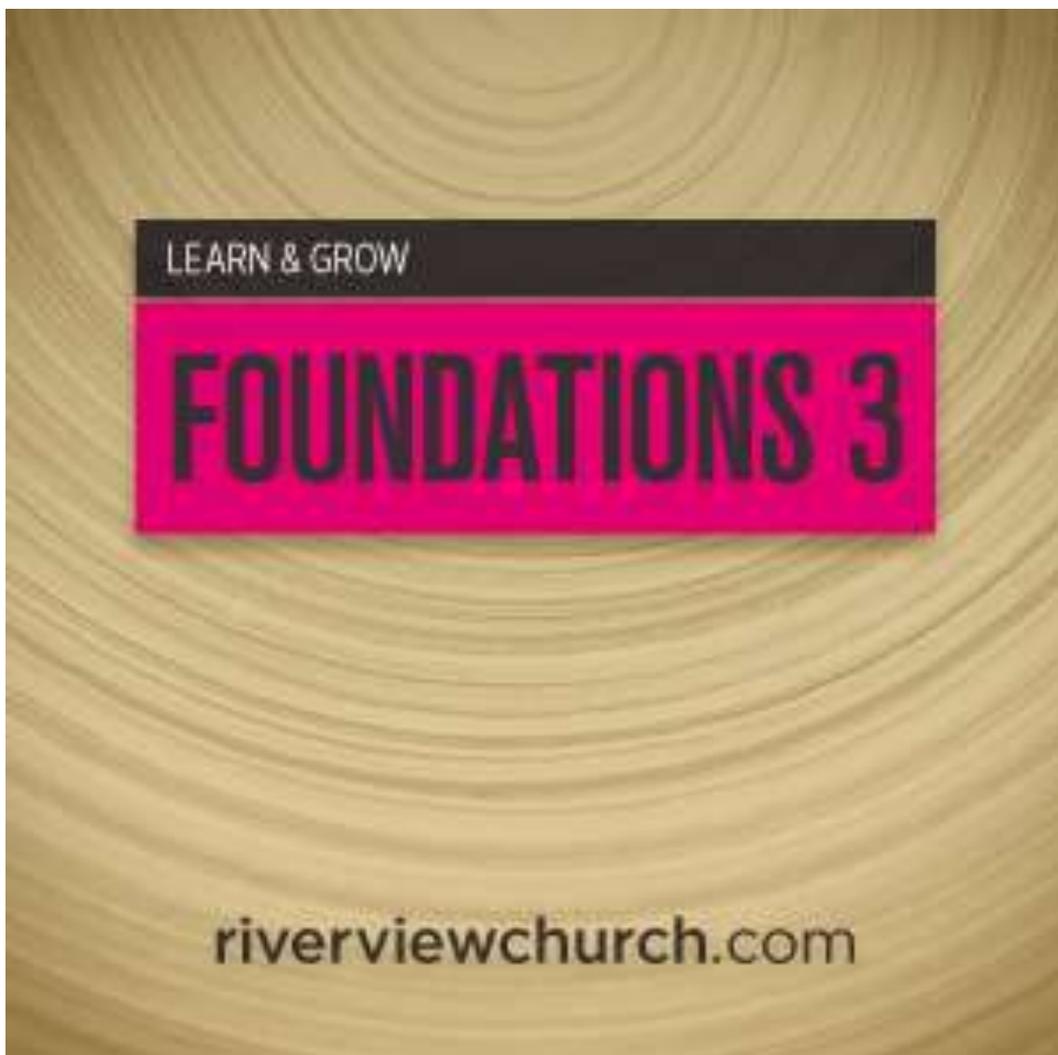
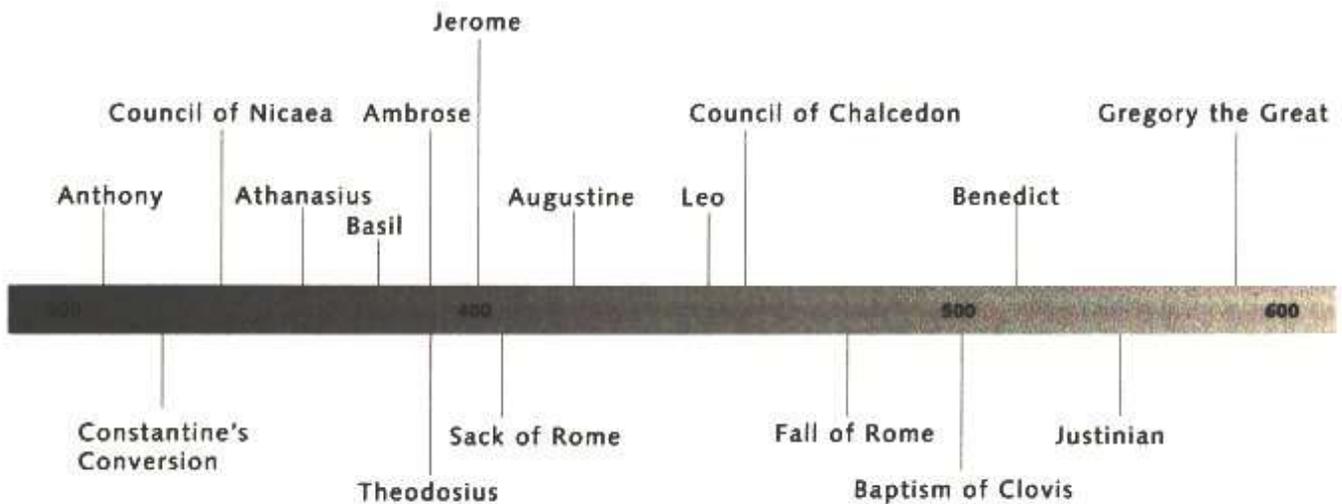


