

# OpenTheo

## Principal Events of the Middle Ages (Part 1)



### Church History - Steve Gregg

In a fascinating historical account, Steve Gregg shares 15 principal events of the Middle Ages. One such event was when the bishops of Rome became Popes and were positioned superior to bishops of churches throughout the world, despite resistance from some. The expansion and official doctrine of purgatory in the Catholic Church also circulated throughout the masses of people. Gregg goes on to discuss significant developments in the rise of Islam, Papal authority and the Holy Roman Empire, and the eventual Reformation.

### Transcript

I've given you a handout entitled 15 Principal Events of the Middle Ages. Now, it's printed on both sides of the sheet, and if you'll look on the back side of the sheet, you'll see that I've only given anything like a little bit of detail on the first six of these 15, because that's how far I intend to get tonight. I've only given you a list of the remaining nine, which you can anticipate our covering next time that we have this class.

So, we're going in two parts to study the 15 Principal Events of the Middle Ages. Now, that's a pretty rapid coverage when you consider that we've taken probably, I don't know what, 10, 12 weeks covering the first 600 years of Church history. But that is because so many significant changes happened during that time, so many new things were introduced that have long-term ramifications that we still live with, and it seemed impossible for me to take it any quicker than that.

And there's another reason I took so long, and that's because I knew more about that than I know about this. The Middle Ages have not fascinated me as much as the early ages of the Church. All my life, I've been gathering information about the early ages, and to a much lesser degree have I gained anything like expertise on the Middle Ages, and I don't have a great deal of expertise.

But there are some real fascinating and some very important things that occurred. And when we say the Middle Ages, we're talking about a period of about 1,100 years from the year, or about 900 years, I guess is the number I've given you here, from the year 600 to

the year 1,500. Now, if you have even a cursory knowledge of the leading turning points in Church history, you know that the year 1,500 is roughly when the Reformation occurred.

And the year 600, as we saw last time, was the time when Pope Gregory, usually called Gregory the Great, established the medieval form of the papacy. And the papacy, of course, means the system of the popes ruling in the Roman Catholic Church. So, we're talking essentially about the beginning of the papacy in the year 600 and the beginning of the Reformation in the year 1,500, and the 900 years between that time we call the Middle Ages.

Some portion of that we also call the Dark Ages, and that's actually how far I hope to get tonight, up to a consideration of the Dark Ages, which were sort of in the middle of this period. But there were many things of great interest and of significance that we need to consider, and I've chosen 15. I could have made the list longer, but I really think that these are the principal things that are important for a cursory study, which is all that we can really hope to engage in here.

The first of them on the list is really something we don't have to discuss tonight too much because we discussed it last time, and that was the papacy or the papal bishopric of Pope Gregory. If I might just summarize a few of the significant things about Pope Gregory, he is believed to be responsible, he is credited with being responsible, for the formation of the medieval papacy or the popes. Now, he was not the first man to be called a pope, and of course if we use the term pope in the sense that the Roman Catholics use it simply to mean the bishop of Rome, he was by no means anything like the first of those.

There were many, many, many bishops of Rome from the apostolic times on until the present time. There's been hundreds of bishops of Rome, and at a certain point in history they began to talk about the bishops of Rome as popes and began to give the bishop of Rome a position over other bishops of other churches throughout the world that was superior to them. This was a gradual development.

We looked into this last week and talked about the development of the papacy. But Gregory the Great is the one who is considered to have really given the papacy the form and the distinctive character that it possessed for hundreds of years afterwards into the Middle Ages, what's called the medieval period. He was, as I said last time, born of a wealthy, noble, devout family.

He held office as a prefect of Rome, which was like mayor or one of the highest civil administration posts in Rome before he was a religious man. He did return from that political career to a life of monasticism. He retired to a monastery, and he spent the fortune that he inherited from his parents on helping the poor and establishing seven monasteries.

He was called back to public life by the earlier pope, the one prior to him, Pelagius II, and he served as bishop representing Rome at Constantinople for a period of time. However, when Pelagius left office, Gregory was elected as bishop of Rome. He personally strongly resisted this appointment.

He didn't want to be the bishop of Rome. He was much more attracted to monastic life, much more of an ascetic sort of a person. He didn't want the honor of being the highest ranking church official in the world, and the lifestyle didn't appeal to him, but he nonetheless felt eventually persuaded that God was calling him to this office, and so he accepted it.

Eventually, because the civil rulers of Rome at this period were so weak and ineffective, Pope Gregory found himself in the position to have to basically rule Rome as if he were the emperor. He had to marshal an army against the Lombards who were invading and threatening to destroy Rome. He commissioned officers.

He sent commands to commanders in the field. He was acting as if he was the head of state and the head of the military, and through this he managed to save Rome, basically, from the Lombards. Among the things that Gregory did is he organized and transformed the papal government into an elaborate, smoothly functioning system which endured through the Middle Ages.

He standardized and introduced changes in the liturgy of the church, which he enforced around the world. There were different liturgies in different churches until this time. The Gregorian chants are named after him, although he did not invent them.

He simply made them a form of worship that was used throughout the churches. He incorporated and synthesized not so much anything original, but the popular elements of the masses at the time. When I say masses, I don't mean the mass like the Catholic mass.

I mean the masses of people. The religious people had a lot of superstitions and ideas that the church had never officially taught, but had been allowed to circulate. A lot of these were taken up by Pope Gregory and made official as doctrines of the church.

Some of those are doctrines that we recognize today as distinctly Roman Catholic doctrines as opposed to Protestant doctrines. That would include the idea that tradition is equal to scripture in authority. That is, the tradition of the church decided officially by the College of Bishops has the same authority as scripture in determining normal practices and beliefs for the church.

