

Anabaptist History (Day 3) Early Church Problems and Constantine

by Dean Taylor

The sermon explores early church problems, particularly Gnosticism and its implications for Christian theology and faith.

Duration: 1:20:05

Scripture: Matthew 6:19

Topics: "Early Church", "Constantine Influence"

Description

This sermon delves into the historical context of the early church problems, focusing on the influence of figures like Constantine and Augustine. It highlights the shift towards mental faith, the concept of just war, and the impact of theological debates on the church's direction. The importance of staying centered on Jesus amidst theological discussions is emphasized.

Transcript

Yeah, yeah, yeah, good point, yeah, yeah, right, yes, amen, amen, oh, he's got coffee now. Is that for me? Thank you very much. No, no, we don't have espresso, thank you.

Okay, well today what we're going to do is look at some of the early church problems, and we're going to show how going through problems can kind of shape your whole church, and I think we experienced that today. I think the early Anabaptists we're going to see the next following weeks certainly did that, and these classic problems, some of these we see even in things that we deal with today, the Gnostics, and some of the things that Augustine brought in, and some of those, the Donatists, and some of those things. So we're going to look at some of those things as examples to us, and also these same themes get brought up by the Reformers when they're accusing the early Anabaptists and some of those things, so it's good to have a working understanding of the early church in this way.

So if we could again, let's start with prayer. Dear Heavenly Father, we come to you in the name of Jesus Christ again this morning. And dear Father, as we look through some of these mistakes of the early church and different things today, we have a slightly different focus today.

I do pray God that we don't look at them as a judgmental fashion, but be able to see weakness in our own hearts, in our own thinking, in our own mind. And dear God, I pray that through all of this again, Jesus

Christ can be more real to me and to everyone here, and that we can be conformed into your image. So Lord, please be with me today, speak through me today and speak through your word, and let us hear what you said to your church in days gone by and what you want to say to your church today.

It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen.

Okay, at the ending of the last class, we were talking about the Gnostics, or I was going to start talking about the Gnostics. And so if you pick up the last bit of your paper from yesterday, and we're going to go in there, we're going to come into talking about the Gnostics. So if you can get out that paper, your paper from yesterday, the very last two pages where I have who were the Gnostics.

So we just started getting into infant baptism and saw some of those things that started to creep in, some of the way that some of the early Christians struggled with it. One of the biggest struggles the early church had was with the Gnostics. And to some degree, and I don't want to overstate it, I think some of the same temptations that affected the Gnostics can affect us today if we're not careful.

So it's interesting to look at some of the Gnostics' mistakes. Does anybody know where the word Gnostic came from? Okay, excellent. It's from the Greek word gnosis for knowledge.

And so they believed that you were given secret knowledge. And in general, salvation was something that happened in your mind. It was something that just affected your mind because your body was evil, but we'll get to that.

So I have here on your paper, the name Gnosticism derives from the Greek word gnosis, which means knowledge. According to the Gnostics, they possess a mystical knowledge reserved for those with true understanding. That knowledge was the secret key to salvation.

Often times in the early church, you'd have these guys come in, come to church for a while, start saying, hey, you want to come over to my house? We're going to have a little study, you know, and they'd have little studies. And next thing you know up there, you see the little pictures I have there. They would often pretend, depending on which sect they were, would have a secret word or a secret truth revealed.

They said, pass down, and they're going to show you the secret way of knowledge. And with that, you'll have salvation. All those other guys at church, they don't know what they're talking about.

And they started meeting like this. But one of the biggest things that they thought was that the material world, everything physical was evil, was created by a lesser God. Keep reading in there.

All matter is evil or unreal. It's not reality. The human body is a spirit which is trapped within an earthly body.

Therefore they reject the idea that Christ truly had a human body. This is a very important point. He was completely of a spiritual matter.

He did not come in the flesh, according to the Gnostics. They would say that he only appeared to be fully human, but he was not. Since all matter was evil, some tried to live very strict lives, punishing that carnal life, while others said that since it doesn't matter what happens in your body, and they just lived a very worldly carnal life, some of them had the term Epicureans, which just indulged in pleasure.

It's because, hey, it's the heart that matters. So what was done in the body did not matter. I'm going to talk a little bit more on this next page.

Another one that came up in the early church was Marcion. Marcion was kind of Gnostic, but you couldn't really call him formally a Gnostic. He was a little bit different.

Marcion was a teacher who, being convinced that the world was evil, also thought so, came to the conclusion that the creator of this world was a lesser and evil God. He reasoned that the God of the Old Testament was an evil being, but the God of the New Testament, the Father, was a loving God. Marcion did not believe that Jesus was born of Mary, another important point, since that would make Jesus part of the old world.

In the end, he believed that there would be no judgment. Universal salvation would be given to all because Jesus would forgive everyone. He was one of the first to produce lists of scriptures that supported his doctrines.

For the most part, Marcion only liked Luke and the letters of Paul. Because of his errors, the church started to make orthodox lists of scriptures and also began to develop creeds. So these debates that they got into, these discussions that they got into, it shaped who the church was in many ways, and in some good ways and some bad ways.

The scriptures tell us that God allows heresies to test the church. We're very early. As a matter of fact, I'm going to show you with the Gnostics, even Apostle Paul is writing about it, and with Marcion in the 100s as well.

Very early. I have the question number 13 there on the last page. What effect do you think these types of heresies had on early Christian theology? Could this type of debate frame the essence of Christianity in the wrong outlook? Here's what I mean by that.

Some guy comes in your church and he says, hey, I think that Jesus just came in the spirit, not real. He wasn't really flesh. Well, can anybody think of a scripture that speaks of that? I'll show you one.

Now turn to the next page. I mean, turn to the next packet. See, when we're not careful, when we get into debate, what we're going to see the theme all the way through today, when you get into a debate, and I think it's important sometimes.

Somebody brings us heresies. It's important for us to study theology. It's important for us to understand truth, because I think the truth is absolute.

It's the scriptures and there's only one truth. But the problem is we have to be very careful. When we get into a debate, the frame doesn't make that argument being the essence of Christianity, and that's the mistake we see all through the day today, and that's the mistake we see repeatedly.

It even happens in our own churches. Somebody starts to disagree with something. You say, no, that's wrong.

This is right. But we don't want to frame that as being Christianity, and that's what I'm afraid we're about to see today happen in the early church. Okay, starting to pack it up today.

Yep. Okay, good. Can I get to that here a little bit? That's excellent.