# The Middle Ages

Church History 1 (306) – Week 3



### The Age of the Christian Roman Empire



## 1. Decline of Faith and Fervour

Whatever Constantine's motives for adopting the Christian faith, the result was a decline in Christian commitment. Gregory of Nazianzus complained: "The chief seat is gained by evil doing, not by virtue; and the sees belong, not to the more worthy, but to the more powerful."<sup>1</sup>

In the fifth and sixth centuries practically every leader in the church was either a monk himself or was closely linked to monasticism. The monastic cell became a study and the monks became scholars.<sup>2</sup>

The loss of the enthusiasm of the martyrs led to aestheticism and monasticism being seen as ways in which to regain the strength of faith shown by the martyrs.

## 2. Jerome and Scholarship (347 - 420)

After the early Church Fathers came Jerome, most well known for this translation of the Hebrew Bible in Hebrew into Latin. This translation, the Vulgate, became the foundational translation for the Roman Catholic Church over the next few hundred years.

<sup>1</sup> Bruce L. Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language*, Updated 2nd ed. (Dallas, TX.: Word, 1995), 118.

<sup>2</sup> Bruce L. Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language*, Updated 2nd ed. (Dallas, TX.: Word, 1995), 119-20.

### **3. Augustine of Hippo (354 – 430)**

Augustine is the most important Biblical scholar, particularly within the Roman Catholic stream of theology. It is from Augustine that the concept of ‘original sin’ and ‘total depravity’ is developed as the foundation for the why of salvation. This is the basis for western Christian theology but was different from the eastern churches who saw sin not in a legal way but in a relational way.

### **4. Monasticism**

During the early years after the fall of Rome, however, the vital core of Christianity was the monastery rather than the throne room.

Benedict of Nursia, Saint (circa 480-c. 547), founder of the monastery of Monte Cassino, is known as the father of Western monasticism.

Monasteries spread throughout Europe and often became centres of culture as well as piety. Monks taught school, copied old manuscripts, wrote histories, and accumulated libraries.

### **5. Plague**

In 538 the first of a number of Bubonic Plague outbreaks occurred beginning in Constantinople. By the end of the outbreaks some estimate that over a third of the population of Europe had died. This drastic reduction in manpower and particularly military power left Europe in the dark.