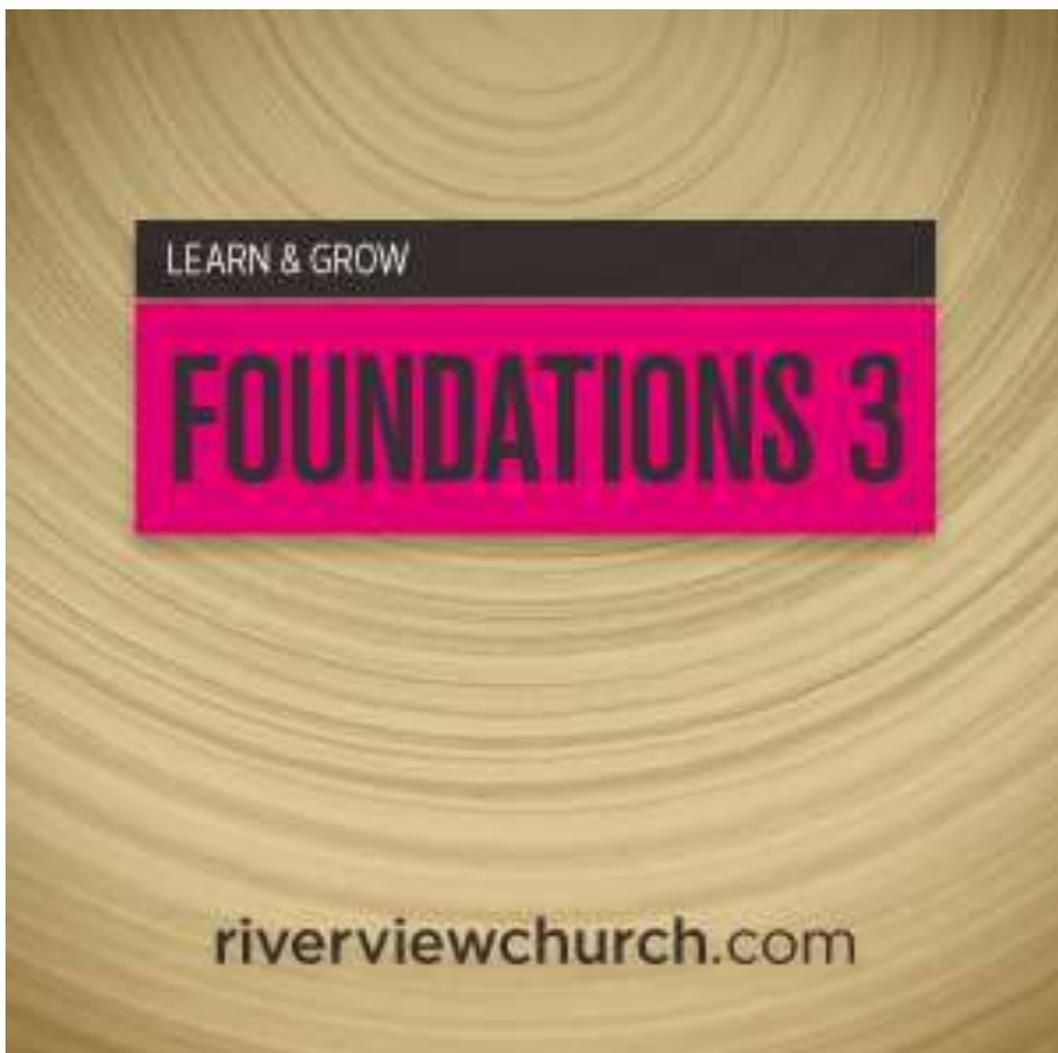


Restoration of the Holy Roman Empire

Church History 1 (306) – Week 5



The Restoration of the 'Holy' Roman Empire

The church lost many of its roots to Islam. In 732 the Muslims reached the heart of France but were defeated and sent packing by Charles Martel, the grandfather of Charlemagne. Pepin (Charlemagne's father) turned to the Pope to legitimise his claim to the Merovingian throne. Pepin was crowned with papal blessing in 751. As a gift to the Pope, Pepin gave the Ravenna territory. This made the Pope a temporal ruler of territory, the Papal States.