That's good. Let's talk about that. That's beautiful.

So you're asking the question, so where is the point in that? And here is the point that I like to keep going to, is the center has to be Jesus, and the real Jesus, not a fake Jesus, not a heresy Jesus. I mean, one of the things with Jeroboam in the Old Testament, they had all the different practices of Judaism and things like that with the northern tribes and all that, but the fact is that in the center of their worship, they worshiped a cow. In the same way, if we have a wrong understanding of Christ, it is serious.

The catch in this is that when somebody is outside of this and we correct them, okay, I believe this, it's all of Christ that is the essence of Christianity. This does need to be corrected, but we do ourselves a big disfavor if then we move the target to that, and that's what we're going to see today. It does need to be dealt with, it does, but we must always come back now, what did Jesus want us to do? How did Jesus want us to live? How am I conformed into the image of Jesus Christ? And we're going to see, so in other words, what we're going to see in what we're coming up with the debates that happen to the later church, when you're correcting someone's theology about Christ, and so because he's wrong, you're cutting his head off, you've somehow moved the target the wrong way, and that's what we're going to see today.

But they do have to be dealt with. Okay, where do they come from, the Gnostics? Gnostics, I believe they came from the story of Simon Magus in Acts chapter 8. Scholars today would argue that, but the early church were very, very clear on it. They believed that Simon later then, when he was rebuked by Peter, got offended or whatever, and ran off and started this whole process.

And when you do start studying Gnosticism and type of things like that, you see there was elements of Gnosticism even pre-Christian amongst the Jews. As a matter of fact, you know in Genesis, if you ever catch there, that in Genesis 1 and going into Genesis 2, it repeats the creation story of man twice. Well, one he mentions the making of the earth, the other it doesn't.

Well, so the Gnostics said, see, there's two types of people, spiritual people and carnal people. So in essence, if you wouldn't get it, if you were given the secret code and you didn't get it, they might say, well, you were predestined to be one of the carnal people. You'll just be destroyed with the earth.

But we get to go on into heaven. Now, here's something interesting about the Gnostics. The Gnostics had a bad habit of changing the obvious meanings of the scripture and turning what is being said into something completely different.

In other words, if a scripture was talking about, you know, I don't know, something very practical, loving your enemies or something, they might turn it into some mystical meaning. Okay? And here's an interesting quote from Irenaeus. He says, running around the year 150, he again was the Bishop of Lyons in France.

The Gnostics, he says, they disregard the order of the connection of scriptures, just as if one, when a beautiful image of a king has been constructed out of precious jewels, should this take the likeness of a man all to pieces, he should then rearrange the gems and so fit it together to make them into a form of a dog or a fox. So in other words, you have a gem of a beautiful king and you start taking away the gem, I mean the sculpture of a king, you start taking away the gems and then you build a fox or a dog and should then maintain and declare that this was the beautiful image of the king. He's just saying, you're taking scriptures and you're pulling them out here, you're taking them out there, and they're not meaning the plain language of what the scripture is about.

And that's a warning. It's a warning that goes on today. Here's someone here writing about the Gnostics, gave just a brief summary of their practices here.

Their doctrine of creation, the material world is bad, the product of an inferior deity or entity. In the doctrine of the fall, man's fundamental problem is not that he is a sinner, but that he is material, he's just made of the earth and needs to escape that. In the doctrine of Christ, they believe that Jesus merely appeared to have a material body and this is known as docetism, taken from the Greek word as a phantom or appears to be there.

The human and physical element of the person of Christ is a deceptive appearance. In the doctrine of salvation, they believe that salvation lies in escaping from the material world to a realm of pure spirit. This is attained through private gnosis, knowledge offered by Jesus, a knowledge or a gnosis that awakens a divine spark within the subject.

You know, I don't know how many people you hear today talking about just their spirits with God, and they talk about just their spirit going to heaven. The early church was very clear that it is a bodily resurrection that we appear before Christ. It's not just a spirit being escaped from the body.

And it was because of some of these arguments that that was hammered out. In the doctrine of the church, the people of God are the enlightened elite who have obtained the gnosis necessary for salvation. In the doctrine of the world, what happens in the world is of no importance.

The doctrine of revelation, true revelation comes through a secret oral tradition handed down by the apostles in contrast to the open, popular and public tradition of the church. And so, some of these things that we see here, I think we need to ponder. And the point that I'm even bringing them out is, do we see any of those creeping into the church today? Do we see any? This one person I found, and I think he's pressing it a little far.

Look at his summary here in the point three. My question, is there some comparison of Gnosticism to modern American Evangelicalism? All right, let's ask that question. Is there a comparison of Gnosticism to modern American Evangelicalism? This guy, and I think again, I would say that he's pressing it a little far.

Gnostic myth one, Christianity isn't a religion, it's a relationship. In other words, it has no part of a practical day of life, that's the way that he's using the word religion there. It's just this interpersonal relationship with my God.

Number two, salvation means going to heaven when you die. That's what it means to be saved. It has nothing to do with establishing a kingdom on earth.

Number three, the material world isn't important. Number four, organized religion is bad. That's common today.

Jesus' kingdom has no use for this world. Knowledge saves. And number seven, God doesn't work through physical things.

Knowledge saves. You know, that whole point, I think, is the biggest risk that I think we have. Maybe we inherit it from the Greeks, maybe we inherit it from the whole Greek way of thinking, but there's some big problem when we separate our thinking from the totality of who we are, and so that's the Gnostic trap, that salvation becomes a, aha, I got it, oh, I understand that now.

John Wesley, speaking of understanding just the facts of Christ and the atonement of Christ in his first sermon on faith, calls that demonic faith. Quoting from James, he says, the demons believe these things. But what do the demons do? Entremble, entremble.

And so this kind of a faith, as John Wesley rightly said, is a demonic faith. It's just a mental faith. The early Christians, and I believe Jesus gives it to us, faith is something that incorporates every bit of you.

See, I have no problem with looking at Romans and looking at the idea that faith without works, you know, excuse me, that we are justified by faith. I don't even problem here, say, by faith alone. And Michael Sattler used that term in calling, we're saved by faith alone.

When it's understood in the proper way, it's the frame that moves that makes it wrong. When you believe that faith equals a mental ascent, then it doesn't make sense. And suddenly James and Romans are conflicting when James says faith without works is dead.

