

- I. Introduction.** It will be well to remember several important facts before going ahead with this lesson. So far we have covered approximately the first 400 years of church history. A summary shows several things stand out:
- A.** Jesus Christ found the church during His earthly sojourn.
  - B.** At the death of Christ, at least one church, the one in Jerusalem, was in operation.
  - C.** When the Christians scattered from Jerusalem, they went everywhere preaching the Gospel and many other churches were established far and wide.
  - D.** The Apostle Paul and other missionaries were successful in establishing over the then known world.
  - E.** For probably 200 years the churches remained comparably pure in practice and doctrine. However, errors began to appear even in the time of the apostles.
  - F.** Early in church history, the separation between the true churches that clung to the New Testament doctrines and practices and the other churches that drifted into error began to occur.
  - G.** In 306 A.D. the churches that had drifted into error were consolidated into one organization under one head. The Emperor Constantine accomplished this. This consolidation of error was the real beginning of Catholicism.
  - H.** After only four centuries, the lines were drawn. On one side the accepted “state religion” (Catholicism) and on the other side the true churches that refused to be led into this error.

## II. The beginning of “infant baptism.”

- A.** When the error of “baptismal regeneration” [*the belief that baptism is a necessary part of salvation and that a person is "born again" through baptism*] became widespread in about the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, it naturally necessitated another error.
1. If baptism was accepted as essential to salvation then babies must also be baptized in order to be saved.
  2. Throughout the 3<sup>rd</sup> century the practice of "infant baptism" was carried on throughout the churches of error but was not generally accepted.
- B.** In 416 A.D. the alliance of the Roman Empire and the Catholic Church passed a new law making “infant baptism” compulsory.
1. The true churches and believers rejected this law and refused to obey and the breach grew greater.
    - a) The loyal churches refused to baptize their children.
    - b) They refused to accept into their churches those who had been baptized by churches of the new (Catholic) organization.
  2. All this occurred the wrath of the religionists.

## III. The beginning of the “Dark Ages” period from 426 A.D. to 1628 A.D.

History notes: Much was happening in Rome during the 5<sup>th</sup> century. Rome was invaded by foreign enemies multiple times, including:

- 410 AD: The Visigoths, led by King Alaric, sacked Rome on August 24, 410 AD. This was the first time in nearly 800 years that Rome was taken by a foreign enemy. The Visigoths looted, burned, and pillaged the city for three days.
- 455 AD: The Vandals sacked Rome.

- A. With the establishment of the new Catholic temporal [*relating to worldly as opposed to spiritual affairs; in other words: secular.*] power, a bloody persecution began.
- B. Loyal New Testament churches, by whatever name they were known, were hunted and hounded to the utmost limit by this new Catholic power.
- C. The newly established Roman Catholic Church began a war of extermination upon all who were in opposition.
- D. Dr. J. M. Carroll, a Baptist historian states: *“I again call your attention to those who the hard hand of persecution fell. If fifty million died of persecution during the 1,200 years of what is called the ‘Dark Ages,’ as history seems positively to teach – then they died faster than the average of four million every hundred years [40,000 deaths per year]. That seems almost beyond human conception. As before mentioned, this iron hand, dripping with martyr blood fell upon Paulicans, Arnoldists, Henricans, Petro Brussians, Albigenses, Waldenses, and Anabaptists.”*

**IV. The beginning of Popery.** The word “Pope” means “papa” or father. This word, as it is now used by Catholicism, was largely a development.

- A. It probably was first used in 296-304 by the Bishop of Rome.
- B. It was formally adopted by Sericus, Bishop of Rome, 384-398.
- C. It officially became a title under Leo II, 440-461.
- D. Gregory I, 590-604 was probably the first Pope in the sense the word is now used.

**V. Ecumenical councils.** The word “ecumenical” means “worldwide.”

[catholic--The word comes from the Greek meaning "through the whole," that is "universal," "worldwide," and "all-inclusive."]

- A. The Roman Catholic hierarchy began calling for “worldwide” councils in 325 A.D.
- B. These councils were patterned after the one described in Acts 15 but probably nothing bearing the same name could be further apart. [*Remember: Acts chapter 15 resembles Acts 11:1–18, where Peter testified before the leadership of the church in Jerusalem. His subject was how the Holy Spirit had fallen on uncircumcised and unbaptized Gentiles. Here Paul and Barnabas also testify that Gentiles are coming to faith in Jesus without being circumcised.*]
  - 1. These councils would be called to discuss and decide upon issues that faced the Catholic church.
  - 2. In the fourth of these councils called by Emperor Marian in 451 with five hundred or six hundred Metropolitans (city pastors) present, the doctrine of Mariology was introduced. This means the worship of Mary. It was finally accepted as a permanent doctrine of the Catholic church.