rothman said, no, it doesn't. It doesn't make me a false prophet, because you repented. And it's just like Nineveh.

He said, because just like the people of Nineveh repented, you repented, and so God spared us. And so, from that, the reports say the nuns all started screaming and jumping, and getting all excited, and rolling around in the snow, and apparently, it was some pretty good excitement there that was happening. But now, okay, things are getting weird, and even the moderates that are still left there are thinking, okay, we've got to stop.

And so, the Anabaptists started looking at the Lutherans who weren't getting re-baptized, and say, you know, why aren't you doing the baptism thing? I mean, you know, things are getting happening. The world's ending here, and you need to do something. And so, we began to get some internal conflict.

The bishops are coming around here. They're starting to bring in armies. They're starting to hear about things.

And now, inside here, you're starting to get the Anabaptists and the Lutherans starting to disagree between themselves. And internal division starts to happen. Some of these guys go out and tell the bishop, hey, hey, guess what? We, the Lutherans, we want to be your citizens, but these Anabaptists are, you know, doing stuff, and so, can you help us here? And so, they eventually come out and start to get such to the point that Nipperdoling runs to the Lutherans and cries out at their little council hall, repent.

They're about to stab him with a spear. They stick him in the prison, and finally, it looks like there's going to be a whole revolt here, and there's going to be an internal war right when they're surrounded. And so, they said, hey, we'll send a guy to the bishop and tell him, and then we'll have this coordinated attack.

The Lutherans left the door open, and a bunch of farmers started coming into the area with pitchforks and all kind of weapons that they were going to help the Lutherans and the Catholics be able to whip up on

these new Anabaptists. You would put marks on your house if you lived there, little crosses to let the bishop's armies know, don't kill my house, kill the Anabaptist houses. But this guy who went to tell the bishop was an Anabaptist spy.

And he said, okay, well, give us your document on how you're going to help us, but he never went back and told the Lutherans. So, what the message they got was the bishops not responding, and so it forced a truce between the Lutherans and the Anabaptists. What do you do with all those farmers in there? The farmers are all in town, they're all in here, and they open up the breweries, they open up their sausage things, and all these farmers go into these, get drunk with beer and drink all the sausage into a stupor until the evening, and they finally go home to their wives, and then the Anabaptists slam the door shut and lock the whole town secure.

And then, right when they're walking off, the evening is there. Rothman looks, and he sees this thing that I have a picture of. He sees three suns in the horizon of the sunset.

And he sees that, and he says, this is a sign from God. And this is kind of a little scientific thing that happens where, because of ice crystals, and that's a true picture there that I have on your paper there, they call it sun dogs, or there's different scientific names for it there. And in that, you get this in the Chronicles too, there's many times where the Chronicles mentions this, especially during the Turk War, and those types of things.

And so they mention this in the horizon. Rothman sees this, and of course he's thinking, wow, this is it. And he thinks this is a revelation from God.

And he makes this proclamation. He writes all of Holland, and he tells him what happened. He says, if the farmers had remained an hour longer, they would have been consumed by these flames and sent to hell.

And so he thought this for sure. There's one of the diaries of the people that were there writing about it, and he said that people were saying they saw all kinds of things. They looked up out of these three suns and saw the apostles, saw the angels, and all the things.

And the guy in the diary said, all I saw was some lights. I didn't see anything. But these guys that are whooped up into all this frenzy were seeing all kinds of stuff.

And so, at this time then, another young man that's living in the area there in Munster, his name was Jan van Luyden wrote a letter to the leader of the crazed Anabaptists up in Holland, Jan Matthias. Jan Matthias. And says, it's time to come.

And everything turns a chapter. Whew. Already bad.

But already bad in a Reformation sense. I mean, you know what I mean. Things are weird, but not bizarre.

But what happens next goes crazy. Okay. So, he writes Jan Matthias.

And Jan Matthias is this man who now was a disciple of Hoffman. Hoffman baptized him. And now he's pretty much in charge of all that's going on in North Germany there and all that.

And he says he's coming. But he's coming not just to town to be the preacher. He's coming to bring an end to the world.

And all the literature that Rothman had been sending out, now he's there. And it's no small thing. Thousands of people are now getting converted in Holland and North Germany.

And he was their leader. So when he shows up, I mean, it's a big deal. It's a big deal to Münster.

