

**Great Truths - Great People**

KEY MOMENTS in Theology:

Trinity	Council of Nicea, 325
Hypostatic Union	Council of Constantinople, 381
Bible Translation	Jerome, 400
Justification by Faith	Luther
Sovereignty of God	Calvin
Bible for common people	Wycliff
Textual Criticism	Count Von Zinzendorf
Abolition of Slavery	William Wilberforce
Dispensationalism	John Nelson Darby
Home Bible Study	C I Scofield
Systematic Theology	Lewis Sperry Chafer

We will study these doctrines and the men who clarified them, or fought to preserve them. Some of these leaders were revolutionaries.

**Why include history?**

- The Bible is filled with history
- reminds us of the need to guard doctrine
- Allows us to see key doctrines in the light of the events surrounding them
- Appreciate the sacrifice of dedicated Christians and learn from their example
- We are living in a time that will demand similar commitment and sacrifice

**“The Coming Evangelical Collapse”**

By Michael Spencer

Christian Science Monitor

from the March 10, 2009 edition

Oneida, Ky. - We are on the verge – within 10 years – of a major collapse of evangelical Christianity. This breakdown will follow the deterioration of the mainline Protestant world and it will fundamentally alter the religious and cultural environment in the West.

Within two generations, evangelicalism will be a house deserted of half its occupants. (Between 25 and 35 percent of Americans today are Evangelicals.) In the "Protestant" 20th century, Evangelicals flourished. But they will soon be living in a very secular and religiously antagonistic 21st century.

This collapse will herald the arrival of an anti-Christian chapter of the post-Christian West. Intolerance of Christianity will rise to levels many of us have not believed possible in our lifetimes, and public policy will become hostile toward evangelical Christianity, seeing it as the opponent of the common good.

Millions of Evangelicals will quit. Thousands of ministries will end. Christian media will be reduced, if not eliminated. Many Christian schools will go into rapid decline. I'm convinced the grace and mission of God will reach to the ends of the earth. But the end of evangelicalism as we know it is close."

**It would be easy for me to dismiss this except for 2 factors:**

- 1. The rapid demise of orthodoxy in the Christian Church**
- 2. This is exactly what happened in Europe (GB) thirty years ago.**

How do we avoid being swept up in this wave?

- Understand the times
- Grounded in the Word of God
- Completely dependent on the Lord for everything we do

RESOURCES:

Shelly, "Church History in Plain Language"

Noll, "Turning Points"

"100 Most Important Events in Church History"

"131 Christians Everyone Should Know"

LESSON ONE -

Doctrine: **WORLD EVANGELISM**

The PERSON(S)- **the early Church**

LESSON for US: **Times of difficulty are the Lord's method for moving us into new areas of ministry and evangelism.**

I. Doctrine: **WORLD EVANGELISM**

A. The book of acts can be outlined according to the central command given to the church in **Acts 1:8**

B. What did the early church do?

1. Summary begins in 2:47
2. Acts 4:4
3. Acts 5:41
4. Acts 6:7
5. Acts 9:31. Note the difference between Acts 6:7 and 9:31. What was the difference?

C. The PERSECUTION of Acts 8:4-8

II. The Fall of Jerusalem (the Early Church)

A. Persecution continued sporadically

1. Judiazers
  - a. (Philippians 3:2-3) *"Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh. For it is we who are the*

*circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh"*

- b. (2 Corinthians 11:26) *"I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers."*
  2. Grecian Widows denied food (The Hebrew widows were cast out of the synagogue)
  3. Paul's gift to the church in Jerusalem
- B. Until 70 AD, the center of the Church was Jerusalem, and the leaders of the church were primarily Jewish
1. Acts 15:1-5
  2. 50 AD, after 1<sup>st</sup> missionary Journey
- C. Jewish prominence in the Church continued until the JEWISH REVOLT, which started in 66 AD
1. In 66 AD, an attack against the Jews occurred in Caesarea.
  2. Romans soldiers stood by and watched as unarmed women and children were massacred
  3. Word reached Jerusalem. Riots broke out against the Roman guards stationed in Fortress Antonia near the Temple
  4. The Jewish political appeasers (Roman collaborators) could not contain the anger of the mobs. Groups united and defeated the Romans.
  5. The Romans Senate dispatched one of their most trusted generals, Vespasian and four legions of soldiers to re-establish control.
  6. Vespasian proceeded cautiously, first establishing control of the Mediterranean ports, and then proceeding toward Jerusalem.
  7. 68 AD - Jerusalem was surrounded.
  8. Vespasian had to return to Rome. Nero died. Vespasian was in line to replace Nero.
  9. There was temporary relief for Jerusalem, but then Vespasian's son, TITUS, took control.
  10. He was more feared than his father, and he had a point to prove.
  11. Titus not only conquered the city. He destroyed everything that had to deal with Judaism.
    - a. The Romans regarded Christianity as a Jewish Sect
    - b. They either tolerated, or despised both because Christians and Jews would not bow down and worship the emperor.
    - c. The historian Tacitus wrote, "Titus wanted to destroy the Temple *in order that the Jewish and Christian religions might*

*more completely be abolished; for although these religions were mutually hostile, they had nevertheless sprung from the same founders, the Christians were an offshoot of the Jews, and if the root were taken away, the stock would easily perish” (Noll, 25)*

- D. From that date forward, Israel would not recover nationally for 1900 years
- E. From that point forward, Christianity was permanently severed from Jewish control.
  - 1. No more arguments of Judiazers
  - 2. End of the apostolic age
  - 3. The Great Commission being carried out

III. **LESSON for US: Times of difficulty are the Lord’s method for moving us into new areas of ministry and evangelism.**

- A. Lord, what is happening?
  - 1. Moral decline
  - 2. Move toward a one world government
  - 3. Economic turmoil
- B. God is sovereign!
- C. He is working in ways we cannot see!
  - 1. To spread the gospel
  - 2. To strengthen the church
  - 3. **COMMITMENTS during ECONOMIC CRISIS**
    - a. God is Sovereign
    - b. The world is not my home
    - c. I can be content without American pre-eminence or prosperity
    - d. Persecution does not mean that God has abandoned me. God uses persecution to accomplish his purposes
    - e. I commit to live within my means
    - f. I commit to support God’s work
    - g. I commit to assist my church family so that every member has food, shelter and clothing.
    - h. I commit to the efforts of the body of Christ to assist in the relief of the poor, to provide them with the necessities of life for their body, and the gospel of Christ for their spirit.