

## Lesson 2

# THE POST-APOSTOLIC PERIOD

A.D. 100 – 600

*“But the Spirit saith expressly, that in the later times some shall fall away from the faith...” (1 Timothy 4:1)*

### I. INTRODUCTION.

#### A. The Study of History is Profitable.

1. Old Testament writers appealed to history (Deut. 1-3; Psa. 78; Isa. 51:1-2).
2. Jesus (Mt. 12:40-42), Paul (1 Cor. 10:1-12), the author of Hebrews (Heb. 4:1-11), James (Jas. 5:17-18), Peter (2 Pet. 2:4-9; 3:3-5), and Jude (Jude 5-7) all appealed to history to make their point.
3. We follow their example and appeal to history to learn important lessons for the Lord’s church today.
4. It has been said: “Those who ignore history are destined to repeat it.” It has also been said: “All we learn from history is that we learn nothing from history.”

#### B. Why This Particular Study Is Profitable.

1. The post-apostolic period is a period of the beginning of full-blown apostasy within the NT church. It is important to understand when, where, and why apostasy began within the Lord’s church.

#### C. Understanding Some Terms.

1. The “Post-Apostolic” period is the period after (post) the death of the apostles and those who personally knew the apostles.
2. The “Apostolic Fathers” were a group of men who knew some of the original apostles and who lived at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century and the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century (Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Polycarp, etc.).
3. The “Ante-Nicene” (before Nicaea) period runs from 100 to 325.
4. The “Ante-Nicene Fathers” were a group of men who lived after the “Apostolic Fathers” and before the Council of Nicaea in 325 (Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, etc.).

#### D. Five Key Marks of the Post-Apostolic Period.

1. Persecution of the NT church.
2. Further departures from the faith (see Lesson 1, IV. Apostasy in the Future).
3. Men and their movements.
4. Councils and their creeds.
5. Union of Church and State.

#### E. Five “P’s” Behind the Apostasies of the Post-Apostolic Period.

1. Pride.
2. Power.
3. Prominence / Prestige.

4. Promiscuity.
5. Passivity.

## II. PERSECUTION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH.

A. Review Lesson 1, New Testament Church Persecution.

B. Some Principle Persecutors.

1. Pliny, governor of Bithynia (in modern Turkey) wrote Emperor Trajan about how Christians should be treated, c. 108-111. He wrote that Christians were to be interrogated and if they did not renounce Christ they were to be punished.
2. Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus (161 – 180) persecuted “atheist” Christians and blamed wars, disease, and natural disasters on them. Christians were tortured by being made to pass over thorns and nails. Others were scourged.
3. Emperor Commodus (180 – 192 A. D.) treated Christians slightly better because of the influence of his concubine, Marcia.
4. Emperors Severus (193 - 211), Decius (249), Valerian (257 - 258), and Aurelian (274) all upheld policies to persecute “atheist” Christians. The Decian campaign was the first empire-wide persecution of Christians and the bloodiest yet for Christians. Dionysius (c. 260 – 268), a bishop in Rome, tried to restore Church order after the ravages of Valerian’s persecution.
5. Emperor Gallienus (260 – 300), son of Valerian, introduced a brief period of peace for Christians under the first Edict of Toleration. Bishops were restored to their Churches and Christians were not forced to worship Roman civic deities.
6. Emperor Diocletian (284 – 305) issued edicts for scripture manuscripts and church buildings to be burned (in some cases with worshippers inside) and religious leaders tortured. His campaign against Christians was known as the Great Persecution and was the most organized and extensive campaign against Christian yet seen in the Roman Empire. Persecution continued until 312.
7. Emperor Galerius (311) was more tolerant of Christians.
8. Emperor Constantine (306 – 337) issued an Edict of Toleration calling for the end the Great Persecution (313, Edit of Milan).
  - a) Constantine legally recognized Sunday as a day of worship in 321. He gave State money to followers of Christianity to build church buildings and he excused religious leaders from serving in public office (and paying taxes) to give time to their religious work. Christianity would become the dominate religion in Rome and the Church and (Roman) State would be joined together.
  - b) Helena (c. 255 – 330), mother of Constantine, was also a passionate supporter of Christianity and led a significant excursion to the Holy Lands in 326.
  - c) Major building projects began at this time: Church of St. John Lateran in Rome (313), Church of St. Peter in Rome (320), Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem (325), Church of the Holy Sepulcher (326), and the city of Byzantium was given the name Constantinople (328).
  - d) Armenia, under King Tiridates III, was the first kingdom to adopt Christianity as it national religion (c. 314).
9. Emperor Julian (361 – 363) was a pagan, non-Christian Roman emperor who exiled Christian leaders and closed church building. But, Theodosius I (379 – 395) was a staunch supporter of Christianity and made it the official religion of Rome in 380. He was the last emperor to rule over the united Roman Empire. After his death, one son, Arcadius (395 – 408) ruled over the East, and the other son, Honorius (395 – 423), ruled over the West.

