

THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION

Int.

1. Aim: To show what happened when people began to protest against the evils of the Roman Catholic church and started a new religious movement.
2. We are studying about the history of the church
 - a. The N.T. tells about the establishment and spread of the early church - It started on the first Pentecost after the Resurrection - Acts 2
 - b. In 2 Thes. 2:3 Paul warns of trouble "Let no man deceive you by any means: for [that day shall not come], except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;"
 - c. It was not intended that God's law in the N.T. ever be changed. Jude warns in v. 3 "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort [you] that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." NKJV "...once for all delivered to the saints."
 - d. God prepared a perfect plan, presented the perfect plan and man departed from it.
3. That falling away took place - in the establishment of the Roman Catholic Church.
 - a. Organization - bishops, pope - men began to rule in the church where Christ alone was supposed to rule.
 - b. Doctrines of men - the teachings of the N.T. were changed.
 - c. The Bible was essentially taken away from the people.
4. Men left God's way and the church was practically lost to the world for hundreds of years.
5. Religion was corrupted and changed from the plan given by God.

Discussion

I. **THE DARK AGES**

- A. The Pope in the middle ages assumed authority over the religious affairs, and extended his power over the political affairs of Europe as well.
- B. There was a power struggle for the pope to keep control
 - 1. At one time there were 3 men who claimed to be pope
 - 2. There was conflict between the popes and civil rulers who refused to accept the authority of the Pope.
 - 3. The Muslims spread their religion to many parts of the world from 7th - 11th centuries.
 - a. They conquered the areas around Jerusalem
 - b. There were crusades - military expeditions to re-conquer Palestine from the Moslems - many thousands of people were killed in the name of religion by the Roman Catholic church in these years
 - 4. Struggle to control the people - sects of people developed in response to the worldliness of the Catholic church
 - a. Groups were separated from the world - Ascetics - Monks
 - b. Vow of poverty - could not have material goods - must abandon all property
 - c. Developed a doctrinal system called dualism.
 - (1) This is belief in the existence of two co-eternal and supreme powers, the one Evil and the other Good, who are in perpetual conflict with one another.
 - (2) They asserted that the physical world was the creation of the Evil Power, which dominated the body.
 - (3) The Good Power dominated the spirit.

- (4) Thus, material things, particularly the body and anything pertaining thereto - eating, drinking, and possession of worldly goods - were deemed evil and to be renounced.
 - (5) Consequently, this group forbade the eating of all meats (except fish) and even eggs and cheese, since these were the products of fleshly intercourse.
 - (6) Marriage and marital relations were especially scorned.
 - (7) They believed that the physical world was the prison of those souls which had been taken from the realm of the good God.
 - (8) Thus, human reproduction, thought to be the original sin of Adam and Eve, merely increased the number of prison-houses.
 - (9) Salvation, then, was a renunciation of these things and a life of strict asceticism.
- d. These groups made use of their scripture in trying to defend their positions.
- (1) So a council restricted the use of the Bible by the common people.
 - (2) Some of the defenders of these positions were tried - their property was confiscated, some were imprisoned and others were burned at the stake in order to try to control these people.

C. Worldly Popes

1. During the last half of the Fifteenth Century it plunged into its darkest period since the Tenth Century.
2. Popes were politically ambitious and, it seems sought for nothing more than the advancement of themselves and their relatives.
3. Some were grossly immoral, flagrantly maintaining mistresses and displaying their illegitimate children.

4. The papacy was procured by bribery.
 5. The papal court could rival that of any temporal ruler in its extravagance and luxury.
 6. In order to maintain such a court the popes taxed heavily and even sold ecclesiastical offices.
 7. One pope, Julius II (1503-1513), is especially remembered for warmongering. He rode to battle in armor.
 8. Sixtus IV (1471-1484), after whom the Sistine Chapel is named, is remembered for making indulgences for souls in purgatory an article of faith.
- D. While the papacy was trying to remain in control of the Catholic church and keep control of the political kingdoms there began to be much dissent and protests among the religious leaders and political rulers. The result is what was called the "Protestant Reformation."

II. EARLY LEADERS OF THE REFORMATION

- A. Two men who were early protestors:

1. John Wycliffe

- a. Born in England in the 14th century
- b. Opposed the wealth of the clergy and their interference in civil government - he did not feel that the Popes had authority over the civil rulers.
- c. He was very popular with the common people in England

- d. One of the greatest things he did was to translate the Bible into English so the common people could read it in their own tongue.
 - (1) This was not authorized by the Catholic church and was opposed by them
 - (2) The reading of this version was forbidden under severe penalty.
- e. 44 Years after his death a church council ordered that his books be burned and that his body be dug up from the grave and burned. His ashes were scattered in the brook called Swift. It was done to show the disdain of the Catholic Church for the works of Wycliffe in translating the Bible into English.