That's a modern Catholic conviction also, and he made that official. He believed that you could absolve a baby of original sin by baptizing the baby. He believed that people should do penance for sins that were committed after they were baptized.

He believed in the use of relics and amulets and prayer to the saints and to the martyrs, which became official Catholic practice in his time. He also developed the doctrine of purgatory. There were others who taught something like the doctrine of purgatory before him, but he basically expanded on it and made it official Catholic doctrine.

He also transformed the Eucharist, which we would probably call the Lord's Supper or something like that, into a sacrifice. That is, he redefined it from simply a sacrament to a sacrifice for the atonement of sins, that every time the mass is taken every day, Christ is sacrificed, as it were, for the sins again. All the things I've just mentioned, of course, are points of difference between Roman Catholics today and Protestants today, and many of them were around before Pope Gregory's time, but they became official doctrine in his time.

He is considered one of the four great Latin doctors of the Western Church, the previous three being Ambrose, Augustine, and Jerome. He wrote some important works. One was called Pastoral Rule, which essentially became the standard manual of conduct for the bishops throughout the world, or throughout the West anyway.

And he wrote some other works as well that I mentioned last time. He is the first monk to become a pope, and therefore his influence being as great as it was, promoted monasticism and asceticism to a large degree. Among the things that reflect that trend was that he required the celibacy of the clergy.

That is, the clergy could not be married men. That became official with him. He also was very evangelistic or missionary-minded.

He sent 40 monks to Britain and to Ireland to convert the English, and he also sent missionaries to other places, and he did expand the influence of the Church by those means. So he is an important figure in this period, and certainly is the starting point of what we could call the Middle Ages, the establishment of the papacy and of much of the Roman Catholic doctrine that is distinctive of the Roman Church today. The next principle event I want to talk to you about is the rise of Islam.

Islam is not just another world religion that is a curiosity for Christians, but it is a force that at the time of its rising, threatened to extinguish Christianity, and came very close to doing so. It has had an impact on Christianity insofar as it conquered regions of the world that had been solidly and officially Christian lands in a very short space of time. And it continues to be, very probably, the leading opponent in the world of Christianity.

I mean, Communism is very strongly opposed to Christianity, but Communism is not on the rise. Communism is waning in the world. Maybe a few decades ago, we would have suggested when a quarter of the world was under, or a half of the world was under Communist dominion, that the greatest threat to Christianity in the modern world would be Communism, but that hardly seems true today.

There are still some Communist countries that are threats to our way of life. But the real, singular greatest threat to Christianity today, besides the institutional church, is institutional Islam. And so what rose in the early 7th century, that is in the early 600s, with a man named Muhammad, has continued, it initially had a tremendous impact on the church, and has continued to be probably the principal opponent of Christianity in the world today, with at least a quarter of the world's population embracing it, and the numbers increasing all the time.

One of the more alarming things is that the numbers of Muslims are today increasing most in Western lands, in America, England, parts of Europe, lands that have traditionally been at least nominally Christian, these are the areas where Islam is spreading like wildfire today, and Christianity is not. And of course Christianity is spreading like wildfire in other parts of the world, but not in these lands where we live. Let me give you a little background on Islam.

Muhammad, of course, was the prophet of Islam, he was born in 570, and lived until 632. In 610, which is not on the handout I gave you, but in 610, he indicated that he had had appeared to him the angel Gabriel, who gave him what became one of the portions of the Quran, subsequent appearances of Gabriel, gave him other portions of the Quran. In the second appearance of Gabriel to Muhammad, Gabriel told him that he was commissioned to be a prophet, to bring the Arabs and the world back to God.

Now, in Muhammad's time, you need to understand that idolatry was almost universal throughout the world, even in Christianity. Now, the Roman Catholics might not agree with me in my saying that, because I'm calling idolatry what the Roman Catholics would simply see as the use of images and the use of statues and so forth to enhance worship. Those of us who are not Roman Catholic usually see that kind of practice as idolatry, the making of images and showing irreverence to images.

Even, by the way, back in the Middle Ages there was tremendous controversy over the use of images. There were emperors who banned the use of images. We'll talk about that next week more, or not next week, but next time we meet.

But the iconoclastic controversy was over whether churches should use images or not. And one of the reasons that those who argued against the use of images argued the way they did was because it was a tremendous offense to the Jews and to the Muslims. The Muslims, like the Jews, are very fiercely monotheistic.

Now, technically, so is Christianity, but the form of Christianity visible to Muhammad when he first was exposed to it did not appear to be very monotheistic. The churches had images and statues that were venerated and so forth. And although Muhammad in his early years exposed himself to Christianity and Judaism, he decided against joining either of those religions.

And Christianity did not impress him largely because it appeared to be idolatrous. And, by the way, all the Arabs were idolatrous too. The religions of the Arab tribes were given over to horrendous idolatry in his time and it appalled him.

He had a strongly monotheistic conscience. And one of the great effects of his movement was that he banished polytheism from the Arab tribes and made them all monotheistic. Some people think that's a good thing.

It is better to be monotheistic than polytheistic, that's for sure. One of the sad tragedies is that with his passion for monotheism, he did not find in the church a convincing witness for monotheism. In an age of idolatry and polytheism, he did not find a distinctive alternative in the Christian church.

If he had, the whole face of history would have been very different than it is. Because Mohammed became one of the greatest tormentors of the church up to the present time, although he didn't live to see most of his success. But it was the year 610 that Mohammed was commissioned by, as he thought, the angel Gabriel to be a prophet.

Not too different from Joseph Smith, in my opinion, believing that he saw an angel who commissioned him to be a prophet. And he started the Mormon church. Now, by the way, when you study the doctrines of Islam, you might be impressed that they are more or less positive kinds of doctrines.