C. Some Prominent Martyrs.

1. Ignatius of Antioch was thrown to the wild beasts in Rome during the reign of Trajan, c. 107.
2. Polycarp, a bishop of Smyrna (c. 69 – 156), was burned at the stake for his faith during the reign of Marcus Aurelius, c. 156.
3. Victor of Rome, Irenaeus, and Christian women (Perpetua and Felicitas) were put to death during the reign of Septimius Severus. Under Maximus, many Christians were slain without trial.
4. Justin Martyr was beheaded, c. 165
5. Pothinus (c. 87 – 177), a bishop of Lyons, was executed along with all Christians who would not recant.
6. Alban, the first known British martyr, died in 304 during the Great Persecution of Diocletian. Catherine of Alexandria was a scholar and virgin martyred on a spiked torture wheel in Alexandria, c. 305.
7. A “cult of martyrs” was formed by Christians who recorded the deaths of martyrs, venerated the bodies of martyrs, celebrated the anniversaries of martyrs, and enthusiastically embraced martyrdom themselves. A list of martyrs and the dates of their death called the *Synaxarium* was drawn up by the Church, c. 303.

D. Some Reasons for Persecution.

1. Christians were opposed to many elements of Roman religion (such as the multiplicity of gods, Emperor worship, idolatry and sacrifices). Christians were “obstinate” and did not worship the emperor or incorporate local gods into their worship. They were known as “atheists” because they did not worship the Roman gods. At the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century, about 7.500 of the 60 million in population claimed to be followers of “the Way” of Christ.
2. Christians were viewed as an offspring of fanatical Judaism and their assemblies were held in suspicion (the Lord's supper).
3. Christians were different in how they treated others (masters and slaves), how they conducted business, and how they approached human philosophies (Stoics and Epicureans).
4. Christians were charged with causing natural disasters like famines, pestilence, and plagues.

E. Some Reactions to Persecutions.

1. Some spread the gospel like those Christians did in Acts 8:1-4.
2. Some Christians became apostates by renouncing and recanting their faith to save their lives. Cornelius (c. 253), a bishop in Rome, was faced with the problem of what to do with these Christians who gave into persecution and what constituted a lapse in faith. Cornelius was lenient toward these defectors. However, Novatian (c. 258), took a more rigorous stance against them. He formed a schismatic movement to denounce all Christians who compromised their faith. The Novatians were followed by the Donatists (Donatus Magnus, c. 355) who also formed a schismatic group and claimed to be the one, loyal, true Church.
3. Many Christians, however, endured, suffered, and even died for their faith (Rev. 1:9; 6:9).