Well, then Paul just said faith saves you alone. But if you see that as a totality of who you are, following Christ completely with faith, there's no contradiction in the scriptures. What are your thoughts on that? Have you pondered that before? Faith, is it just a mental thing? Is it every part of your being? That's an essential question, and the Gnostic posed that question early.

So here, okay. Yeah, there's a, you're right, the concept of the preaching of the gospel and the repentance in response to that is the entirety of the power of the gospel being preached. There is something that happens powerfully when the gospel is being preached and the acceptance of the person is received.

The difference is it's not a mental acceptance. It's an acceptance that involves every bit of your being. In my background, you could accept it mentally, but really your life didn't have any thought of it.

So yeah, you still have to receive it in the mind, but nevertheless, your mind is not separated from you in some kind of a trapped person within a physical body, which would be the Gnostic mistake there. If you have your Bibles, turn to 1 John 4, 1 through 3. We're going to see John dealing with this error early on. In 1 John 4, 1 through 3, it seems that he's talking about Gnostics.

He has this to say, Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world. So already in the early church, there's false prophets and false teachers in the church, or in the world, not in the church. They're trying to get into the church.

Hereby know ye the spirit of God. Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God. And every spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God.

And this is the spirit of Antichrist. Whereof ye have heard that it should come, and even now already is in the world. Okay, so there was a group of people that said Jesus really didn't come in the flesh, and these were the Gnostics.

Now, but here's the question that I have here in number 5 of this paper. Can you see how even a good frame, an inspired frame here, could be used in the wrong way to turn Christianity away from its original purpose? You're dealing with an heresy locally in the church, but remember, scriptures have context. John is speaking about this particular thing, but how could we use this frame in a wrong way? Let me throw it out to you.

He said that everyone that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God. And everyone who does not confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God. So, how could this frame be used in the wrong way? So let's say, okay, let's go to the streets of, I don't know, Harlem or something, and let's talk to somebody and they say, okay, say this.

I want you to repeat after me that I believe that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. And so they say it. And so I say, okay, well then you're a Christian, you're of God.

You see what I mean? It's a frame that is an argument that needed to be made, but it could turn the whole thing away from the essence of what Christianity is all about. And that's what happens time and time again. Are you catching what I'm saying here? It's, he's dealing with a particular thing, but if we read it now, read it thinking how somebody could read it in the wrong way.

Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God. And every spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. So he's not saying that if you can get a person to say this, then he's a Christian.

He's dealing with a real life practical problem in the church. I was talking to a missionary once and he was, um, he was down in Central America. And he said there was this really big, muscly missionary down there who used to grab, when they meet somebody, they would, they would squeeze their hand and they would not let him go until they would say, say Jesus is Lord.

And so, what? Say Jesus is Lord. Okay. And then when they finally say it, he'd say, Hey, everyone who confesses Jesus Lord is saved.

Who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. And then he was actually riding home as missionary supporters telling about how many people he got saved. And so again, Paul speaking of a real practical thing that if we call upon the name of the Lord, there's salvation in any of our temptations in any of our ways.

But if we take things wrong and move the frame away from the totality of Christ, it messes up everything. A real apologetic that needed to be done messes up if we lose our perspective. And that's why over and over again, we must come back to Jesus.

We must come back to Christ. Any thoughts? I'm going to leave the Gnostic section here real quick. Any thoughts or comments on that? Any, uh, American evangelicalism and how this salvation by Gnosis, nothing in my flesh matters.

You see how some of these can be temptations that, uh, vex the church still to the day. It's something we have to be very concerned about. All right, let's go to the next group that we should learn something about.

And they were the Donatist. All right. The Donatists were Christians from North Africa.

Uh, and Tertullian and Cyprian were actually some of the most famous ones from, from this area. So if you think of North Africa, I have a little map there that's, you can't see the whole thing. It says Mediterranean.

Um, and the Northern section there where we had Alexandria and all that area there was actually a very popular place of radical Christianity, uh, in the early church. And David Bursell summarizes this area. He says, North Africa, Christians tended to be uncompromising, ready to suffer imprisonment and martyrdom

and unafraid to take a stand against the rest of the church when it felt that its side was right.

Um, during the last 40 years of the third century, approximately 260 to 300, the church enjoyed an unprecedented time of peace. There were sporadic local persecution, but no empire wide persecution. And this seemed like a blessing.

You know, sometimes we think of the early church and we think of the entire 300 years as being constantly living in persecution. And we think of the early Anabaptists the same way, but it wasn't like that. You would get, um, some king or something that would happen.

Let's say a plague would happen or a, or they would take them, uh, you know, some army would take and they would blame the Christians. Well, it's the Christian's fault that this is happening. So they would then start to persecute them.

Well, the, uh, the same thing happened in the early Anabaptists that when something began to happen, even the bubonic plague, they would then blame the Anabaptists. And so a persecution would rise up. But then, you know, the emperor would get busy with something else or, you know, something else would happen or the, and the, and the, um, the persecution would die down.

And this is during that time when it died down quickly, the church grows lax. We're going to see that in, uh, the Emmental Valley, uh, when the Mennonites started progressing up there, which gave rise to the Amish. We're going to see that, um, in any time in our history, it seems that when things grow lax, we're going to see that in Holland when things grew lax.

And maybe we see that in America when things grow lax, how we began to grow coal. All right. Uh, next page.

However, the church from, uh, was beginning to lose its first love and as well as its separation from the world. Discipline became weak, particularly in Rome and in Rome that gave group to a new movement called the Novationists, um, who wanted to stand for, um, a more conservative Christianity. Even in Carthage, known for its rigorous, uncompromising Christianity, many of the church leaders had become quite lax.

Okay. And then it happened. And we're going to talk about it here a little bit more than this when I talk about Constantine, but then it happened.

Then suddenly the piece of 40 years ended catching most Christians off guard. So you had an entire generation growing up in a lax church. The years 303 to 304 emperor Diocletian initiated the most sweeping persecution the church has ever experienced.

And in this, uh, it seems like as people talk to historians talk about this, this was the worst persecution the church had ever had. And now he had been growing at this time. Tertullian's giving challenges and origin is giving challenges.

Our Christians are everywhere. They're the servants in your palace. We've, you know, we've began to take over the world in this nonviolent, this loving way that the Christians have began to be everywhere.

So when the, when the emperors began to see this challenge, they wanted to crack down. Okay. So, um, Christian prayer houses everywhere were burned down.

Soldiers dragged men and women into prison and tortured them in every kind of hideous torment and twisted minds could think of. And church leaders, watch this. Now we're ordered to hand over the Christian scriptures to be burned.