And to people who are hurting that, oh, can you believe it? Jan Matthias came to Münster. And that's what he did. Now, here's from the diaries of the people that are there when he got there.

Let me read this to you. This is mentioned in this Taylor King. Now, in his mid-fifties, Matthias' tall figure was gaunt and stooped, his muscular baker's forearm.

His skull, almost bald, was enormous, his black eyes huge and piercing, and his flowing beard reached almost to the robe belt of his black robe. Quite a daunting figure walking around in this black robe. He stalked the streets of Münster, always accompanied by his beautiful dark-haired wife, Diwara, a former Carmelite nun, twenty years younger than he was.

And she always wore this big white gown. So imagine the two of these guys coming into town. Jan Matthias with his dark robe, his beautiful young wife there with her white robe, and they're there with all this prophetic type of talk and all this sort of thing.

It becomes part of who they are. I asked, where are the Hoffmans? He begins to even take one of the prophecies, Milchor Hoffman in prison in Strasbourg, and this disappoints me. He says that, remember how one of these prophet girls were saying that he was Elijah? Well, she also said that Matthias was Enoch of the Revelation, and so he went with that.

Kind of disappointing, but hey, the guy's in prison. So, they go into these different things, and as soon as Matthias gets there, he immediately calls for the removal of these ungodly. This little dispute? Uh-uh.

Can't be. You've got to get these unbaptized people out of town. And so they had a new council meeting, and called for new mayors, and Nipper Doling was one of the mayors, and Bernard Rothman was the official preacher of the area, and now the stage is set to go to the next crazy level.

And he began, Jan Matthias began to preach and send this proclamation to all of Holland saying, we preach the separation of the world. The state, this state, is to be used to destroy the state. Not exactly a Jesus message, but that's where they were.

Okay, so what do you do with those? Well, Jan Matthias obviously didn't capture Jesus' idea at all, or even Hoffman's concept of non-resistance, and said this, quote, middle of page 16. The Father demands the purification and the cleansing of His new Jerusalem. Our Republic cannot tolerate the confusion shown by impious sects.

I advise that we slaughter without delay the Lutherans, the Papists, and all those who are not of the right faith. None may remain alive in Zion but those who can offer to the Father a pure and pleasing worship. The only way to preserve the righteous from the contagion of the impure is to sweep them from the face of the earth.

We are supremely strong and can do this immediately without fear of interference from within the city or without. Not exactly Felix Mons' attitude. Nipper-Dohling, though, remember, he was the guy who kind of followed this through.

This is a change. Things were crazy, things were radical, but things were at least legal. Nipper-Dohling said, could we perhaps, is there perhaps another way? How about we just kick them out? Finally they go back and forth and he agrees to go to this idea of just having them kicked out.

He brings them all into the city square, all the people into the square, and lines them up and begins screaming at them and prophesying to them saying, and it was sleeting, it was February and it was just freezing cold and it was sleeting, and they're there and they're being stripped of their babies, some were stripped naked, some had their possessions stolen from them, and he falls on the ground and gets into a trance and then he begins to say, hear now the words of your God, cleanse this holy city of its impurities, drive away the sons of Esau. This place, New Jerusalem, belongs to the sons of Jacob. And they're all sent out, kicked out of the city.

Well, they should be glad, but nevertheless. So as they're there and they realize on the morning of February now, they're looking around and they realize they are completely, completely surrounded by the bishop's troops. Completely surrounded.

There's all these camps. Medieval war is kind of funny. I don't know.

You would come up and you would just camp and get ready for all these things. There was posturing, people would bring their families, you had your wife and your children, they're playing and they're doing things. This is why you can imagine Hans Huth was selling books there at Thomas Munster.

Medieval war was kind of weird. So looking all around were all these tents and camps and smokestacks and different things where all these soldiers were coming upon to siege the area of Munster. Okay.

So they were kept away and they began to make some changes. Began to make changes with the school. All the school books, I don't care what they are, taken, burned and thrown away.

Only the Bible is going to be used. Began to make wartime rations. All the food was gathered up there and seven deacons were given to distribute all the wealth and all these different changes were happening.

But finally some of these guys that were on the guards of the wall, one of them started to complain. And as he started to complain, as he started to complain, somebody heard him and reported it. And this was the first time their authority was really questioned.

And just like the times of Hitler or all these different things, you don't question a tyrant. So now the very first true insubordination was being tested. So they brought this young, this blacksmith in who was complaining, well I don't see why the Dutch guys don't have to stand guard all night.