### III. FURTHER DEPARTURES FROM THE FAITH.

#### A. Departures in Doctrine.

1. Doctrine that was consistent with the teaching of the NT was called “orthodoxy” (lit. straight teaching) and doctrine that was contrary to the NT was called “heterodoxy” (lit. different teaching). Followers of “heterodox” teaching were called “heretics.”
2. Departures from sound doctrine will come when 1) one approaches the Bible with pre-conceived ideas; 2) one uses improper methods of Bible study; 3) one relies upon the convictions of men to interpret the Bible; and 4) one is influenced by the social, political, and religious conditions around him.
3. Some Post-Apostolic controversies.
  - a) The Arian controversy involved the doctrine of the Trinity and the relationship of the Father to the Son. Arius (c. 250 – 336), a bishop of Alexandria, taught that Jesus was created as a lower God (following John 1:1-3), was not the same nature as God the Father, and was not eternal. Athanasius (c. 328), later a bishop of Alexandria, opposed this heresy at the Council of Nicea (325). Boethius (c. 480 – 524) would later be charged with treason and executed for disagreeing with Arianism.
  - b) The Appolinarian controversy involved the nature of the Jesus Christ.
  - c) The Augustine-Pelagian controversy involved the sin, the free-will, and the salvation of mankind. Augustine joined the Gnostic Manichees in 373 and was later made a bishop of Hippo (Annaba in Algeria) in 386. He taught that all men have inherited the guilt of Adam’s sin and have had no choice in their salvation. Man’s freedom to choose good or evil has been taken away. Salvation can come only of God to certain people chosen by God. Pelagius, a British monk active in Rome (c. 383 – 410), believed that a man chooses to sin and he has a free-will and chooses whether or not he wants to be saved according to God’s plan of salvation. Augustine’s view prevailed among the bishops at the Council of Ephesus (431), but his views were not universally accepted. Augustine wrote *Confessions* (387), *The Trinity* (399), and *The City of God* (412).
4. Jewish heresies.
  - a) Heresies came from some Christians with Jewish backgrounds. These Christians (1) were trusting of the Old Testament scriptures; (2) were converted from Judaism; and (3) were inclined to return to their former teachings.
  - b) The Ebionites, prominent in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Centuries, believed that Jesus was the Messiah and a prophet, but a mere man. They believed that circumcision and the observance of the Old Law was necessary for salvation and that Paul was an apostate and heretic. They believed that Jesus would return in their lifetime and build his kingdom in Jerusalem.
  - c) The Mandaean followed John the Baptist their departed leader.
5. Gnostic heresies.
  - a) Gnostics (Gr. *gnosis*, or knowledge; lit. knowing ones) flourished in Alexandria and Egypt. They believed in a dualistic world where the material world was created by an evil god (*Demiurge*) and the spiritual world was created by a good god.
  - b) Gnosticism combined Bible teachings with Greek philosophies. Gnostics taught four major theories: First, the Higher God, as spirit, did not create a material world. The Higher God is good and all matter is evil, therefore the Higher God

did not create the world. Second, the Lesser God (Jehovah of the OT) was a evil God who created the evil material world. Third, according to Gnostics all matter is evil (including the flesh), therefore Jesus did not come in the flesh. He only appeared to come in the flesh. This was the doctrine of Docetism (lit. appearance). Fourth, salvation was not forgiveness of sins, but man's freedom from the material world (including his body) through asceticism and special knowledge that comes from spirit beings (aeons from God).

c) Cerinthus (a contemporary with the Apostle John), Basilides, and Valentinus were three prominent Gnostics. Mani of Persia (c. 216 – 276) taught Gnosticism and Manichaeism was probably the most persistent of the heretical Gnostic movements.

6. Other heresies.

a) Marcion of Sinope (c. 85 - 160), another Gnostic, denied the Old Testament, believed the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament were two different beings, repudiated marriage, claimed that all matter is evil, and accepted only the writings of Paul and Luke. His beliefs became known as Marcionism. Marcion was branded as a "heretic" in 144.

b) Montanus (c. 170) believed in the continuation of miraculous gifts after the apostles died, direct revelation from God, the priesthood of men and women, asceticism, and the earthly millennial reign of Jesus. Tertullian became a Montanist in 208.