Okay. And this was the rub. Okay.

So you're the Bishop of Alexandria and the, the, uh, the, the police come in and they say, hand me your scriptures. And they had like these ancient scriptures that were handwritten, handed down from the apostles and all that. And then 40 years they said, well, I guess we do have other copies.

And many of them handed them over to the, to the, uh, people to avoid persecution. This is where we get our word traders from. It's from a Latin word that means to be handed over.

And these bishops and many of these leaders to, to avoid persecution, handed over the gospels, handed over the teachings that they had and compromised the faith and took a pinch of incense and threw it into the fire and said something to the effect of Caesar as Lord or something like that. Well, not everybody in North Africa felt that was a good idea. And some of the ministers and some of the bishops even stayed strong and, and then they went to prison for it, were persecuted, were killed for it.

But then what do you do now when the persecution's all over? Do you let bygones be bygones? What do you, what do you do with the bishops now? Uh, now you're out of jail, the persecution's over and there you are sitting in your church and this bishop handed over the gospels to the, to the, uh, to the state to avoid persecution. Well, they were furious about it and said, I'm sorry, this is not Christianity. And they quoted the scriptures, um, about, uh, uh, you know, if you confess before men, then God will confess you before, Jesus will confess you before the father.

But if you are ashamed before men, he's ashamed before your father. And they did it loud, no repentance from these bishops. So what do you think? Too strong? Okay.

What do you do with it? Do they stay bishops? Do you excommunicate them? What do you do when you get out of prison? What do you do? Let me ask you. Okay. That definitely shouldn't be leaders.

Key point. Anybody else think talking about the bishops that got thrown into, uh, did not get thrown into jail for turning over their, um, scriptures and the other ones, um, got out of prison. Anybody else, anybody think they should just been completely forgiven? You know, make sure the repentance was sure and then allow them to be ministers.

Okay. The Donatist agreed with you, but to them, they had it by this time, had a very kind of a rigorous understanding of who could do the baptizing, who could do the ordaining and who could do the communion. So you end up with a little bit of a different problem.

Oh, so now what do you do? That Bishop that did all that while I was in prison, baptized a hundred people. If he's apostate, are those people baptized? What do you think? An apostate man baptizes people. Is he baptized? Very good.

They're being, they're making their profession before Christ. Anybody else? There was a story in Russia where a KGB, Rick, uh, was hiding in the Greek Orthodox, worked as all the way up, became priest, spent his whole time in, in Russia as this parish priest. And at the end of his, when he was about to retire from the KGB, he came to his church and he said, the whole time I've been faking, I've been just doing this to

spy on you and all your baptisms and all your sacraments are in vain and walked off.

It's a serious question. And they struggled with it. So the Donatist said, no, it's not valid.

And that word valid, valid sacraments became to be the huge rub of what these people were about. And they said, I'm sorry, all those people are not baptized. All that you can't ordain people and you can't baptize people and you can't give communion.

And so you ended up then of course with a split, a huge split in the church of the Donatist. And this was the North African area. These people lasted a long time and we're going to see the church now persecuting them.

Unfortunately, this debate lasted all along and all this turmoil in Africa all along until a little young boy named Muhammad finally saw what Christianity was really about during all this war and turmoil hundreds of years later. But, so that was their struggle. That was the crisis they were dealing with.

So therefore all his orders, which is the word they used for how he could ordain someone, was not valid. Everything he did. So now the bishops that were faithful, you'll now ordain people.

You'll baptize people. We'll reordain anybody who wants to come over from here. And they started this whole separate church thing there.

And okay, we'll pick them up a little bit when we get back to Constantine and Augustine. So what happens when you get your eyes off the plain words of the message of Jesus and put it, I messed up there, and put it on theology? All right, Arius and the big Trinity debate. The changing of the frame.

We're entering now into a, from now into the 700s, a serious ongoing debate on spelling out the precise theology of the Trinity. In the early church, their view of the Trinity, and it's beautiful, I still use this to today. They said they likened the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit to the Son.

Okay? And I still think this is the best explanation of the Trinity. The Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, they use the analogy, I think it was Irenaeus that used this analogy, of the Son. And what they said was that the Father, they represented as the Son itself.

Jesus Christ proceeded from the Father, as like the rays of the Son, and the heat that you feel from the Son, they would represent to the Holy Spirit. But notice now, can you separate any of these things? You can't separate the rays from the Son itself, or the heat from the Son. It all flows from the same essence.

It all comes from, it proceeds from the same thing, but yet they are separate and distinct things. And the early church used that, and thought that was a good enough explanation. Well, some people didn't.

Now in the second century, never felt having a complete understanding that Trinity was one of the essentials of the faith. And that's why their statement of, simply said, I believe in the one, only one God Almighty, the creator of the universe, and his Son, Jesus Christ. But by the fourth century, the church was considerably different, this is the 300s, from the second century church.

By the fourth century, the church was filled with amateur theologians, who thought they needed to nail down matters that are not explicit in scripture. To this end, we enter a person called Alexander the Bishop of Alexandria. He called together the elders of a city to put forth a question about the beginning of the Son and his relationship to the Father.

So this Alex of Alexandria, the bishop there, wanted to have this big theological discussion to say, I want to nail down, you can imagine they're here and they're like a little debate class like this, or excuse me, a theology class, and they want to debate, well, what does it mean he comes from God? I mean, so was there a time when he was not, or was there a time that he was? And this Alexander began to make all these theories. Well, there was another one sitting in his class, a person who became very famous in history. We don't really know Alexander the Alexandria from Alexandria, but we know this next guy.

From the views Alexander expressed during his questioning, one of the elders named Arius, that's a name to know, Arius, to be a good name for a test question, became convinced that Alexander held an unorthodox view of the Father and the Son. It seemed to Arius that Alexander held the position that it often caused civilianism or modalism. He thought, well, you're basically, what people would complain today is oneness theology.

Anybody know oneness, people who believe just, yeah, you're basically, it's all the same, it's Jesus in the form of the Father, Jesus in the form of the Son, and Jesus in the form of the Spirit, just change different modes. And he didn't like that. It's the view, okay, so Arius quickly contradicted what Alexander was teaching on the subject, and the two men got into a big debate.