2. John Huss

- a. Lived in the country of Bohemia in the 14th century
 - b. He also exalted the scriptures above tradition
 - c. He denounced the sale of indulgences.
 - d. He was called before the Council of Constance - upon the promise of "safe-conduct". But upon his arrival he was imprisoned, tried and burned at the stake on July 6, 1415.
- B. These men along with several others were called "Reformers before the reformation"
- 1. They were making attempts to reform the Catholic church
 - 2. But they were repressed with bloody persecution
 - 3. However things were changing and the reformation was coming...

III. THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION

A. Setting

1. The economic and religious conditions of the time led to the reformation
2. Conditions at the beginning of the 16th century:
 - a. Papal taxation and interference had greatly burdened the people of Germany
 - b. The wealth, immorality and tax exemption of the clergy invited disrespect.
3. There was an awakening in learning
 - a. The renaissance - rebirth of learning in France
 - b. People began to study the bible
4. Printing Press
 - a. Gutenberg - 1455 made possible printing of many books
 - b. First book printed was Bible
 - c. Now more people had access to the scriptures
5. Patriotism was running high
 - a. The native people did not like other countries ruling them
 - b. They disliked the Pope in another land appointing their church officers

B. Selling of Indulgences

1. Pope Leo X wanted to complete the building of St. Peter's Cathedral and make it the most beautiful building in the world.
2. They were short on money. So he resorted to a new way of raising funds.
3. The sale of Indulgences - or the forgiveness of sins in return for the payment of money.

4. The Pope sent John Tetzel into Germany to sell the indulgences to raise money for the building fund.
5. Here he met the opposition of Martin Luther and thus began the great REFORMATION MOVEMENT in the religious world.

C. Martin Luther

1. He was born in Germany Nov. 10, 1483. He studied law but then decided to enter the monastery and was ordained to the priesthood.
2. Then he became a professor at the University of Wittenberg.
3. He was greatly offended by the sale of indulgences by John Tetzel.
4. On Oct. 31, 1517 Luther nailed his famous Ninety-five Theses challenging indulgences to the Castle Church door in Wittenberg.
5. This was the spark which exploded the powder keg of the Protestant Reformation.
6. Over the next several years the Catholic church tried to get Luther to recant and change his ways.
7. When asked to reconsider his ways he said: "Since your serene majesty and your high mightiness require from me a clear, simple, and precise answer, I will give you one and it is this: I cannot submit my faith either to the pope or the councils, because it is as clear as the day that they have frequently erred and contradicted each other. Unless, therefore, I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by the clearest reasoning, - - unless I am persuaded by means of the passages which I have quoted and unless they thus render my conscience bound by the word of God - - I cannot and will not retract; for it is unsafe for a Christian to speak against his conscience. Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise, so help me God."

8. Luther drifted further away from the Catholic doctrine.
9. Ordinarily he would have been burned at the stake for heresy, but he was a popular man and the pope could not go against the people.
10. On Jan. 3, 1521 the pope issued a Bull of Excommunication against Luther.
11. But he continued to advance his reformation ideas. Some of his doctrines:
 - a. Salvation by faith alone - This was in contrast to the Catholic doctrine of merit - but this doctrine was contrary to what the Bible teaches. Jas. 2:14-26 teaches that we are saved by obedience to God's will
 - b. Denial of papal infallibility
 - c. Denial of celibacy
 - d. Permissive view of scriptural silence - His view: "What is not contrary to Scripture is for scripture and scripture for it." What was not expressly prohibited by the Scriptures was allowable. - This is not what the bible says: 1 Pet. 4:11 "If any man speak, [let him speak] as the oracles of God;..

D. **LUTHERAN CHURCH** The final result was the establishment of a new church - the first in the Protestant Reformation -

1. They called themselves after Luther - Lutherans.
2. In 1530 they adopted the Augsburg Confession of Faith as their creed. This creed outlined what they believed and wanted to practice in religion.
3. Prominent Doctrines - Salvation by Faith only, infant baptism, consubstantiation, direct operation of the Holy Spirit
4. Organization: Local, church council/ pastor, synod, pastors & lay, general body

E. ULRICH ZWINGLI

1. Lived in Switzerland also became a leader in the Protestant Reformation
2. He was opposed to many of the practices of the Roman Catholic church and wanted some reforms.
3. His approach to the Bible was different from Luthers, He said: We can only do that for which there is distinct authority found in the scriptures.
4. So he rejected such things as: The papacy, mass, purgatory, clerical celibacy, relics and images, and organs.
5. Zwingli was killed in a battle Oct. 11, 1531.
6. After his death some of his followers formed what they called "The Reformed" church.
7. Some of his followers began to doubt the validity of Infant Baptism so they broke away and formed another group called the "Anabaptists"

F. JOHN CALVIN

1. Born in France July 10, 1509
2. Calvin was:
 - a. More of a scholar than Luther
 - b. More of a systematic thinker than Luther
 - c. Calvin's Institutes (1536)
 - d. Early legal training
 - e. Clear-cut moral directives for living
 - f. Relied on Scripture and Augustine primarily for his ideas