B. Departures in Worship and Practice.

1. Holy water (108-112), fasting and Lent (140), infant baptism, sprinkling and pouring water for baptism (180), and the "sign of the cross" (190).
2. Offerings for the dead (200), purgatory (230), celibacy (250), observance of Easter (325) and Christmas (360) as religious holy days, priestly absolving of sins and penance, and auricular confession (329).
3. Candles (417), the adoration and veneration of the Virgin Mary was substituted for the worship of Venus and Diana (470), the Lord's Supper was changed from a memorial to a sacrifice and sacrament with special blessings, transubstantiation – a mass (350, 492).
4. Images of saints and martyrs worshipped (500), and extreme unction (528).
5. Selling indulgences (650) and instrumental music (670, 755).

C. Departures in Organization.

1. A departure in organization came when men desired to rule over others (3 Jn. 9). Departures in doctrine (heresies) also led to a departure in organization because "Presiding Bishops" were selected to answer the heresies.
2. From the time c. 100 – 150, the idea of a leading bishop was developed. Ignatius of Antioch was one who advocated this idea. Later, Cyprian promoted the same idea, c. 250. The departure in organization led to a monarchical (one rule) bishop arrangement and centralized organization. This departure took several steps:
  - a) Step 1 – a distinction was made between a "bishop" and "elder" (see Acts 20:17,28-30; Tit. 1:5,7).
  - b) Step 2 – an extension of the authority of the bishop was allowed to go beyond the local church (see 1 Peter 5:2-3).
  - c) Step 3 – a combining of churches of a large area was made under a single government called a "diocese" with a "diocesan bishop" in charge. A "presiding elder" or "monarchical bishop" was selected to rule over the other elders and he

looked after an area of people called a “diocese.” There were “City Bishops,” “Country Bishops,” and “Metropolitan Bishops” depending upon the size of the territory. These “bishops” met together in Councils and Synods to form Church doctrine.

- d) Step 4 – an area of control with five “Patriarchs” centered around five major cities by the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century: Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, and Constantinople.
  - e) Step 5 – a pope is selected to rule over all the Church. In 606, Boniface III who was “Patriarch” of Rome took on the title of Universal Bishop (see Lesson 3).
3. A clergy (Church leaders) – laity (Church members) distinction was also formed, c. 150 between the leadership in a Church and its members. The clergy, or “priesthood,” took on special titles and wore special garments. This was a departure from Mt. 23:5-12; Acts 10:26; 14:15; 1 Peter 2:5-9; Rev. 19:10; 22:8-9.

#### D. Departures in Character.

- 1. Periods of peace caused some to become weak and decline in their spiritual devotion. Some focused on wealth and luxury (Rev. 3:15-19). Others neglected the poor (James 2:1ff; 5:1ff).

### IV. MEN AND THEIR MOVEMENTS.

#### A. Men of the Post-Apostolic Period.

- 1. The Apostolic Fathers and Apologists.
  - a) Clement I was a bishop in Rome and wrote about bishops and intra-Church factionalism, c. 96 (*First Epistle to the Corinthians*).
  - b) Ignatius of Antioch wrote about bishops and insisted that without the presence of a bishop, both marriage and the Eucharist (Lord’s supper) were invalid.
  - c) Polycarp was a bishop at Smyrna and gave his life for his faith at age 86.
  - d) Aristides of Athens (died c. 140), Justin Martyr (c. 100 – 165) and others were known as “apologists” and wrote to defend the faith against heretics. They attempted to prove the existence of God and the validity of Christianity. The “apologies” of these men were often addressed to Roman emperors and senators.
  - e) Irenaus (c. 130 – 200) was a bishop in Lyons, France (c. 178), and wrote *Against Heresies* (c. 185). He defended apostolic authority and the authority of both the Old and New Testament.
  - f) Hippolytus wrote *Apostolic Tradition* (c. 220) in an attempt to preserve Church order and structure. This document, in fact, contained teaching about the Church that was not apostolic.
- 2. Alexandrians.
  - a) Clement of Alexandria Egypt (c. 150 – 215), interpreted the scriptures allegorically instead of historically, was head of a catechetical school, and defended orthodox Christianity against Greek and Gnostic philosophies.
  - b) Origen (c. 185 – 251), a student of Clement, was also a head of the catechetical school, wrote many books (*Hexapla*, *On First Principles*, etc.) and held to the doctrine of universalism.
  - c) Cyril (c. 376 – 444) was known for his precise reasoning and uncompromising style. He promoted the term *Theotokos* (God-bearer) for the Virgin Mary.