So imagine this huge discussion there in Alexandria, all these ministers are having a big ministers meeting, I don't know if you can imagine it, and all of a sudden, I can imagine it, all of a sudden, they start getting into this big heated debate over this fine point of theology. Okay, exactly, now what are you saying this, and they wanted to be able to nail it down completely. So the other elders joined one side or the other, and soon what had become a personal controversy engulfed the entire Christian population of Alexandria.

From there, it spilled over to the other churches. I mean, this went viral. Some guy said, can you believe he's saying that? And Arius was a genius, I think.

He was also one of the first one, he actually even started getting little songs together. He would get little groups of girls singing, and when they would have meetings to discuss it, they would sing there his theology with little rhymes and little praise songs with his theology attached to it, and he was very good with the way he would propagate his belief there. Arius, though, went too far.

Dave Rousseau uses this analogy called Newton's law of, for every action, there's an opposite and equal reaction, and so as the pendulum swung this way, perhaps with modalism, if that's what Alexandria was saying, Arius swung over here and said, no, there was a time when Jesus was not, and he was created, and that became a serious problem. So there was a time in history, although a brief microsecond, there was the father and he created the son, and that was, of course, a problem for them. Arius, but he was still of God, he was still a deity, he would believe that, and not quite what the Jehovah's Witnesses would say today, but close.

I think what the Jehovah's say today is one notch worse than this, but nevertheless, this is where he was going with this little debate here. Okay, Arius was so determined to contradict the oneness error that he swung way too far. Okay, question eight here.

So what do you do here? You're about to start going down this road. You need to discuss these things, but we're getting deep into these areas. Did anyone just say drop it? Here, I'm going to go into this next section.

Constantine, I'll get to him, but I'll go ahead a little bit. Constantine was convinced that Christianity was one of the true religion, and he wanted to advance his cause. However, he was chagrined, this is from David Rousseau's Theologian, Please Set Down, when he learned that as a result of his granting Christian religious freedom, they were now fighting among themselves.

So he conferred with one of the most respected bishops of the church, Hosius of Spain. So Constantine went to this bishop and said, okay, how are we going to hammer this out? Hosius explained to Constantine the nature of the controversy, and the solution he recommended was straightforward. Tell both sides simply to drop it.

That was the advice from the bishop. Drop the matter. Remember that word I read from the first day when the Swiss brethren was there in Bern debating with the reformers over these fine points of theology, and they said, these things are not revealed to us in scripture.

This is the kind of spirit still in this bishop who wanted to stop this debate before it got too bloody with everything. So Constantine wrote a letter addressed to Alexander and Arius, and Hosius traveled to Egypt to personally deliver the letter and to encourage the two men to follow the advice of it. And here is that letter.

I'm going to read it to you. All right. What then is our advice? It is this.

That it was wrong in the first instance to propose such questions as these, or to reply to them when propounded, for those points of discussion are not required by the authority of any law. Rather, they are suggested by the contentious spirit that is fostered by misuse free time. Even though they may be intended merely as an intellectual exercise, they certainly should be confined to the religion of our own thoughts and not hastily produced in the popular assemblies, nor unadvisedly entrusted to the general ear.

For how very few are there who are able either to accurately comprehend or to adequately explain subjects so sublime and obscure in this nature. That was the voice of wisdom speaking. Just drop it and focus on Christ.

Unfortunately, that's not what happened. You know, it's interesting. It's funny, people who really think that these types of fine points are very important.

I remember early on when I was there in Texas with David Briseau, and we had a teacher come in that was over our church at the time, and he was really wanting us to understand the councils and understand how all these Trinitarian exactness need to be spelled out. He was giving us one point of how the two natures of God, are they intertwined, or are they mixed together? I know he's a fully divine and fully human, but how are they mixed together? He gave then his explanation. So after I was a young man, after I was finished, I said to David, I said, hey, so what did you think of that? He said, he just kept laughing.

He said, he completely, he gave a perfect definition of what has been condemned as a heresy of the monotheists who believed it was all mixed together. So even people who think this is very important, it's like we use it as some sort of an intimidation factor to make other people think that I'm really important. These fine points, this one bishop at least argued, was going too far.

So, but they did keep going. We're going to pick that debate up in just a second. So who was this Constantine that meddled into this business? Alright, so this is one of the important marks of this thing.

So I'm going to have you, by suggestion of Brother Lyndon here, let's all take a three minute break, and then we'll come back and we're going to hit Constantine, alright? Three minute break off you then. Alright, I still prefer this explanation of the Trinity versus like people give the egg or the ice and that type of thing. I don't like those as much, like for instance when the Muslims came over from Saudi Arabia, I should say this when Steve's here, it was at his house that we had it.

People say that one of the first questions they have is, well tell us about the Trinity. And I think we get ourselves in trouble a lot of times, but I actually still keep to this early Christian explanation. I think it's a good explanation.

What's that? I don't like the concept of, it doesn't have the view of the same essence. A shell and a yoke, they're too different in my mind. Although I guess you could medically or scientifically say they derive from the same essence, but this gives more of a, it's all existing from the same essence and one flows from the other and you can't separate one from the other.

You could take a shell off an egg, but you can't take a ray off the sun, or you can't take the heat off a ray. It all comes from the same, yeah. And I guess that was a rub of areas, is that the idea of modalism.

They did get into the idea that it was different persons. So the one thing is, is this, the heat is not the ray, and the ray is not the sun. They are different persons of the Trinity.

And so it's not that this turned into this and this turned into that. The ray is distinct from the sun, and the heat is distinct from the ray. Maybe we should just drop it.

All right. All right, Constantine. All right.

Where did Constantine come from? You know, if there is a mark in the church that you have to come to in the early Anabaptists, everybody talks about is what Constantine's effect on the church was. I mean, even like I say, the early Antonicene fathers are everything before Nicaea or after Nicaea. And whether you're a Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Baptist, Jehovah's Witness, or whatever, everybody believes that Constantine had a huge effect on the church, whether you believe that was good or whether you believe it was bad.

Okay. So where did this guy named Constantine come from? I took this from my book. Near the end of the third century, the church was experiencing a bit of relief of persecution, and Christianity was gaining ground, experiencing widespread conversions, reaching even into the emperor's own family.

For a moment, it seemed safe to be a Christian. For the Christians, skipping down, however, the peace was very brief, as we talked about just before. At the times of testing soon returned in AD 295, Galerius, thank you very much, catch this point here.

This is what led to that Diocletian persecution. In 295, Galerius, one of Diocletian's four new governing emperors, oh excuse me, let me back that up, I'm sorry. Okay, Diocletian had become emperor, and this is an important point.