3. He was the author of "The institutes of the Christian Religion" in which he presented his doctrines of:
 - a. Total Depravity - known as original sin
 - b. Unconditional Predestination - foreordination
 - c. Limited Atonement - Christ died only for the elect
 - d. Irresistible Grace - the elect cannot resist the grace of God
 - e. Perseverance of the Saints - once saved always saved
4. All of these doctrines are false and contrary to the Plain teaching of the Bible!!
5. These teachings of Calvin were taken by **John Knox** to the country of Scotland and they formed the Presbyterian Church.
 - a. This name for the church was not taken from the man
 - b. It is taken from the word used in the Bible talking about the Organization of the church.
 - c. The Word Presbyter is used in Greek to refer to the elders of the church.
 - d. The Presbyterians hold to all of the teachings of Calvin and also:
 - (1) Practice 3 forms of baptism
 - (2) Conversion by direct influence of the Holy Spirit
 - (3) Keeping the Ten Commandments
 - (4) And that it is not necessary to observe the Lord's Supper weekly
 - e. All of these teachings are out of harmony with the New Testament practice!
- G. We are studying the Reformation Movement. This was largely a protest against the corruption morally among the clergy and laity [the church leaders and members] and an affirmation of the authority of the Scriptures over that of the church represented by the Popes and Councils.

H. Church of England

1. In the country of England the reformation movement resulted in a church that separated from the Catholic Church.
2. Founder King Henry VI I I wanted a divorce but the Pope refused his request. So they started a new religion. It did not depart much from the Catholic doctrines.
3. The King of England is the head of the church.
4. It was a Catholic church under English Rule.
5. When the church migrated to America it was called the **Protestant Episcopal Church.**
6. The creed of this church is expressed in the 39 Articles of Faith - and the Book of Common Prayer contains the rituals for the services of the church.

I. Baptists

1. A small group fled from England to escape the persecution of James I and settled in Holland in the early 17th century.
2. Their leader was **John Smyth.**
3. They came to the conclusion that Infant baptism was unauthorized by the Scriptures.
4. They organized the first Baptist church in the year 1607.
5. The first Baptist church organized in England was founded by **Thomas Helwys** in 1611 and called themselves A General Baptist Church.
6. Other groups of Baptists wore the name Calvinistic Baptists.
7. The first Baptist church in this country was organized by **Roger Williams** at Providence, R.I. in 1639.

8. The Baptists practice immersion as the mode of baptism and cling to the principle of congregational independence.
9. Today there are many different groups of Baptists and they hold to many of the doctrines of Calvin.

J. Methodist Church

1. A man by the name of **John Wesley** was also had great influence in the Protestant Reformation.
2. He was born in England and educated at Oxford University.
3. He was ordained to the priesthood of the Church of England in 1728.
4. While he was at Oxford he became associated with a group of student who:
 - a. Spent certain evenings in reading the N.T. and in prayer
 - b. They engaged in many works of charity - like visiting the poorhouses and consoling the sorrowing and suffering.
 - c. They would ask each other if they had prayed with fervor on Mon, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday at noon. - if they had meditated on Sunday's from 3 to four, mused on Wednesday and Friday from twelve to one. These strict rules resulted in the nickname "Methodists"
5. The followers of Wesley wear this name even today.
6. The first group of Methodists began meeting in 1729.
7. John Wesley did not intend to found a new religious group, only to reform the church of England. The first Methodist church in America was in 1766.
8. Their creed is called the Discipline which contains all the church laws and rules of action, as well as the articles of faith.

K. These are some of the first Protestant denominations - many more followed and today we have several hundred.

1. Church of Christ established in 33 AD
2. Catholic church in 606 ad - Greek Catholic 1054
3. Reformation began in 1521 with Martin Luther
 - a. Lutheran church - 1521
 - b. Church of England - 1534
 - c. Episcopal - 1609
 - d. Methodist - 1739
 - e. Pentecostal
 - f. Presbyterian - 1541
 - g. Baptist - 1607
 - h. Mormons - 1830

Conclusion

1. Sometimes people ask: "How did so many religious groups come into being?"
2. These facts have been presented to help us all to have a better understanding of why we have so many religious organizations today.
3. This kind of study will help us to see that these different religious groups are different from the church we read about in the N.T.
4. These men of the Protestant Reformation were great men, but they were fallible and made mistakes.
 - a. Only wherein they have followed Jesus and His teachings are they proper guides for us today.

- b. Paul admonished us: "Be ye followers of me even as I also am of Christ" 1 Cor. 11:1
 - c. We should not worship men, nor should we try to follow any man
 - d. We must exalt Christ and His will above all else and strive to follow him day by day.
 - e. His commands are to be obeyed in all that we do
5. The Reformation should teach us the great mistake of manmade creeds, and the failure to follow only the teachings of Jesus.
6. We are grateful for the work that the men of the reformation did but we can't follow what they taught unless it is the truth.
7. These men did not restore the N.T. church.
- a. They merely tried to reform the Catholic church and its evils.
 - b. They strove to reform those things which were aggravating to them.
 - c. They protested against these evils and their work resulted in Protestant Denominationalism.
8. Our next Study will be about the Restoration of the New Testament Church !
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