3. North Africa.
    - a) Tertullian (c. 160 – 225) from Carthage wrote many works in Latin and is known for his famous “Apology” (c. 197).
    - b) Cyprian was a bishop in Carthage and considered Tertullian his “master”. He fled the Decian persecutions in 249, returned to Carthage, and demanded that anyone baptized by a schismatic (for example, the Novatianists) or heretic be rebaptized in order to enjoy full communion with the true Church.
  4. Jerome promoted the monastic life and wrote many works in Latin. He translated the entire Bible into Latin (the Latin Vulgate; “Vulgate” meaning common tongue). He believed that the Old Testament should follow the Hebrew canon of 39 books and excluded the books of the Apocrypha (c. 386).
  5. Preachers.
    - a) Ambrose was a bishop in Milan without being baptized (c. 375). He wrote *On the Duties of the Clergy* and he emphasized emulating the Virgin Mary. He also castigated the Emperor Theodosius for killing over 7,000 citizens in Thessalonica leading the emperor to submit to penance. Ambrose’ famous maxim concerning this act was: “The emperor indeed is within the church, not above the church.”
    - b) John Chrysostom was made a Patriarch in Constantinople in 398 and was known for his “golden-mouthed” preaching. He was put to death in 407 for preaching against wickedness.
  6. Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea, was called the “Father of Church History” and he wrote his famous *Ecclesiastical History* in 325.
- B. Movements of the Post-Apostolic Period.
1. Monasticism.
    - a) Monasticism (*monos*, alone; and *askesis*, to exercise) was a movement to encourage separation from the world in order to serve God acceptably. It was a life of celibacy, vegetarianism, asceticism (bodily self-denial), poverty, and contemplative retirement from the activities of the “world” (not just sinful things, but the affairs of life). Monks living in monasteries soon replaced the martyrs in popularity during the Post-Apostolic period. Some Jewish Essences and Greek Cynic philosophers had practiced forms of monasticism even before the time of Christ.
    - b) Anthony of Thebes in Egypt (c. 251 – 356), using the words of Jesus in Matthew 19:21, began a movement to retire and withdraw from the wicked world around him and live as a desert hermit. His cenobite communities soon flourished in Egypt and Syria. This movement led to the formation of monks and nuns and the Coptic Church of the fourth and fifth centuries.
    - c) There are many examples of monasticism from this time period. Pachomius (292 – 346) and Shenoute (334 – 450) were two prominent desert monks who formed monastic communities in Egypt and North Africa. Simon the Stylite was a “pillar-saint” who lived on a pillar 60 feet above the ground. Pachomius formed a monastic community (“cenobite”) on the Nile River and practiced chastity, poverty, and renunciation of the will. Basil of Caesarea and Benedict of Nursia (480 - 550) were well-known among the founders of monasteries. Benedictine monasteries were popular during the Post-Apostolic period in Italy. Columbanus (543 – 615) from Ireland established monasteries in Germany and later in Italy. Two orders of monasticism that have come from the Roman Catholic Church are the Jesuits and the Franciscans. Martin of

Tours (335 – 400) was the father of monasticism in Gaul (France). Jerome (342 – 420) founded monasticism in Italy.