Diocletian had become emperor, and gifted with a mind for strategy and logistics, he reorganized the Roman Empire into four sections. Each ran by a separate governing emperor, with himself as the head position. For a while, his plans brought in greater Roman peace and prosperity, but not long.

In AD 295, Galerius, one of Diocletian's four new governing emperors, saw to it that a group of Christians would be executed, for guess why? They refused to join the army. He didn't like that. Okay, and then another group of new converts soon followed him, condemned the death for trying to leave the army.

Hmm, I don't like this. Galerius came against the church in his geographical area. Eventually he was influential in convincing Diocletian that the Christians could not be trusted to be loyal to any part of the empire, and therefore should be looked at as a threat.

The Christians are a threat to the state. Killed them, and he convinced them, and so they did. In AD 303, this influence, led by empire-wide edicts, pronounced against the spread of practice of Christianity, with these new laws in place, also with some natural catastrophes, which were conveniently blamed on the Christians, the flames of persecution went up very high.

All right, so all across the empire, the scenes have multiplied of courageous, unmovable Christians who refused to cast a pinch of incense into a flickering flame of homage to an idol. That's one thing about this thing, you know, it really would have been kind of easy. We think of it as always in dramatic scenes, but you know, you line up in line, you're there at the marketplace, and okay, your name, okay, just throw the pinch of incense and go on, here's your certificate.

And no one knew. Maybe nobody was even looking, and you could go on, live a good life, your family didn't have to be persecuted, and that little pinch, you get your certificate to prove that you did in some cases, and you go on. And that subtle little compromise was all they were really asking.

The early church said, no, Jesus is Lord, not Caesar. All right, so many heroes of the church emerged during this time, and we already talked about the, although some gave in. In AD 303, 304, Diocletian became sick, and by AD 305, Galerius took over his section of the empire, gaining for himself the leading Augustus position, the worshiped one.

During this time, civil wars battered the kingdom back and forth. As you can imagine, this quadrilateral of these four empires that thought would bring in extra peace just made things worse and worse and worse. Actually, historians say that Galerius then came down with a strange disease, and he was covered with ulcers and a, quote, innumerable swarm of devouring insects, and he died an ugly, disgusting death.

And the early church looked at that and goes, uh-huh. Mess with us is what happens. That's what they did.

All right, so now that the empire's in turmoil, this persecution of the Christians was at its all-time high. These Donatus bishops were giving in, some were coming out, and then Constantine to the rescue. Onto this tempestuous scene of momentary prosperity, political chaos, and severe religious persecution entered the opportunistic young ruler, Constantine.

Seizing on the chaotic nature of the empire, Constantine began to design a plan that would allow him to have the empire as his sole possession. So here's what he did. In AD 312, Constantine put his desires into action in an attack on the unsuspecting armies of Rome.

Constantine led 98,000 soldiers from Gaul, present-day France, Belgium, and western Switzerland, which would have been part of where, maybe the Tyrolean area, where some of the Anabaptists would have come centuries later, across the Swiss Alps and marched into the capital city to take over Rome. Impressive. Surprise attack on your own guys, you know.

But then, on his way, something happened. Something very historical happened. According to ancient historian Eusebius, on the day, the very day before the battle to take Rome, Constantine reported that he and his men looked into the sky and saw a vision of a shining cross resting above the sun.

Over the cross were these words, by this sign. Another ancient historian explained that what that cross actually looked like was this, Chi and Ro, the words for Jesus Christ. And this became, and still is today, considered the Constantine Cross.

And some historians say it was a regular cross, some ancient historians say this is what it looked like. I don't know whether it happened or not. Okay, the next day it has appeared that Constantine, when he went to bed that night, awoke in a terror by an angel.

And this angel said to him, Hach Vinci, which translated mean, by this sign, conquer. By the name of Jesus Christ, conquer Rome. Astonishingly, Eusebius claims that this angel was Jesus Christ himself, appearing to Constantine and telling him to take Rome.

It is reported that Constantine then quickly added, I don't know how he did this, went and got some kind of paint or something, he added this Chi Ro to the shields of all his men. And you can imagine that morning he's getting up and he's saying, okay, we're going to do battle. What are you doing? And so he put this on all their shields, the soldiers.

After all this supposedly supernatural events, Constantine met the Roman army led by Emperor Maxentius at the Melvian Bridge. Now, the army there, there's a water around Rome, and there was this bridge, historically named the Melvian Bridge, and there was this huge bridge that the armies were then coming across. And here comes Constantine with his cross and he's coming over.

And then, as they took this, unbelievably, the emperor himself broke through and crashed into the water and died. Wow. The Roman army, of course, was scared to death.

Constantine comes in hardly any trouble with his 98,000 soldiers and takes over Rome in the name of Christ. And the world is changed. And the history of the church is changed.

Eusebius records that after Constantine took the city, Eusebius knew Constantine personally, it was disgusting how much he loved him, he ordered that the statue of himself be erected. I want now a statue of me to be erected. And the statue displayed the Cairo symbol in his right hand with the inscription beneath, they wrote beneath it, by this saving sign, the true token of bravery, I have delivered your city from the yoke of the tyrant.

So what was the church's response to this? I mean, there were Christians living in Rome and they saw all this happening and this guy now suddenly coming in and claiming all this stuff to be done in Christ's name. It's disappointing. Now, the church that got to this time were already in a lot of trouble.

You know, they are already having, the kind of sin is like if you read the Council of Elvira, which was happening early on before this time, the kind of stuff that they were having to debate was pretty disgusting already before this time. The church was weak. Once the emperor became supportive of Christianity, people started coming into the church in droves.

Christianity was becoming more and more publicly acceptable everywhere. Constantine began rebuilding churches, giving state salaries and tax exemptions to ministers, freeing Christian slaves and even giving

money and new clothes to those who would convert to Christianity. Mass baptisms were conducted all over the empire and in just a matter of years, literally hundreds of thousands of people came into the church.

What was the response from the leaders? Instead of seeing these favors as a danger, it's disappointing to see the response of the church. To be honest, people always say, oh, this evil man Constantine. I don't blame Constantine.

I blame the church's response to Constantine that made these changes. What did he know of Christianity? Let's read what Eusebius' response to him. He said this, surely it must be seen to all who duly regard these facts, what just happened, that a new and fresh air of existence has begun to appear and a light hitherto unknown suddenly to dawn from the midst of the darkness of the human race and all must confess that these things were entirely the work of God who raised up this pious emperor to withstand the multitude of the ungodly.