It's not like Satanism. It's not like Hinduism. In many respects, it's very much like Judaism.

In fact, friends of ours who have labored for a long time among Muslims say it's irresistible, the comparison between the Muslims today and the Pharisees of Jesus' day. Very, very similar spirit and very similar practices in some respects. What Mohammed did, notwithstanding his claims to have gotten his religion from God through revelation, he obviously incorporated ideas from Christianity and from Judaism and from Arabic paganism and melded them into a distinctive Arabocentric theology of monotheism that flattered the Arabs as the chosen people and appealed to them strongly.

Well, not all of them, not initially. He had some serious problems in the beginning. In fact, he was born and raised in Mecca, and he was the grandson of the governor of Mecca, and therefore he was like a prince in that city.

He became the business manager of a wealthy widow whom he later married and became wealthy that way himself. And because of his wealth through marriage, that was just his first marriage. He had many others besides, including one to an eight-year-old girl who was his favorite wife of his harem.

But his first wife provided him with a lot of wealth, and he had the leisure to study and philosophize and travel and expose himself to religious ideas and discuss religion with

caravan traders and so forth. And he, as I say, he was disenchanted with the current offerings available in the religious smorgasbord, so he obviously came up with one of his own. Now, the Muslims believe, and Muhammad would have us believe, that this religion of his was founded by God.

And of course we cannot say for sure whether Muhammad really did have an encounter with a supernatural being, just as we cannot say for sure whether Joseph Smith did. On the one hand, the books that were of these religions, the Book of Mormon and the Koran, the Book of Mormon of course came to Joseph Smith and the Koran to Muhammad, are such inferior productions that it's hard to believe that they are the product of supernatural intelligence at all, even if we would say demonic intelligence. We would expect demons to be able to put out better books than these.

But of course, it is either of human origin, either Muhammad wrote the Koran, although there is a strong tradition for centuries that he was illiterate and could not write, and therefore it was implied that Gabriel just brought it down to him, you know, already made. But he either wrote the Koran or else it was revealed to him. But if it was revealed to him, it was not by God or by any emissary of the true God.

The doctrines of Islam are close enough to those of Judaism and Christianity to be a wonderful counterfeit to those who have an innate sense of reality and truth. But they are just far enough from the truth, especially in their beliefs about Jesus, to make it evident that we're not talking about a religion revealed by God. Now, in 622, because of his preaching against idolatry in Mecca, which was a very idolatrous Arab city, he was driven out of Mecca.

Actually, he left on his own, but he felt there were threats upon his life. He had been preaching there for four years and had only 40 converts. And six men from another city called Medina came to him and asked him if he would come to Medina and help them out with, I think it was a political kind of alliance they were working out.

And he found it a good idea to get out of Mecca. His life was in danger there. So his followers and he went to Medina.

This flight to Medina is called the Hujra and is celebrated by the Muslims today as the beginning of the religion of Islam. Islam is a word that means submission to the will of God, submission to the will of Allah. Now, Allah, who is the name of God in the Islamic faith, is not really a proper name, although they use it as a proper name.

Christians who work among Arab people use the name Allah for God also for the simple reason that Allah is simply the Arabic word for God. It is not the distinctly Muslim word. It is simply the word in the Arabic language that means God.

However, that being the case should not lead us to conclude that Allah is the same God

as the God of the Jews and the Christians. There is much debate, even among missionaries, I know about that. I know missionaries who feel that they can reach Muslims better by seeing the connection, the likenesses between Allah of Islam and the God of the Bible.

It is sort of a cultural bridge for reaching Muslims and so forth. Others believe that Allah of Islam is a demonic caricature of God. And in any case, whether one feels that Allah might be similar to the God of the Bible, or even identified with the God of the Bible, we can say that the doctrines of Muhammad are not agreeable with the Bible, and therefore the religion of Islam is not inspired by the same God as inspired the religion of the Christians and the Jews.

There are five essential doctrines of Islam. First, is that there is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet. Not his only prophet, but his most important and most authoritative prophet.

This is a very radical affirmation for Muhammad to make in his own day, when all of his countrymen were polytheistic idol worshippers, and yet that was his message. There's only one God, Allah. A second doctrine of Islam is that God's work is carried on by men and angels, and therefore the conquest of the world for Allah must be done through his servants.

And a third doctrine is that the Koran is the will of Allah written down, and it is the holy book of Islam, like the Bible is to the Christian. Islam teaches that there were six great prophets. There are other prophets, but these are the greatest in history.

Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad. Now, if you notice that list, I think Christians would be inclined to be five-sixths in agreement with Islam on this point. Not that Adam is recognized by us as a great prophet, but certainly Noah and Moses and Abraham and Jesus, we would recognize these as great prophets.

Of course, we believe Jesus is more than a prophet, but Islam does not teach that Jesus is more than a prophet. He's just one of six great prophets, and he's inferior to the greatest of them, which is Muhammad, and this is the significant difference between Islam and the truth. And one would say that if Gabriel, the same angel who came and told Mary that she would have a child and he would be the son of God, had appeared later to an Arab named Muhammad, he would not have told him that Muhammad was superior to Jesus.

And for that reason, we know that Gabriel did not reveal himself to Muhammad. Gabriel would not be so poorly informed on these matters, nor would he lie. By the way, I like to tell this story because I think it's great.

There's a Christian apologist named Ravi Zacharias. Some of you may have heard him on



the radio. I think he has a daily program.

He's written some books. Great guy. He's from India.

He's an Indian, but educated in the West and basically headquartered here. I was listening to him once talk about some ministry he was doing in, I think it was in Jordan or some other Muslim country, and he was actually speaking in a Baptist church there. I don't know if there's Baptist churches in Jordan or not, but anyway, as I recall, he was in a Muslim country speaking for a Baptist congregation.