- d) Monastic orders produced literary works and preachers who evangelized as missionaries, established other monasteries, and “converted” large numbers at one time. Patrick was a missionary to Ireland. Columba (521-597) was a missionary to Scotland and Britain. Augustine (not Augustine of Hippo) was a missionary to the Anglo-Saxons in 596. Later, Bede, a monk and scholar, would write a history of the Church in England (731).
  - e) Monasticism was a departure from Mt. 5:13-16; 10:1ff; Jn. 17:14-15; Phil. 2:15; 1 Tim. 4:3 and 1 Pet. 2:11-12.
2. The Papacy.
- a) The development of an ecclesiastical (Church) hierarchy (rule) among the bishops soon led to the development of Papal power. The Presiding Bishops (Patriarchs) who lived in Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, and Constantinople (the capital of the Roman Empire in 325 B.C.) rivaled for power. The Bishop of Rome at this time called himself “Papa” or Pope (from the Latin, father). When the political capital of Rome moved to Ravenna, c. 404, the bishops who remained in Rome became the significant officials in the Church. Innocent I (401 - 417), Celestine I (422 – 432), and Leo the Great (440 – 461) were all given authority over the Church in the West.
  - b) Both Leo the Great (440) and Gregory the Great (590 to 604) believed themselves to be the leader in Rome who was over all other bishops. Gregory the Great is known as the “architect of the medieval papacy” because he promoted the idea of papal supremacy that would later crystallize during the Medieval Period.
  - c) In 588, John the Faster, Bishop of Constantinople, took on the title of “Universal Bishop of the Church” (ecumenical patriarch). He was challenged by Pelagius II (579 – 590) and Gregory I (590 – 604). John was called the antichrist by Gregory I for asserting his authority. The bishops in Rome and Constantinople began to assert their authority one over the other during these years. Finally, in 606, the Emperor took away this title from John and conferred it upon Boniface III then Pope of Rome. The date 606 marks the beginning of the fully organized Roman Catholic Church with the Pope of Rome as its head. Christianity spread to Ethiopia, Armenia, and Ireland at this time.
  - d) The Roman Catholic Church argues that the Papacy goes back to Peter, the first Pope. However, Peter was not the first pope because: 1) Peter is not the foundation of the church, Christ is (Mt. 16:18; 1 Cor. 3:11); 2) Peter was married (Lk. 4:38); and 3) Peter refused worship (Acts 10:25-26); and 4) Peter was fallible (Gal. 2:11-14).
  - e) The Papacy was a departure from Acts 20:28 and 1 Cor. 3:11.

## V. COUNCILS AND THEIR CREEDS.

### A. Councils.

1. Departures from the faith (heresies) led to the formation of “ecumenical (world-wide) councils (assemblies).” Presiding bishops from different places around the world convened to discuss and form Church doctrine. Latins used the word “council” and Greeks used the word “synod.” Rules or laws passed by the councils were called “canons.”



2. Councils were formed 1) by Emperors who wanted to keep peace among Christians; 2) to have a standard of authority (creed) to solve Church problems; and 3) to provide a means of excommunication to anyone who did not agree with the council.
3. It is interesting to note that a Bishop of Rome did not attend these early councils and a Bishop of Rome did not call for these early councils. Yet, today, the Roman Catholic Church takes credit for calling and conducting these councils.