Yuck. The more the church accepted these gifts, the faster the gifts came. Some ministers even were able to dine on the big couches and referring to one of these, Eusebius again boasted of these big suppers.

Now we bring the bishops and we'll bring them down to the old castle here and let's have them for dinner. Bring bishops so and so. Now listen to the way Eusebius explains some of these big festivals that they had.

On this occasion public festivals were celebrated by the people of the provinces everywhere. But the emperor himself invited and feasted with those ministers of God whom he reconciled and thus offered as it were through them a suitable sacrifice to God by giving all the stuff to the bishops. Not one of the bishops was lacking at the imperial banquet.

The circumstances of which were splendid beyond description. Detachments of the bodyguards and other troops surrounding the entrance of the palace was withdrawn swords and through the midst of these the men of God proceeded without fear into the innermost imperial apartments in which some were the emperor's own companions at the table while others reclined on couches arranged on either side. One might have thought that a picture of Christ's kingdom was thus shadowed forth in a dream rather than a reality.

That was the response of the church elders to Constantine's pride with his swords but then give him a few tax exemptions, give him a few clothes, give him a few banquets and suddenly, hey, you know, you're not so bad. And I want you to mind something here. Constantine was never even baptized into his dying day.

Never even baptized. All right. What was Constantine's response to his conversion? I wrote in here, but while the bishops and church leaders were feasting on the imperial court Constantine was busy restructuring the church and the world.

You see, Constantine was still all through this time head of the pagan religion of Apollo, the sun god. In 308 he donated large gifts to the temple of the sun to obtain a certain position called the pontificus maximus. This made him head of both the spiritual and the physical world of his people.

Even by the year 320, they were still, even in 320, years after this, they were still having coins that had the Cairo on one side and the sun god on the other there in Rome. Now, so as he goes on to all this, and even after his death, all the way through his life, all the way to his death, to show you what kind of attitude was

still in Rome, the senate, led by his children, still wanted to declare him a new pagan god. They still did.

Interestingly enough, in the Greek Orthodox calendar, you could pray to Constantine today, or one of the days that he has, as a saint. All right, what did he get better over time? In spite of the church's enthusiastic blessing, he ended up killing his, his, any of the rivals. See, in those days, you know, like during the time of kings, any one of your own children make a serious rival to your throne.

So, he killed them. And many of the people that were his rivals, once his, his, his own son, Crispus, he had put to death because of the jealousy that he had. And one of his, and one of his family loyalties, Constantine then made a solemn vow to his sister, Constance, that he would spare the life of Licinius, her husband, after the invasion of his province.

And in the very year 325, the very year that we have the, the Nicene Creed done, after he solemnly vowed not to kill this man, he had him put to death. All right, number 11 here. How did the church respond to the fact that Constantine was a king? Once persecution decreased and comforts increased, the church quickly digressed into substantial parties and divisions, disgracing herself through heated religious debates.

When Constantine noticed these divisions, he made it his business to call for a worldwide council of churches to decide various issues. So, that, what we talked about a little bit ago with the, with Arius, he says, I'm going to settle this. I don't like this division amongst the church.

I'm going to get you guys together. So, it was Constantine that said, we're going to settle this theological debate. All right.

And much more than Christology was discussed there. Following the pattern of his Roman predecessor, Diocletian, who had, remember how he geographically divided the Roman Empire, constantly divided the church into four major geographic areas. He called them, overseeing bishops, a patriarch, or a metropolitan.

In each of these four areas, local leaders or bishops now submit their judgments and decisions to these four metropolitan areas. So, this pagan king now is appointing archbishops, head bishops over provinces, and if you're a local parish minister or whatever, you now submit to these appointments from Constantine. Scary.

And then, in addition to these specific definitions and doctrinal formulas were drawn up with dogmatic resolves. Constantine wrote an edict of several of the nonconformists and separatists calling them haters of truth. He banished their ministers from office, demanded excommunications, and forbade the nonconformist churches to meet in public or even in private houses.

If you didn't agree to his theology, you are out. Now, was there anything left? It was interesting, I gave this to you in a fact here, just to show you how some of the ancient Christianity still existed. In number 12 there, I have actually here a canon from the Council of Nicaea, and it's amazing these two worlds now colliding together that this still made it as a dogmatic canon in the Council of Nicaea, and I gave it to you.

Canon 12 of Nicaea states, my question is, was there anything left of early Christianity after the Council of Nicaea? Here's just an interesting thing, I had to give you the actual quote here. It still says in Nicaea Canon, Canon 12, as many as were called by grace and displayed the first zeal, having cast aside their military girdles, but afterwards returned like dogs to their own vomit, so that some spent money and by means of gifts regained their military stations, let these, after they have passed the space of three years

as hearers, they shall be excommunicated, and for ten years, prostrators. So in other words, these people are to be, if you wanted to go back into the army as a Christian, you're going to be excommunicated.

And excommunicated so long that you're for three years, you can't even come to the church building. After three years, you can spend ten years prostrate before God and hoping that at the end of that ten years, then you can finally receive back into communion. What's that? Yeah, it probably never happened.

About ten years later, probably things would change so much. But it's interesting that the church used then the government to enforce these things. I don't know how much that actually got happened.

But I just find it amazing to see, as you're seeing the two worlds kind of from the old into the new, and there's just an interesting canon. Interesting, these councils are considered infallible by the Catholic Church and by the Greek Orthodox. They are received as infallible statements.

And so that's a good one to bring up. Yes, sir? So what he did was he called a giant meeting all together to discuss how he was going to debate. So he brought the bishops and they would give their side of the story, and then the other bishops would give their side of the story.

That story that I gave earlier, how he wrote the bishop, and the guy said just to drop it. He didn't drop it. And so the whole thing then was to decide this issue that Arius had brought up about how Jesus proceeded from the Father.

But he used that, though, not just to give that doctrine. He then went on to give all these regulations about how church would be set up and how provinces would be done, and they used that as a time together to say, hey, this is our chance to set a lot of things straight. And he did.

It's everything before that day. Yeah, and we have mainly the ten-volume set of the Antonine scenes, and there's some few others that have been found a little later, like the Didascalia from Syria and that type of thing. They are everything that is written before this council.

It gives the idea of early Christianity. You can usually get that as called the Antonine scene fathers. Post-Nicene would have been the next era right after that.