And between services, he actually went to a photography shop there because he needed some film for his camera. And when he walked into the shop, the Arab shop owner saw that he was Indian. He says, ah, Hindi.

And apparently the Muslims like Indian people. And asked him why he was in the country. He said, oh, I'm a Christian preacher.

I'm preaching some evangelistic meetings here. And the shop owner grew rather cooler toward him at that point. But the shop owner said, oh, you're a Christian.

Well, what do you think about Muhammad? And Rabbi Zacharias was with the pastor who was his host, and he turned to the pastor and said, tell him. The pastor said, he asked you. And everyone in the shop turned around to see what his answer would be.

What do you think about Muhammad? Well, if a Christian says what he really thinks about Muhammad, plainly, he probably will not get out of a shop like that alive in a Muslim country. And so Rabbi Zacharias said, well, let me ask you a question. He says, was Muhammad a prophet? And the shop owner said, yes.

And Rabbi said, was Jesus a prophet? And the shop owner said, yes. And then Rabbi Zacharias said, can a prophet be wrong? And the man said, no. And Rabbi Zacharias said this, well then, we know that Muhammad said that Jesus is a prophet.

And Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father but through me, which would rule out Muhammad. Therefore, if Jesus is right, then Muhammad is wrong.

On the other hand, if Jesus is wrong, then Muhammad is still wrong because he said he was right. He said Jesus was a prophet. So either Muhammad is wrong because Jesus was right, or else Jesus was wrong and Muhammad is still wrong because he said Jesus was right.

I don't know how he escaped alive from that conversation, but I thought it was a rather clever way of putting it. The fifth doctrine of Islam is that there is a resurrection and a final judgment of all men, and that all will either go to paradise or to the abyss, hell. So

you can see that there are a number of points here that resemble both Judaism and Christianity in this religion.

Now in the world of religions, of course we have Buddhism and Hinduism and Confucianism and so forth, but none of those religions are monotheistic. There are three monotheistic religions, Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Two of these were established by the true God.

One was not, and that was Islam, but it comes so close to the other two in some of its major assertions that it is a very remarkable and deceptive counterfeit of the truth. There are four basic practices that Muslims are required to practice for salvation. One, they are required five times a day to bow and pray toward Mecca, and the Quran actually describes the posture and so forth that they must pray in, but five times a day they must pray toward Mecca.

They also are required to pay tithes, an idea that came out of Judaism, and give alms to the poor. That's a second practice of Islam. A third practice is that they must fast during the month of Ramadan, which is the fast that they do is not really like we would think of fasting.

Is it 30 or 40 days? It's a 40 day fast. What's that? Depends on the phases of the month. But it can be 40 days, right? But when you find out that the Muslims are fasting for 40 days, you may be too quick to be impressed.

Jesus fasted for 40 days. Moses fasted for 40 days, and he did it again without breaking his first fast, so he fasted for 80 days. Elijah fasted for 40 days, and that's pretty good.

The Muslims fast for 40 days, but they only fast during the daylight hours for 40 days. When the sun goes down, they can and do eat until the sun comes up again. So, they are 40 day fast is really, when they say 40 days, they take the word day in the strict sense of not night.

But this is required. They must every year in Ramadan fast for these 40 days in this manner. Also, one time in their lifetime, they are required to make a pilgrimage to Mecca, the holy city, which by the way, I haven't gotten to it yet, but Muhammad conquered it and made it a Muslim city.

But the holy city of Mecca, they have to either go there themselves or by proxy, they can hire someone else to go for them. But once a year, once in a lifetime, they have to make a trip to Mecca. So, this is how you get saved in Islam.

Islam, I think, would never have become so influential if it was made to compete in the ideological world on its own merits, on the merits of its convincing teaching or the superiority of its book or whatever. It certainly would never be able to compete with the Bible on its merits, but Islam has not really had to do that in the early days. Islam was

spread by the sword.

Now, some converts, of course, were made in the traditional manner, but in Arab lands, initially, Muhammad and his followers required everybody that they encountered to convert or die. And first, because he was brought to Medina by some leading citizens there, he converted the whole city of Medina and he was made the leader of that city. Then he waged war on Mecca, his home city, and conquered it and made it his capital and holy city.

And then, of course, from there, the conquests continued. And it's an amazing thing. Muhammad only lived about 22 years after he became the prophet, and he did not really live to see the phenomenal advances that happened within the remainder of that century.

He died in the year 632, but his successors, who were called caliphs, led battles against the lands near and far and eventually subdued an incredible amount of the then known world to Islam by military conquest. Now, one reason they were able to do this is, well, they were good fighters, for one thing. I mean, they were fierce, but one thing that contributed to their fierceness was the doctrine in Islam that if a person dies in a holy war, and any war for the expense of Islam is a holy war, he automatically goes to paradise.

Now, in the Islamic faith, one sin can buy you, what, 50 million years in hell or something like that. And most Muslims have no assurance whatsoever of salvation. Their religion does not allow for any assurance of salvation except if they die in a holy war.

And therefore, those who are eager to make sure that they are saved are strongly motivated to participate and even die in a holy war. Now, they don't go out there to die. They go out there to conquer.

But if they die, that's okay with them. And so they can be fierce and aggressive, and they came in great numbers. The Arabs who were converted to Islam were in the Middle Ages called the Saracens.

And they swept into surrounding regions first in the Middle East. They conquered Damascus, the capital of Syria, in 635. Two years later, 637, they conquered Jerusalem and Iraq.

Next year, they had many conquests. In 638, they conquered Antioch, Tripolis, Tyre, Caesarea, and 15 other Mediterranean coastal cities. Three years later, in 641, Mesopotamia surrendered to them.

