

World Religions

Revelation 2-3

The Protestant Reformation- Part 1

Wednesday, April 22nd 2026

A. Factors Behind the Decline of the Roman Church- The Sardis Church Period

1. Factors leading to the decline of Roman Catholicism

- a. The failure of the Crusades-
 - Promises of victory proved to be false as the Crusades were miserable failure
- b. The peak of Papal corruption-
 - Arrogant abuse of power and double standards eventually wears thin
 - The double standard results in one of two responses:
 - Rejection of the power and control of the clergy
 - The level of corruption regarding the wealth of the church
- c. The kings of Europe began to resist the popes-
 - European monarchs were in constant conflict for power and control- Henry the VIII
- d. The Renaissance- The rebirth of learning
 - The Renaissance was not a spiritual revival of faith but more about secular learning and knowledge
 - The Renaissance produced the greatest artists of history such as Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci Rafael
 - It also opened the door for learned men like Dante, Shakespeare, Galileo and Sir Isaac Newton

2. Early Lights in the Midst of Darkness- Sardis Period

- a. John Wycliffe, (1320-1394)- The “Morning Star of the Reformation”
 - First published and English translation of the Bible and placed it in the hands of the common man
 - His Bible was the first book off the Gutenberg press in 1456
- b. John Huss (1466-1536)- Bohemian Pastor from what is modern day Czech Republic-
 - John huss was born a peasant which means, that in the Catholic feudal system he had very little opportunity for education or to improve his lot in life
 - He learned to read and write and was greatly influenced by the writings of John Wycliffe he was ordained to the ministry in 1401 in Prague and immediately stirred the pot ire of the Roman church
 - His is plain preaching of salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ and not the church
- c. Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536)- Language Scholar-
 - He is best Known for his contributions in preserving the true line of Biblical manuscripts
 - Erasmus was a brilliant language scholar the illegitimate son of a Catholic priest
 - He was raised in the Catholic church and witnessed firsthand its corruption.
 - He taught at Cambridge University and one of his students was William Tyndale
 - He was a contemporary of Martin Luther and they were personally acquainted

B. Facts Behind the Protestant Reformers/Reformation- The Philadelphian Church Period- (Man, Movement, Machine, Monument)

1. Martin Luther (1483-1546) and the German Reformation-

a. Martin Luther was born November 10th, 1483, to a poor common feudal surf family. His father was a peasant miner

- Martin was nine years old when Columbus sailed to the new world
- He began his studies in theology and was ordained a Catholic priest in 1507

b. Luther's Impact-

- Martin Luther continued his studies in theology at the university of Wittenberg Germany and was a committed Catholic priest.
- In November of 1510 he traveled to Rome to get a better understanding of what his faith was all about
- His eyes were opened as he saw the abuses and corruption and cardinality up close and persona. It disillusioned him against the Pope but not against the church. However, he could not find peace in his soul. Being a good Catholic, Martin believed that salvation was obtained by good works and receiving the sacraments.
- In 1514 while in studies and still not able to find peace, he found himself in Romans chapter 1. His eyes fell upon 6 words in verse 17 "The Just Shall Live by Faith". that verse changed his life and began what we know today as the Protestant Reformation.
- By 1517 Luther had detailed his major disagreement with the practices of the church.
- The main issue was indulgences for sin. Luther did not initially deny the Pope the right to grant indulgences but was appalled at its abuses. Upon returning home, he posted his famous 95 thesis on the door of the Wittenberg cathedral all dealing with the issue of indulgences.
- Shortly after his after his conversion Luther began preaching a series in the book of Romans. He won a massive following in Germany preaching salvation by grace through faith and the sole authority of the Bible.
- In June 151520 Pope Leo the 10th excommunicated Luther and issued a papal pull against him
- Martin Luther sits at the top of the list of God's men who made a mark on the world

2. John Calvin (1509-1564) and the French Reformation-

a. John Calvin is considered the second most famous reformer

- Luther paved the way for John Calvin and the message of grace through faith which spread throughout Switzerland
- In 1536 John Calvin published his most famous work the institutes of the Christian religion which formed the doctrinal basis of the French and Swiss reformations

b. Calvin's Impact-

- In 1541 Calvin moved to Geneva Switzerland and was successful in establishing what has been termed the "Perfect Christian Society" it was a theocratic/ autocratic system modeled after the Roman church/state religion, except for the fact that the persecuted became the persecutors. Bible reading and church attendance was mandated by law. The mass was outlawed with a penalty of death.
- John Calvin was referred to as the Protestant Pope because of his theocratic rule in Geneva.
- Calvinism theology is prevalent in many mainline denominations to this day.

3. Huldreich Zwingli (1484-1531) and the Swiss Reformation-

a. Zwingli the Swiss Reformer-

- Zwingli like Luther and Calvin was ordained a Catholic priest.
- In 1520 after reading Luther's writings he was converted by the end of 1522.

b. Zwingli's Impact-

- Zwingli stated that only the pure word of God was to be preached in Switzerland and within a few year more years cities throughout Switzerland had banned the mass, images and relics and adopted reformed theology as the law of the land.

4. John Knox (1513-1572) and the Scottish Reformation-

a. John Knox the Scottish Reformer-

- Knox was educated at the University of Glasgow Scotland and ordained to the priesthood in 1530.
- Two years earlier, a man by the name of Patrick Hamilton had visited Wittenberg Germany and was converted after reading Luther's writings.
- Hamilton was instrumental in the conversion of John Knox. Knox later became the leader of the Scottish reformation from St. Andrews castle.
- A few years later, the French army captured the castle and held Knox as a slave in France.

b. Knox's Impact-

- In 1559, Knox Returned to Scotland and immediately gained a large and loyal following
- The pent-up zeal for the word of God among the common man made it nearly impossible for Rome to keep a lid on things.

5. The Reformation Denominations- The Reformation resulted in an explosion of Protestant denominations throughout Europe. The following is a list of the major Protestant denomination that came out of the Protestant Reformation.

- a. Lutheran- Marth Luther (1529)
- b. Anglican/Episcopal – Henry VIII (1534)- The English Reformation
- c. Mennonite – Menmo Simon (1536)
- d. Presbyterian- John Knox (1560)
- e. Congregationalist- Henry Jacob (1606)
- f. Quaker- Geroqe fox (1652)
- g. Methodist- John Wesley (1739)

C. Failures Behind the Protestant Reformation-

1. Protestants futile attempt to reform the Roman church- The reformers aimed to reform the Roman church with the Bible. As we learned in our previous study the Bible is not the final authority of the Roman church.

2. Protestants continue to practice Catholic doctrines and practices. Mass, hierarchal clergy system (doctrine of the Nicolaitans)

3. Establishment of Protestant state religions