



church

HISTORY



GROW

CHURCH HISTORY | LESSON TWO

CONSTANTINE, COUNCILS, AND CREEDS

The year 312 AD marked a major turning point in the life of the early Christian Church. With Constantine's rise to power, Christianity moved from being a persecuted minority to a faith increasingly favored by the Roman Empire. This change set off a chain of events that gave the church new power, influence, and challenges. In this lesson, we'll explore how that transition shaped the future of Christianity, for better and for worse.

What pros and cons do you think would come from Christianity gaining power and popularity?

MAJOR CHURCH EVENTS IN THIS TIME PERIOD

- 312 AD - CONSTANTINE DEFEATS MAXENTIUS AT THE BATTLE OF THE MILVIAN BRIDGE
- 313 AD - THE EDICT OF MILAN LEGALIZES CHRISTIANITY IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE
- c. 318-381 AD - THE HERESY OF ARIANISM IMPACTS THE CHURCH
- 325 AD - THE FIRST COUNCIL OF NICAEA
- 381 AD - THE FIRST COUNCIL OF CONSTANTINOPLE
- 382 AD - THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON IS CONFIRMED AT THE COUNCIL OF ROME
- 392 AD - CHRISTIANITY BECOMES THE STATE RELIGION UNDER THEODOSIUS
- c. 405 AD - JEROME COMPLETES THE VULGATE (LATIN TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE)
- 410 AD - ROME IS PLUNDERED BY THE VISIGOTHS (A GERMANIC TRIBE)
- 413-426 AD - AUGUSTINE WRITES *CITY OF GOD*
- 451 AD - THE COUNCIL OF CHALCEDON
- 452 AD - LEO THE GREAT MEETS WITH ATILA THE HUN
- 476 AD - THE WESTERN ROMAN EMPIRE FALLS
- 300s-400s AD - THE SPREAD OF MONASTICISM



SCRIPTURE & CANON

It's 382 AD in Rome. You're a bishop attending the council of Rome. The gathering would like to agree on what books belong in the New Testament, but there are still some questions about books like *Hebrews*, *James*, and *Revelation*. On what basis should the group be making this decision, and is this even a wise distinction to make?



DOCTRINE & HERESY

It's 410 AD in Alexandria. A teacher named Pelagius argues that people can choose to follow God because we have free will. Others like Augustine say we can't and are born in sin. Does a debate like this really even matter to someone like me who's not a theologian? If it does, how do I know who is right and what does that mean for me?



WORSHIP & LITURGY

It's 400 AD in Antioch. Worship is elaborate. There's incense, chanting, special vestments, and a long liturgy. Some in your congregation want even more ceremony, but others think ritual has replaced simplicity and sometimes sincerity too. How do you decide which practices truly glorify God, which might distract, and what is essential versus cultural?



LEADERSHIP & CHURCH ORDER

It's 390 AD in Milan. Bishop Ambrose refuses communion to Emperor Theodosius after a massacre, insisting even rulers must submit to Christ. Some praise his courage; others worry he's overstepping and endangering the church. Was he right to do so, or just playing politics? What is the relationship between the Church and worldly powers?



MISSION & PERSECUTION

It's 450 AD in Gaul. As barbarian tribes invade and settle, some Christians want to defend their homes by force, while others see the newcomers as a mission field. Many fear losing the peace won after years of persecution. What do you do? Fight, flee, or stay and reach out? How do you live out your faith amid a collapsing culture?



DISCIPLESHIP & DAILY LIFE

It's 417 AD in Hippo. Your family is now part of the Christian majority. But with comfort comes complacency. Fewer attend worship, Scripture isn't memorized, and Christian values seem to be assumed more than taught. How do you raise your children to truly follow Christ when the whole empire claims to be Christian but doesn't really live it?