And Persia in 649. In 652, most of Asia Minor, which is now Turkey, was now conquered by the Muslims. And from 673 to 678, a five year campaign was made by the Muslims to conquer Constantinople, which was, of course, the capital of the Eastern Empire, where

the Roman Emperor actually lived, and one of the major centers of the Church.

Now, the people of Constantinople managed to hold them off at this point. Later, Constantinople was conquered by Turkish Muslims, but the Arab Muslims were not able to conquer Constantinople at this time, and they had to turn their attention elsewhere. They had some disasters at sea, lost some ships, their navy was decimated, and their conquests were called off briefly until they were resumed later on.

But Constantinople survived. However, with the survival of Constantinople at this point, there had been, I don't know if you recall, but the Roman Empire had been divided into East and West at an earlier time, in the days of Constantine. And in the Western Roman Empire, one bishop had the most authority of any, and that was the Bishop of Rome.

But in the Eastern Empire, there were four, what they called patriarchs, bishops that were patriarchs of major Eastern cities in the Roman Empire. Those cities were Antioch, Alexandria, Jerusalem, and Constantinople. And by the end of this wave of Islamic conquests, three of those four were now Muslim cities.

They had been strongholds of the Eastern Church. But Antioch and Alexandria and Jerusalem all fell to the Muslims. Later on, the Crusades, which we won't talk about tonight, but we will next time, were attempts on the part of the Church to recover Jerusalem and the Holy Land from the Muslims.

But it was at this time that those lands and the churches there succumbed to the Islamic invasion. And so Constantinople was the only remaining significant bishopric in the East, which gave it a prestige without rivals like Rome had had in the West up to that point. Now, the third principal event of the Middle Ages I want to talk about is the Battle of Tours, France.

The Muslim forces swept into Western Europe after they had conquered the Middle East and Persia and also North Africa. And they had gotten Turkey under their sway. They made attempts to take over Western Europe.

And they were succeeding for a long time. And it looked very much like this tidal wave of Islamic invasions was never going to be stopped. But they were stopped.

They were stopped at Tours by a man named Charles Martel in what is considered to be one of the most important battles in history. Of course, there are some other battles equal to importance, but this is one of the most important battles in history, because had the Arabs not been stopped at this time, they might have conquered all of Western Europe, in which case there would be no Church left in the world. They had basically extinguished or conquered or degraded the Church in most of the East with the exception of Constantinople.

And had they had similar victories in the West, there is very little reason to believe that

Europe would have ever become a stronghold of Christianity. And the missionary sending continent that it later was, and of course the American continent, the settlers here came from Europe with Christian convictions and so forth. But had Martel not stopped the Islamic hordes at Tours, France, it is possible that the whole world would have been Islamic.

That when the new world was discovered, it would have been discovered by Europeans who were Islamic instead of Christian. And certainly the face of history would have been remarkably different had that been the case. So the Battle of Tours in 732 for Charles Martel, who was the king of the Franks.

Now the Franks were a people who occupied the regions that we would, in modern political boundaries we would call it Western Germany and Northern France. Of course the political boundaries were different then than now. But the Franks were a very important people during that period of time.

And the king of the Franks was a powerful leader and he managed to halt the Muslim advances there in the West and they never did really conquer the West as a result of that. The fourth significant event in the Middle Ages to talk about is King Pepin and the establishment of the Papal States in 756. Now before that, around this period of time, the Lombards were a people who were trying to conquer Rome.

Rome had fallen already in the 5th century and was no longer the great city that it had been. It was no longer a Roman city really. Rome was a Gothic state.

It had been conquered by the Goths and the Visigoths and the Vandals and so forth. And so it was not really technically a Latin state. It was a Gothic state.

But there was still a city of Rome and still a church in Rome. It just happened to be that the Goths had been converted and were under the Pope. But now the Lombards were seeking to conquer Rome.

And the Pope appealed to Charles Martel for help after he had managed to get rid of the Muslims at Tours. The Pope hoped that he might come and drive off the Lombards. For reasons I don't fully understand, Charles Martel did not come.

I don't know if he was occupied elsewhere or had other reasons, but it did not help. The Lombards continued to be a threat. Martel died in 741.

And although he had been strong, he left his authority to two sons. One was Carloman and the other was Pepin, the Short, as he was called. And I wonder why.

Anyway, maybe he had a short fuse or something. But one of those two brothers who shared the authority of Martel after his death, retired to a monastery. That was Carloman.

And that left Pepin as the sole King of the Franks in the year 751. Pope Zacharias at the time approved of Pepin as the King of the Franks. And through the influence of the Pope, Pepin was made the King of the Franks.

And therefore, he had a debt he owed to the Pope, because the Pope had swung his influence to cause Pepin to have that kind of assignment, appointment. And later on, in 754 and 556, through a couple of campaigns, Pepin and the Franks helped Pope Stephen II by driving the Lombards out of Italy. And then when that battle was over, because of the mutual assistance that the Pope and the King of the Franks had given to each other, Pepin, the King of the Franks, gave the Lombard territories, or the territories that the Lombards had inhabited, gave them to the Pope to be perpetual possessions of real estate for the Papacy.

This was the first time that the Pope actually owned a country. These were called the Papal States. And they remained in perpetuity in the possession of the Papacy until 1870.

So for a very long time, over a thousand years, the Papal States were in the possession of the Popes. They actually had an empire there in northern Italy that was given to them by the King of the Franks. They don't have that anymore.

It was in 1870, I believe, that the Pope had that taken from him by, I'm not real clear on all the factors that led to that, but I believe it was at that point that the Pope was confined to the Vatican. Now, in the Papal States, there were 22 cities in their environs, and they stretched across northern Italy. And this alliance between the Popes and Pepin established two precedents that had not really been before.