B. Seven Ecumenical Councils.

1. The First Council of Nicaea (325). Emperor Constantine called together 318 bishops in Nicaea of Bithynia (Iznik in Turkey) to discuss the Arian controversy (concerning the nature of Christ) and other religious matters such as the observance of Easter. The "Nicene Creed" was formed to teach orthodoxy. The crucial term *homoousios* was placed in this creed to teach that Jesus was "of one substance" with the Father. Christianity was recognized as the State religion and the leadership of Church (bishops) and State (Constantine) joined hands. Athanasius was a prominent defender of orthodoxy at this council. Later, the "Athenasian Creed" mentioning the "trinity" would be formed in the fifth century.
2. The First Council of Constantinople (381). Emperor Theodosius called together 150 bishops to discuss the incarnation of Jesus, the nature of the Holy Spirit, and other matters. This council outlawed Arian congregations and confiscated property held by heretical groups.
3. The Council of Ephesus (431). Emperor Theodosius called together 158 bishops to discuss the role of Mary and the heretical views of Nestorius about Jesus' nature. Nestorius (c. 381 – 451), Patriarch of Constantinople, recommended that Mary be called *Anthropotokos* (man-bearer). However, it was decided at this council that Mary would be called *theotokos* (God-bearer), "Mary the mother of God." Mary was worshipped and venerated after this council. Nestorius came from the Antiochene school of theology that stressed the humanity of Jesus at the expense of his deity and Cyril came from the Alexandrian school of theology which stressed the deity of Jesus at the expense of his humanity. Nestorius was excommunicated and died in exile. The result of this council was a schism between the Churches in Alexandria and Rome and the Churches in Syria and Mesopotamia. Nestorianism later found its way into Seleucia (Iraq), Edessa and Nisibis (Turkey).
4. The Council of Chalcedon (451). In opposition to Nestorianism, Eutyches formulated the view in 448 that Jesus was too divine to be of any moral or spiritual relevance for normal humans. At the Council of Chalcedon, the Emperor Marcian (450 – 457) called together 520 bishops to discuss the heretical views of Eutyches concerning the nature of Jesus (God and man in one nature). Both the teachings of Nestorius and Eutyches were rejected at this council (monophysitism, or one nature). The Creed of Chalcedon set forth Jesus as one person with two natures (dyophysitism, or two natures). The Bishop of Constantinople was also given equal power with the Bishop of Rome at this council. Later, Emperor Justin I (518 – 527), went against the Council of Chalcedon when he wrote his *Edict of Three Chapters* to placate the powerful Monophysite group of his day.
5. The Second Council of Constantinople (553). Vigilius (Rome) and Emperor Justinian (Constantinople) called together 150 bishops to discuss the nature of Jesus once again. Following this council, the Church in the East moved farther away from the Church in the West and moved closer to the Monophysite position. The council also added to the title of Mary, the title *Aeiparthenos* (ever-virgin), thus fixing the dogma of Mary's perpetual virginity.

6. The Third Council of Constantinople (680). This council was the sixth general council. There were 289 bishops present to discuss and uphold the two natures and two wills of Jesus (opposed to Monoenergism, two natures with one will). The Council at Constantinople in 754 supported the imperial policy of condemning icons.
7. The Second Council of Nicaea (787). About 350 bishops were present to discuss the worship of images. The council was called the Iconoclastic Council (iconoclast = breaking down of images). The position of the veneration of icons prevailed (see Lesson 3 for more details).

### C. Creeds.

1. Councils led to the formation of creedal Statements of faith. “Creed” (Latin, *credo*, meaning “I believe”) is a Statement of one’s belief.
2. The well-known Apostles’ Creed (neither written nor sanctioned by any Apostle) reads as follows:

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through Him all things were made. For us and for our salvation He came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit He became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake He was crucified under Pontius Pilate; He suffered death and was buried. On the third day He rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and His kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father.\* With the Father and the Son He is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. AMEN.

*\*Roman Catholics and Protestants add ‘and the Son’ at this point.*

3. The first schism between West (Rome) and East (Constantinople) came as a result of positions taken with respect to the creeds. In 484, Felix III in Rome excommunicated Acacius in Constantinople because the latter would not agree on the Nicene Creed (particularly over the matter of Jesus’ nature). Acacius had written a *Decree of Unity* which was a concession to the Monophysites (Jesus had one nature, not two). This schism would last until 518.

## VI. UNION OF CHURCH AND STATE.

### A. Constantine: The First “Christian” Emperor.

1. Emperor Constantine “converted” to Christianity in the early part of the 4<sup>th</sup> Century, but he put off baptism to the end of his life. He adopted the *labarum* as his military standard (the Greek letters X and P; the first two letters of the Greek for Christ).
2. After Constantine’s “conversion,” much good was accomplished: 1) Rome protected the ApoState “Church” instead of persecuting it, 2) church buildings were restored and reopened, 3) heathenism was discouraged, 4) crucifixion was abolished,

5) infanticide was repressed, 6) slavery was regulated, and 7) gladiator contests were suppressed.