Why do we have to do it and all that? And so finally they said, well what are we going to do with them? Jan and Matthias said, kill them. So let's bring him up and let's execute him for his insubordination against authority. So they brought him.

A kind of terrible scene happened. As they were there, Jan Matthias, again, he's kind of whipped him up into all this kind of excitement and everything, but he really was never a soldier. He wasn't a warrior.

But he had this big sword, and he was going to do the executing. And so as they brought this young, strong blacksmith who was complaining up on the platform, Matthias lifted up his sword to cut his head off. But when he was up there, he made the judgment on him, and he froze.

He couldn't quite do it. And everybody started looking at him, and he was just froze there. And finally Jan van Leiden saw what was going on and saw that people were kind of suddenly, this is going to be bad.

I mean, he can't do it. So he took a spear and ran it through him. Right when he's sitting there and ran the spear through him.

But he was a tough blacksmith, and unfortunately, he didn't die. So as he's sitting there and everybody's watching all this terrible, grotesque scene, finally van Leiden got a pistol, a primitive musket, and shot him. He still didn't die.

So he said, get him out of here, drag him, and it took like eight or nine days until finally he died. And things began to go bad for worse. And it started this, just like during the French Revolution, a time of tyranny and different things.

During this time, up around Holland and all these places, people are starting to come and they're getting to hear about this message in droves. Thousands! To the tune of what, 15,000 people began to start leaving Holland and all this northern area to come to Munster. But the Dutch heard about this and they blocked them, they stopped them, and many of their boats were stopped and people couldn't come.

As all these blockades were effective, it began to get harder and harder. People started to get hungry and things were going bad in Munster. So finally, it was a big wedding feast.

They were still, although when they wanted to have their feast, they still had their feast. So they drew this big table and one day on Easter, look on page 19, on April 5th, they're here having this big wedding ceremony and now Jan Matthias is hearing about all these blockades happening, people aren't coming, so he said, it's going to happen by Easter. It's close to Easter, but he says it's going to happen by Easter.

And he falls in the middle of this wedding feast, throws himself on the table, goes into the trance, and then wakes up and says, not my will, but your will be done. He goes and kisses everybody, guy and girl, and says, I have to do this. And so, he then decides on Easter morning, he will be the David against the Goliath.

And he personally, armed by himself and 12 little guys that were helping him be his armor bearers, would go and face all of the troops of the bishop. So, armed with his sword and his shield, Jan Matthias goes to battle against all the armies of the bishop. Needless to say, he was slaughtered and cut in pieces.

Pieces were hammered to the walls and things like that. So, what do you do? Give up? Probably would have been a good idea. But, that young zealous Jan van Luyden said, I got an idea, so he started to take over.

And on that next day, when everybody was wondering what to do, he claimed that he had this great prophecy. And Jan van Luyden then started to say that he should be king and that he heard a direct revelation. And if you think, Matthias was weird.

This guy was bizarre even more. And so, he was young, only 20, what do I have on there? 26, what is it? Yeah, 26 years old. He was an actor.

He even was a playwright. Wrote some little plays and weren't very good. And all this.

And so, he said that he was going to be the new king, the new leader of all this. And so, he did that and it duped everybody. And he claimed that he had this great vision.

Angels came and told him this. And he was wearing Matthias' robe and he had nipper doling and Rotham saying, yeah, we saw the vision too. It's true.

And that beautiful wife that Matthias had, God has also told me that I should also take her as a wife. Now, he already had two wives. He was married back in Holland, left that poor lady, fortunate lady back at home.

He married nipper doling's daughter. That was kind of in secret. Now, he wanted to marry this beautiful, young princess lady.

And so, he married her. But to do that, he couldn't just do that. So, he instituted polygamy.

He said, enough men are all dead around here. It was 3 to 1 on the women. So, he said, everybody has to take as many wives as you possibly can.

It was terrible. Some of the women complained. They ended up getting their heads chopped off.

You see who they were complaining about, their new husbands. Terrible things that were happening. And this caused another internal revolt.

One man who loved his wife dearly who did not like this said, no. And so, he led a revolt against the people and said, no, you can't do that. And finally, the revolt was good.

And they locked up, actually, Nipperdoling, Rothman, and Van Luyden in the prison. And he won this little revolt. But that night, his guys started getting into the beer and the sausages and they got drunk.