One was that the Popes used their papal power to set up government authorities. There had always been, or usually been, friendliness between the Popes and the Emperors from the time of Constantine on. But this was the first time that the Popes really had a key role in deciding who would be the king of a country.

And Pepin was made King of the Franks very largely through the influence of the Pope. And so that set a precedent that was followed much in the future. In fact, the appointment of Charlemagne by a later Pope was a very significant development in this way, because the Popes were now exercising political authority, even in some respects, over kings.

And it gave the impression that the Popes have the right to legitimize the reign of a king or not. And that was a new development that had repercussions throughout the Middle Ages and to this day even. A second precedent that was set by this relationship between Pepin and the Popes was that the Pope obtained territory and possessions, which led later to the idea of church states, of whole countries really belonging to the Church of Rome or of the Church in general.

Now, the fifth principal event in the Middle Ages I'd like to talk about is Charlemagne and the establishment of the Holy Roman Empire. When Pepin died in 768, he left his kingdom of the Franks to his two sons, Charles and Carloman. Obviously, there was a previous Carloman who was the brother of Pepin, but Pepin had a son named Carloman also, and to Charles.

Carloman, though, died in 771, and that left Charles, who is also known as Charles the Great, left him to be the sole ruler of the Franks. Now, Charlemagne fought against the Lombards, who were still a problem to the Popes, and did a great favor for the Popes by actually eliminating the Lombard kingdom. The Lombards ceased to exist as a kingdom because of the defeats they suffered under Charlemagne's military conquest.

And from 772 to 785, Charlemagne also had a series of campaigns against the Saxons. In 778, he conquered Bavaria, and in 801, he captured Barcelona, which obviously is in Spain, although he didn't control all of Spain. But Charlemagne was a brilliant military guy, and he was a ruler, and he was actually, in some respects, a very good ruler, and a very pious man.

He actually promoted Roman Catholicism everywhere where he went, so he spread the influence of Catholicism in these areas, and he planted bishoprics and monasteries in Saxon lands, which hadn't been done before. He brought Christianity to Austria, or what is today Austria, and he extended the possessions of the Papal States, and also promised perpetual protection to the Pope. So Charlemagne was very much appreciated by the Romans.

Now, he was not a Roman, he was a German, or he was a Frank. But there was a very positive relationship between the Italian Pope and the Frankish king here in this case, because of favors done. In the year 800, Pope Leo III was accused by some rivals of the Roman Catholic Church, of crimes, and Charlemagne came to his defense, actually, and supported him, and set up a council at which it was declared that the Apostolic See, by the way, the word see means oversight, the Apostolic See means the oversight of the Bishop of Rome, the Pope.

It was declared at this council under Charlemagne's direction that the Apostolic See has the right to judge everyone, but can itself be judged by no one. And Pope Leo rewarded Charlemagne for this support by crowning him as Charlemagne, Charles Augustus, crowned by God, great and peaceful emperor of the Romans. That is the Western Empire in rivalry with the emperors of Constantinople.

Remember, the Roman emperors had moved to Constantinople way back in the days of Constantine, and always lived there. So that, although there was a city of Rome, the Roman Empire was not ruled from Rome, it was ruled from Constantinople. But now, the Pope of Rome appoints the Frankish king, who is not even a Roman, to be the king of the Roman Empire, the new emperor of the Romans.

This was a very significant event. It established what came to be called the Holy Roman Empire. It resulted, really, in establishing, it was attempted to revive the old Roman Empire, but it really never was quite the same.

And after Charlemagne's death, there was nothing very impressive about it all. Charlemagne apparently was caught entirely by surprise at this. He was praying at the altar in St. Peter's, and the Pope crept up with a crown while he was praying and put it on his head and proclaimed him Charles Augustus, like Caesar Augustus, emperor of the Romans.

So here we have the case of a Pope, for the first time, crowning an emperor. And so Charlemagne became the emperor of this new Holy Roman Empire, which included, in terms of modern boundaries, France and Belgium, Holland, about half of Germany and of Austria-Hungary, more than half of Italy and northeastern Spain. So a large multinational empire was given to Charlemagne here, and he was very friendly to the Pope.

For all of his days, he did a lot to promote Christianity, at least of the Popish sort, and he also did a lot to enhance culture. He brought scholars in from many lands. He brought Gothic and Saxon scholars and others.

And a lot of scholarly work was encouraged. And the Pope, as you know, was a great, sort of a little renaissance of culture under the reign of Charlemagne. And it was generally viewed as a positive development, of course, in European history.

The Holy Roman Empire, thus begun, continued until it was abolished by Napoleon in the year 1806. And since he was crowned on Christmas Day 800, we can see it lasted almost exactly 1,000 years, give or take about six. So Napoleon abolished the Holy Roman Empire with his conquest in 1806.

Now, when Charlemagne died, his sons and his grandsons were not as effective as he was, and the power of the Holy Roman Emperors diminished. And one of the things that caused their powers to diminish and to erode was that they were pestered continually by raids from Vikings and from Muslims and from a group of people called the Magyars from modern Russia, the region of modern Russia. These invasions really took their toll on the power of the Holy Roman Emperors, and they declined in effectiveness and in general influence.

And to fill that power vacuum, the power of the popes increased to the point that we have in 858, the consecration of Pope Nicholas I. Just to give you an idea of how powerful the popes became, in 858, Pope Nicholas I was consecrated pope. He deposed and excommunicated Photius, the Patriarch of Constantinople. Now, Constantinople was the rival center of Christianity to Rome, and the Patriarch there was like the Bishop there, like the Pope was the Bishop of Rome, the Patriarch was the Bishop of Constantinople.