3. After Constantine's "conversion," much bad was also accomplished: 1) the ApoState "Church" was run like the Roman Empire; and 2) heathen religions were "converted" and brought much of their belief and practice with them into the ApoState "Church" (images, ceremony, holy days, etc.). In 321, following the Council of Arles, the Church and (Roman) State collaborated for the first time in history to suppress the heretical practices of the Donatists (see above).
4. The relationship between Church and (Roman) State will continue to grow stronger during the Medieval Ages (see Lesson 3).

B. New Testament Teaching.

1. Christians are to obey their elders in the church (Heb. 13:17).
2. Christians are to obey their rulers in the State (Rom. 13:1-8; 1 Peter 2:13-14,17; 1 Tim. 2:1-2; Tit. 3:1).
3. However, the two realms of church and State are to be kept separate (Mt. 22:21).
4. When the State is in conflict with the church, God, not man, must be obeyed (Acts 5:29).

## VII. LESSONS LEARNED.

A. Persecution.

1. How will you react to the persecutions that Christians face today (Lk. 6:22-23; 2 Tim. 3:12)?

B. Departures.

1. Departures from the faith come when individuals do not know the scriptures, do not respect the scriptures, or both (2 Pet. 3:16-18).
2. Departures from the faith result in patterning the Lord's church after the world around it. (For example, departures in organization resulted in patterning the Lord's church after the Roman government and departures in worship resulted in patterning the Lord's church after heathen religion.) Christians are to transform the world, not be transformed by it (Rom. 12:1-2).
3. Departures in doctrine often involved changing God's plan of salvation for one set forth by men (Ebionism, Gnosticism, etc.). The same is done today.
4. How do departures (apostasies) come about?
  - a) An individual does not respect the word of God. He goes against what is specifically forbidden in God's word, or he presumes to act when God is silent.
  - b) An individual believes that a change of God's word is warranted.
  - c) An individual presumed that he has a good way to do something even though God had not spoken about it.

C. Men and Movements.

1. Will you follow men and their movements or Jesus Christ and his word (Mt. 17:5)?

D. Councils and Creeds.

1. One wrong, like a departure from the faith, often leads to other wrongs like forming councils and creeds to answer and defend against the departures (2 Tim. 2:16; 3:13). Councils and creeds ignore the all-sufficiency of Jesus and his word (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3; 2 Jn. 9; Jude 3).
2. Were the councils of the Post-Apostolic period just like the "Jerusalem Council" of Acts 15? Is the "Jerusalem Council" of Acts 15 an apostolic president for all other

councils to follow? No. First, the meeting at Jerusalem in Acts 15 was not a “council” or a “conference” in the ecclesiastical sense of the word (only called that in the margins of some Bibles). Second, Paul and Barnabas did not need a decision from those in Jerusalem. They defended the truth of this matter before going to Jerusalem (15:2). Third, delegates from various churches were not sent to Jerusalem to discuss the truth of this matter, only the apostles and elders in Jerusalem (15:2,6). Fourth, a formal discussion about this matter was not made by uninspired delegates from various churches, but by three inspired apostles: Peter, Paul, and James (15:7-21). Fifth, a formal decision was not made by uninspired delegates, but by the apostles and elders inspired by the Holy Spirit (15:22,28; 16:4)

E. Church and State.

1. The Lord never intended for his church to be political machine of church and State, but a teaching body (1 Tim. 3:15).

**VIII.CONCLUSION.**

A. Let Us Be Content to Respect Bible Authority and Do the Lord’s Work in the Lord’s Way.

B. The Faithful Remnant of the Lord’s Church.

1. The Lord has always had a remnant of people who remain faithful to him during any period of history (1 Kings 19:18; Dan. 2:44; Heb. 12:28; Rev. 3:4; 2 Tim. 3:10,14).
2. Will you be a part of that faithful remnant?