And so, as they got drunk, all their soldiers got drunk. Some supporters of Van Luyden and all those got them back out. And as you can imagine, all those guys got killed.

And there's the etching there on page 20. And they were all killed. This then finally got to a point where they regained their control and he began to train his troops very good.

He had women stationed on the walls with barrels of hot pitch ready to be poured on the troops. He had all kinds of military maneuvers. And surprisingly for a tailor and an actor, he was a pretty good military guy.

Because on August 28, 1535, finally, the bishop made a full-scale attack. Full-scale attack. And as he went on them, excuse me, first on May 22, 1535, he made an attack and they won.

They won this. And they won the battle against the Lutherans and they were very excited about it. Now again, the bishop was making another full-scale attack, coming against them and taking them and on the wall, these women were very bold.

They were throwing all this stuff. It was terrible warfare and somehow or another it was a stalemate and the Munster won again. And so from the walls, the report says, you could hear them singing out, Almighty Fortress.

And they were singing Luther's Mighty Fortress is our God from Munster, claiming this victory against these people. Jan van Leyden is so happy. He's made himself king and then he says, he starts telling this

person, okay, you get, you're going to be king of Switzerland.

You can be king of, let's say, Czechoslovakia. And he started saying what this new world's going to be like in his new kingdom. He takes 16 wives.

He becomes this big tyrant of this area and finally on that one time one of these spies during that first siege on May 25th left and this spy told the bishop where the weak spots were. So eventually the bishop found their weak areas. So on January 22nd, 1536 during a massive thunderstorm orders from the king that if anybody drinks they'll be punished by death.

Nobody get drunk. They attack the city, climb over the walls and grab the troops and grab van Leyden and everybody is taken and prisoner and finally Munster is rescued from the tyrants of these people and put back into Catholic hands. It's interesting when they take him and a lot of these people are starved to death and all the troops were starved to death.

But in Wittenberg's *The Withering Scorn* I have written here of the voice of Franz van Waldeck noble lords as he spoke to the doomed wretch who stood before him echoes through the centuries. There's this famous quote. So he brings van Leyden in, you know, capture him alive.

He brings van Leyden in and he looks at him all pathetic and everything and this still people tell this story over and over again. And he says to them, bist du ein König? Did I say that right? Say it for me there. Okay, yes.

Are you a king? And then he answers back and he says, und bist du ein Bischof? And are you a bishop? So needless to say, Jan was executed, exhibited around the region in these cages and finally in January of 1536 he was returned to Münster and he and Nipperdeling were tortured to death with burning irons. Jan remained completely silent throughout the torture. Another record I said at the beginning of the tortures.

I read at the beginning of the tortures. Then he did start to scream. Following their death, their bodies were suspended in the town in cages.

At the hands of the bishop, the city was returned to its previous Catholic status. Interestingly enough, one report from the priest says that in his last days, Jan, about the priest, said he stayed with him the entire night and found Jan greatly changed. He greatly regretted his godlessness, his murder, his looting, his lack of discipline, his shameful deeds.

He admitted that he deserved the bitterest possible death ten times over and he renounced all his errors. Jan was thus comforted and consoled the whole night by the priest. So in those cages now, they hung then these cages for these bodies to rot so everybody could see on St. Lambert's Church and still to this day, if you go to Münster, there's those cages.

Still to this day, showing a memory of those people who rotted, their corpses rotted in those cages, still hanging to this day from St. Lambert's Church. But interesting, those three cages, who were in them? One was Bernard Kretsching, another one that became a leader in that area. We didn't talk about him.

Bernard Nipperdoling and of course, Jan van Leeuwen. But Bernard Rothman escaped in the chaos. That original preacher who was there at the beginning, never to be found.

He became like a mythical figure and people said, you know, like people looking for Elvis or something. They saw him here and saw him there and he was said to be part of this and part of that but Bernard Rothman was never found. And so in lies the beginning of what became the Mennonites of Holland and North Germany.

So as we get into tomorrow and we talk about how, as you can see, this is what the Anabaptists had to work with. One picture I didn't show, I thought it was an interesting painting. I assume looking at this, this is Jan van Leeuwen after he has been making himself king.

This is him marrying the widow of Matthias and I'm guessing that this is Nipperdoling with the he became the executionist and Bernard Rothman with his scriptures, he became the preacher and I don't know who this one is. Maybe that's his other wife crying. I don't know.