And Pope Nicholas I excommunicated the Patriarch of Constantinople, who turned around and excommunicated him back. Nicholas also reduced the Archbishop John of Ravenna to total submission of the papacy. He commanded King Lothair II to take back his divorced queen, and apparently exercised authority that much over the king.

And he also devised a plan for papal censorship of books. For many, many years, the Roman Catholic Church has censored books for its readers. Now, I'm not altogether opposed to censorship.

I know that's a dirty word in America, because we're not supposed to have any kind of censorship, but unfortunately, the opposition to censorship sometimes goes to ridiculous lengths. But it was because of this policy of the popes censoring what books people could read, that they were able to keep many rival movements to Christianity from really flourishing. In one of our sessions soon, I'm going to be talking about the rival movements to the papacy during the Middle Ages.

There were many of them, and most of them would be what we would consider to be true Christians who got persecuted by the popes. But until the Reformation, they weren't able to succeed, because the popes would ban their books. Now, what changed, of course, in the 1500s, and why Luther succeeded where others failed, apart from issues of divine sovereignty, was the fact that the printing press was invented just before Luther's time.

And once you start printing books by the zillions, it's much harder to keep them away from everybody. Until the invention of the printing press, every book had to be handwritten, and it was not too hard to find all the copies in many cases. And so, because of the papal censorship established by Nicholas I, many of the groups that were non-conformist to the Catholic system were kept from really getting very far from having the kind of success that Luther later had.

Now the sixth event, and the last one I want to talk about tonight, is what's called the Dark Ages. Some people think of the whole Middle Ages as the Dark Ages, but really there's a period of approximately 200 years, 150 to 200 years, that are really called the Dark Ages. Some call it the Midnight of the Dark Ages.

There were social and religious developments that characterized them. Here I'm going to actually read from some texts. I've done a lot of study about this just today, and got my head so full of information, I know I'll get it all mixed up if I don't read it from the original sources.

But I want to talk to you, I'll just read to you, this will save time if I try to talk. The more I don't know about something, the longer it takes me to talk about it, for some reason. But since I know less about these things, as far as explaining them is concerned, I'll just read directly and save time.

One of the developments in what's called the Dark Ages was that there was tremendous insecurity throughout the empire because of these Viking and Muslim and Magyar invasions. And also other invaders came in. There were Scandinavian invaders also.

And these invasions just kept the whole empire in disarray. And things were almost entirely in anarchy, without any real effective rule over society. So what developed out of this, for the sense of people wanting security, was what's called feudalism.

And feudalism was an arrangement between landowners. Usually a powerful landowner would make an agreement with some less powerful landowners that they would provide him with troops. He would form an army.

They'd provide him with troops, and he would protect them. And of course, eventually this was a system of lords and serfs. The serfs were the vassals, and the lords were the landowners who were the most powerful.

Serfs were like half slave and half free. And they weren't entirely slaves. They could not be sold from the land they were on.

But they were not free either. They couldn't leave the land they were on. But they could be enlisted by their lords to serve in sort of a military defense of the whole serfdom there.

And that's called feudalism. Let me read you just a paragraph here. This comes from Kenneth Laderet's classic work, *A History of Christianity, Volume 1*. He said, Feudalism rapidly developed.

Its roots went back before the time of Charlemagne, but it now began to flourish. It was partly the result of the weakening of the monarchy and the desire for security in an age of disorder. It was also in part the outgrowth of an agricultural economy in which commerce had dwindled, towns were few and small, and money was scarce.

This sounds like conditions after Y2K. The weaker landowners put themselves under the protection of the stronger, and in return made contributions to their lord in the form of contingents for his armed forces and in other forms of service. The system was based upon land which was usually cultivated by serfs who were half free and half slave, who could not be sold from the soil which they tilled, but they could not leave it.

The major occupation of the feudal lords was fighting, and war among them was chronic. This warfare made commerce and other peaceful pursuits difficult and produced a sag in morals. There's more, but I won't read any more on that.

That's one development that led to the Dark Ages. There just was no really powerful central government that could hold society together, and things developed into localized serfdoms and a feudal system that really Europe was divided up into these warring

feudal lords and so forth, and society was fairly anarchistic at that time. Now, the other development that made the Dark Ages as dark as they were was the condition of the popes.

It was during this time that the popes were about as bad as can be imagined. So bad, in fact, that the period from 904 to 963 is often called by historians the pornography, the rule of the harlots, literally. And again, I'll read to you because there's quite a bit of detail.

I've got a couple of books basically talking about the same period that I'd like to read from. This is Austin's topical history of Christianity about this period of the rule of the harlots. Let me read to you, get some idea of how the papacy was doing in these days.

It says, 48 popes served during this period. Only a few were honorable men, and some suffered unimaginable crimes and indignities. Pope John VIII from 872 to 882 was beaten to death with a hammer by his own relatives when the poison they had given him did not work fast enough.

Three inconsequential popes followed in rapid succession over the next nine years. Pope Formosus, this is humorous if not so tragic, Pope Formosus from 891 to 892, was the only one who had a hammer. Pope John VIII in 896 was a dangerous schemer capable of treachery and sedition.

His followers were thieves and assassins, and in his ecclesiastical affairs he behaved as if the ends justified the means. He was crowned Lambert of Spoleto as Holy Roman Emperor in 894, but repudiated his own choice and crowned Arnulf of Germany in 896. After Formosus died, the mother of the deposed Lambert had the body of Formosus exhumed, clothed again in the papal robes, and tried in public court.