But yeah, when you hear that term, that's meaning everything that we have in existence, letters written back to churches, sermons that are whatever, are in those volumes up until this day. Yeah, yeah. And the creed itself, I like the creed itself.

I'll try to print that out for you. The creed itself is a good creed, and that was the main point. But it's the problem, again, was the focus.

And in this, he did something that had never been done before. He said you got to use a certain word of the same substance. Homoeusia is the word he used, if I'm saying it right.

I doubt I am. But the word that he's using was of the same substance that a particular Greek word. See, they were able to explain the creed, all this of the sun flowing to the point that the Arian said, I can submit to that.

And the others would be, but then the other ones would be more nervous. No, he's not using this word. And because he's not using this word, Homoeusia, he's not really Orthodox.

So they made it, if you don't use this word, you're not a Christian. Something happened historically. So suddenly now the whole definition of something being a Christian is something that's not even in the Bible.

The frame had moved. And boy, did it move. It moved.

And so they went on and began to add more and more things. I'm going to finish up with Augustine and we'll leave the rest for you just to read there. All right, Augustine.

All right. As the church is growing, now we're getting close to the 400s, this brilliant theologian by the name of Augustine came upon the scene. It's what we call St. Augustine.

And I have here now, particularly dealing with his changes, and one of the biggest changes he made was the concept of the just war theory and also bringing back in dogmatically almost some of these ideas of a mental faith. I have here a quote, it is now full time for the emperor to provide for the safety of the Catholic Church and prevent those rash men from terrifying the people whom they cannot seduce. Those were the words from a council that Bishop Augustine was at.

And this whole thing was his counsel to what we can do with the Donatists who now have continued on. Now this church was still growing. They were being obstinate down there too.

And now how do we deal with Christians who differ from us? So eventually it came to be, well, we should let our Christian emperors kill them and that'll solve the issue. And it was the first time that the church officially sanctioned the concept of a just war. We're going to kill them to do a good thing.

And that was a terrible thing that happened to the church. The decree that came out with the emperor, then they got the emperor, and they decreed this. I have it there if you'd skip down a little bit.

We decree that the Donatists and the heretics, who until now have been spared by the patience of our clemency, our mercy, shall be severely punished by legal authority so that by our manifest order they shall recognize that they are detestable and have no power of entering into contracts of any kind. But they shall be branded with perpetual infamy and separated from honorable gatherings and from public assemblies. These places in which the dire superstitions have been preserved until now shall utterly be joined to the venerable Catholic Church and thus their bishops and priests, that is all their prelates and ministers, shall likewise be despoiled of all their property and shall be sent into exile to separate islands and provinces." Wow.

So how did Augustine work through some of this stuff? Now to make a real long story short here, I'd like you to read through that. He was a Manichean and that was a type of Gnostic and he was actually very high in that. He studied that a lot and it did a lot in his conversion that he said of understanding his mental idea and his physical life.

And they had some things that they believed, a predestination, people being elect and people being chosen and that type of thing. And that was, some would say, that had influenced Augustine. But the particular thing that troubles me the most about Augustine, which is the point that I want to bring to it, kind of the point of this day, is his shift to only the mental.

Separating what you do in your body with only your consent in your mind. Here's the way he understands why you can go around killing people who differ than you as Christians. He says, It is indeed better that men should be brought to serve God by instruction than by fear of punishment or by pain.

It's better. But because the former means are better, the latter must not therefore be neglected. Many must often be brought back to the Lord like wicked servants by the rod of temporal suffering.

Before they attend the highest grade of religious development, the Lord himself orders that the guests be first invited and then compelled to his great supper. Compelled them into the kingdom. I'll say this guy, he was coming down to Dallas once and Tyler, he was trying to convince us to be Greek Orthodox.

And he had this icon of, and he said, Look, here's an icon. And it showed all these soldiers. It was the icon of compelling to come in.

And it had all these swords of making people be Christians by force. He thought that was a neat thing. Um, some of the other things that he said in regards to this heart religion, different from your, your, your person, he says, it may be supposed that God could not authorize warfare because in latter times it was said of Jesus Christ and I messed up there.

I say unto you that you resist not evil, but anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the left also. However, the answer is that what is required here, watch this, is not a bodily action, but an inward disposition. You can kill people as long as your heart's right.

He did the same thing with oath, everything to the sermon on that. Let a person understand that swearing is to be reckoned, not among things that are good, but among things that are necessary. We don't want to do them, but we have to do them.

Therefore we should refrain as far as we can from indulging in it, unless by necessity. That is when it seems slow, when it's slow to believe what I are saying is true, then you can say it. And then he goes on to say, don't swear unless you have to.

It's for their benefit and not for yours. Um, so this idea that Constantine did this, um, of making it just a mental idea, you then suddenly the Sermon on the Mount does not mean anything. And I'm afraid that that's where we are today.

Well, don't store up treasures if your heart is right. You can kill people as long as you don't deal with hate. You can divorce, just don't have a divorcing spirit.

You can, uh, you know, and you go all the way through the Sermon on the Mount. Nothing. But if we allow, we come back to the center to come back to the center and we come back to Jesus, even though we needed maybe to deal with some issues, but we keep coming back to Christ.

What do you say? It puts us in the right balance. A few other things that I'll close here that he brought into the church, that Mary was born and lived her entire life without actual sin. Uh, he had his, his understanding of, of how could Christ be born of a sinning person and take his flesh, that unbaptized infants are eternally damned, that marital affection, even when children are procreated is an inherently evil and debased act, that war can actually be holy, that there is no forgiveness of sins outside the official and his particular Catholic church, that some of the practices and teachings of the apostles no longer apply to Christians because the apostles lived in a different age, that there is a purgatorial fire and that the dead can benefit from the sacrifice of the Eucharist.

And that is proper for a Christian state to persecute heretics. And if you could read through the rest of that on your own, and, uh, I might just mention some of these little battles in brief before we get into the, to the

next section tomorrow. But again, the point that I want to bring home today is we as a church, as a people today do need to engage in theology.

We need to look at the truth because the scripture is the sure word of prophecy, not someone's dream, not someone's imagination. It is the word of God. That is the sure word of prophecy.

So we need to engage in, in, in, in apologetics and debate sometimes, but we must be careful. And I'm going to show you this tomorrow. Some of the ridiculous things happen, just like it happened here that we don't get off target over and over again.

We must come again to Jesus and not let our debates take us from that. So, all right, well, um, we could, Jacob Peters, if you could, uh, maybe lead us in prayer.

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