I don't know. Here's just an artist's interpretation. But this has been used through the centuries.

It's still used to the day of saying that this is what happens when Anabaptist theology gets used. And again, is everybody who baptized infants a Catholic? What do you say? No. Is everybody who baptized adults an Anabaptist? No.

And as I think you can plainly see, the center of the theology that was started by the Swiss brethren, the Moravian brethren, and all those again was this, and it brings us down to here. What's the terrible thing that can happen when we get our view away from Jesus Christ? That somewhere I don't care how their visions or whatever, if you or an angel of heaven should come and preach any other gospel than that which we receive, let them be accursed. We must come back to Jesus.

It must look like Jesus, talk like Jesus, act like Jesus. His way is our way, and if not, this is a kind of chaos. People pick on him, but I wonder how different is this from the French Revolution? How different is this than even some of the atrocities of the American Revolution? How different is this? I would say more the spirit that we see in these people, instead of being the spirit of a people who try to take the Sermon on the Mount literally, I see a people who do not let the words of Jesus Christ reign in them.

He had when Jan van Luyden was sitting on his throne, as he was sitting there, he had two pages, little boys that would hold things. One held a sword for him. The other held a copy of the Old Testament.

And he began to speak and preach. Rothman began to speak and preach on the Old Testament. Rothman began, and he wrote a book in this time called Revenge, sending it out to all the Mennonites saying, you think that there's a time for peace and time for war, and you think that we're supposed to just wait for Christ.

He said, oh no, it's time for us to make these things happen and bring in war and bring in these things. And this was all taking us away from Jesus Christ. And so let's get to Holland now and see if the brave souls who had to fight through this abuse to bring it to Jesus Christ.

And you'll see why Menno Simon's fundamental verse, his model becomes, there is no other foundation can any man lay than to be laid Christ Jesus. And that becomes the foundation of what comes out of this. Let's pray.

Dear Heavenly Father, instead of judging these people Lord, we ask you to look in our own lives where there are perhaps areas that we are not letting Jesus Christ be real. Somehow we've explained it away.

Somehow we got into some theological traps or whatever it may be.

Lord, I pray that the true Lamb of God would be true in our life. That just like John looked in Revelation and saw in Revelation chapter 5 when you showed us that vision in John that he looked and the lion of the tribe of Judah was now a lamb that was slaughtered. And I pray God that we would take that spirit, that lamb-like spirit and realize that all day long we are led as lambs to the slaughter and may allow our Jesus Christ be manifested through us to this world.

Thank you for these warnings that we hear from this testimony and may we truly look like you, Father. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Alright, you're dismissed. Try to read into the Holland there stuff chapters that I gave you and then let's start picking up the pieces in Holland. No, not with the Swiss Brethren.

What they did with all that was happening of Hoffman's travels up north. I didn't read anything out of any of the books that show any contact with the Swiss Brethren. And by now, remember they're pretty much heading toward Moravia.

So, yeah. It would have been... But they linger on. We'll still see them in Holland.

Some of the guys that escaped and that still try to bring in new little kingdoms and still didn't give this whole thing up. Yeah. Yeah.

Yeah, good. Very good. I am.

But yeah, you're right. No, you're exactly right. You're right.

And it's a... I use the term in humility in academics just to explain because it's kind of a hermeneutic of who we are. But you're right. What we could say is, are you a follower of Jesus? But to do that, I don't want to be insulting to people who are struggling with some of these teachings of Christ or whatever.

So I use the term Anabaptist in humility. Not in trying to say we're better than everybody else, but to say, you know, our view of trying to put the words of Jesus into practice has been labeled by everybody else Anabaptist. And so I think it's a good title.

It is... It is a theological principle that kind of helps us distinguish between a Protestant way of thinking, which is theology only in the mind, a Catholic way of thinking, which is sacraments, and a life of... the concept of trying to be literally following Jesus is the Anabaptist concept. We're scorned by all of them. And so I think it's okay to use.

But you bring a very good point, though. In its technical sense, when it gets down to it, we're Christians. Followers of Christ, hopefully.

Yeah. Yeah.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/slwGzkz8tA0.mp4>

Source:

<https://sermonindex.net/speakers/dean-taylor/anabaptist-history-day-15-the-munster-tragedy-and-melchior-hoffman/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net