He was found guilty of treachery, and the royal orders conferred on him, and all the decrees he had issued were declared null and void. The three fingers he used to bestow the papal blessing were cut off, his vestments and insignia were stripped from his dead body, and his corpse was dragged through the streets of Rome and thrown into the River Tiber. From 896 to 904 there were ten popes, one of whom ruled four months, one only one month, and still another only twenty days.

Then began the so-called pornocracy, during which Theodora and her two daughters, Theodora the Younger and Marozia, virtually controlled Rome and the church itself. Enticing harlots, these women had sold their bodies for positions, titles, and land, giving them widespread power. Marozia, one of the daughters, had an illicit affair with Pope Sergius III, from which was born a son who later became Pope John XI.

When Marozia sought to have herself crowned empress, her younger son, Albrecht, kidnapped and imprisoned his mother, incarcerated his half-brother, the Pope, and

became emperor himself. He reigned from 932 to 954, exercising absolute control over the papacy. After Albrecht's death, his son Octavian was elected as Pope John XII, and proved to be the most odious member of his depraved family.

In 962, the wicked John XII crowned the German king Otto I as emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. Thinking he had an ally in depravity, John soon found that the new emperor to be a man of character, and devoted to restoring the papacy to decency and honor. When Otto assembled a synod to discuss deposing Pope John, the Pope threatened them all with excommunication, but they deposed him anyway.

Three months later, John called another synod, which rescinded what Otto's synod had done. Therefore, Otto decided upon force to rid the papacy of its evil ruler. But as he prepared to attack Rome, John XII died suddenly, presumably assassinated by someone he had wronged.

Otto I served as a welcome relief from papal abuses, and proved himself an able ruler and a dedicated Christian. The popes who served during his reign were at least dignified and respectable. A little later, though, it says, the next 42 years of papal history were filled with intense rivalry, expedient mediocrity, spiritual impotence, vice, and corruption.

It seemed to reach its lowest depth with the election of a degenerate 12-year-old boy, Pope Benedict IX, who after a shameful debauchery and erratic administration, sold the Holy Tiara to the highest bidder. He was known as Gregory VI, that is, the highest bidder was. And it says, and in the end, he was forced to abdicate because of his simony.

Simony is selling offices for money, church offices for money. There's another brief summary of this period from Haley's Bible handbook, has a section in the background on church history, and about the reign of the harlots. I'd just like to read to you a little bit, some of the same information is here and some different.

Haley writes, Sergius III, the Pope from 904 to 911, said to have had a mistress, Marozia. She, her mother Theodora and her sister, filled the papal chair with their paramours, that's of course lovers, and bastard sons, and turned the royal palace into a den of robbers, called in history, the rule of the harlots. Anastasius III from 911 to 913, Lando from 913 to 914, and John X from 914 to 928, was brought from Ravenna to Rome and made Pope by Theodora for the express purpose of more convenient gratification of her passions.

So she brought her lover from Ravenna to Rome to make him Pope so she could have an affair with him. He was smothered to death by Marozia, the daughter, who then in succession raised to the papacy Leo VI and Stephen VII and John XI, her own illegitimate son. Another of her sons appointed the four following Popes, Leo VII, Stephen VIII, Martin III, and Agapetus II.

John XII from 955 to 963, a grandson of Marosia, was the Pope of Marosia, was guilty of almost every crime, violated virgins and widows, high and low, lived with his father's mistress, made the papal palace a brothel, and killed while in the, he was killed in the act of adultery by the woman's enraged husband. So one of the Popes was killed while committing the act of adultery, murdered by her husband. This is just a little bit of it.

There's more. I don't want to read the rest. I want to leave on an edifying note, which is a little hard when we break off in the dark ages.

What's amazing about this whole thing is that this history of the papacy, not all the Popes in history were bad men. Pope Gregory, Pope Leo, some of the Popes were decent guys. It's even probable that the current Pope is a decent man.

Whether he's a true Christian, in the sense the Bible uses that word, I cannot say. I don't know. To me it's very hard to know how a true follower of Christ could head up such an organization as the Roman Catholic Church and claim to himself such powers over souls of people as the Popes, they do claim.

It's hard to know how anyone who believes in Jesus and follows Jesus would allow himself to be in that position. But nonetheless, we'll have to leave it to God to make the final decision about the salvation of the better Popes. We can say that many of the Popes have been decent men and men of conscience.

But there have also been Popes who are in no sense Christian and in no sense decent. And yet, of course, the Roman Catholic Church to this day believes that every Pope that ever was was a successor of Peter and had authority like the Apostles over the whole Church. And it seems extremely difficult to sustain this view when one studies the history of the Popes.

I mean, that there were actual adulterers who were serving as Pope, and the Bible says no adulterer is going to inherit the Kingdom of God. And here we have men who will not inherit the Kingdom of God, and yet we're told that they had the keys to the Kingdom because they sat in Peter's chair. This theology has definitely got something wrong with it.

And that is one of the reasons why not only the Protestant Reformation, but many within the Catholic movement, opposed the Papacy. The Franciscan monks, an order that rose later under St. Francis, they opposed the Papacy eventually, and they never did become Protestants. But we'll have more to say about some of those things later on.

We have followed the Middle Ages into the most degrading period, and actually some rather positive things by comparison happened in the following centuries, although some very awful things happened too. We have the Inquisitions. We have the Crusades.

We have some bad things yet to come to study, but we have some better, more cheerful

things too. And of course, eventually we have the Reformation. Now next time what I plan to do is take the remaining nine items on this list of 15 principal events in the Middle Ages.

And then in the lecture after that, I want to talk about what I consider to be probably the true church during the time of the Middle Ages and the movements that arose that were in opposition to the Papacy. Most of them were killed by the Inquisitions. But nonetheless, it would appear that Jesus had some true followers in those days too.

And so we'll talk about those, and then we'll get on to Reformation and post-Reformation times.