This alliance between the Pope and the Franks affected the course of European politics and Christianity for centuries to come. It also accelerated the split between the east and west.

Charlemagne came to the throne in 768 with 3 goals in mind;

1. military power to crush his enemies
2. religious power to direct his people's spiritual lives
3. intellectual power to direct learning

His success in these goals established European Christianity. He conquered the Bavarians and the Saxons and established his authority throughout Austria (Huns). He also defended the Papal States from attack and was crowned in St. Peter's by the Pope who proclaimed him Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire.

For the next 1000 years the challenge facing Europe was who had the real power the Pope or the Kings?

The Climax of the Papacy

Pope Innocent III

A man of keen intellect, he successfully positioned the church to dominate all human relationships. His leadership in matters of church doctrine and practice were perhaps even more significant. The most powerful of the medieval popes, Innocent's crowning achievement was his convening of the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, the decrees of which shaped church policy for centuries.¹

Pope Innocent III (1160–1216), an effective statesman, began his reign by reorganizing the management of Rome. He desired to be the supreme authority in international affairs and the guardian of unity

¹ E. Michael and Sharon Rusten, *The Complete Book of When & Where in the Bible and Throughout History* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2005), 179.

throughout the Christian world. After Germany's rule over Italy collapsed with the death of the German emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, Henry IV (1050–1106), Innocent III was able to revive and expand the Papal States and to prevent the unification of Italy.

In 1202, after his first choice for emperor attacked Italy, Innocent issued his famous letter, *Venerabilem*, which maintained the pope's right to accept or reject any recently elected emperor, thereby giving the pope ultimate control of the imperial throne.²

The letter contained the following assertions;

- The German princes have the right to elect the king, who is afterwards to become emperor. This right was given them by the Apostolic See when it transferred the imperial dignity from the Greeks to the Germans in the person of Charlemagne.
- The right to investigate and decide whether a king thus elected is worthy of the imperial dignity belongs to the pope, whose office it is to anoint, consecrate, and crown him; otherwise it might happen that the pope would be obliged to anoint, consecrate, and Crown a king who was excommunicated, a heretic, or a pagan.
- If the pope finds that the king who has been elected by the princes is unworthy of the imperial dignity, the princes must elect a new king or, if they refuse, the pope will confer the imperial dignity upon another king; for the Church stands in need of a patron and defender.
- In case of a double election the pope must exhort the princes to come to an agreement. If after a due interval they have not reached an agreement they must ask the pope to arbitrate, failing which, he must of his own accord and by virtue of his office decide in favour of one of the claimants. The pope's decision need not be based on the greater or less legality of either election, but on the qualifications of the claimants.

Magna Carta

One of the most influential events stemming from the absolute authority that Innocent wielded was the signing of the Magna Carta by King John in England.

² E. Michael and Sharon Rusten, *The Complete Book of When & Where in the Bible and Throughout History* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2005), 179-80.

Decline of Papal Power

Pope Boniface VIII (1294-1303) took the papal power to its ultimate step. He announced that **‘we declare, define and pronounce that for every human creature to be subject to the Roman pope is altogether necessary for salvation.’** This was as far as the pope could go and it began a back lash that saw the decline of papal power. Edward I of England and Philip the Fair of France both fought the Pope. Finally Philip had him arrested and within a month the Pope was dead. Not only had the pride and arrogance of the popes sown seeds of spiritual decline but the growing nationalist spirit in the various countries saw the opening of an era of open hostility to the papal power.

Results of the Crusades

- bolstered the commerce of the Italian cities,
- generated interest in exploration of the Orient,
- established trade markets of enduring importance
- led to the development of systems of direct general taxation
- established colonization mechanisms that later generations of Europeans used and improved on

Voices in the Wilderness

John Wycliff (1320-1384) – an Oxford scholar and a Roman Catholic Priest. He rejected transubstantiation, declared the Pope to be the vicar of anti Christ, denied the infallibility of the Roman Church in matters of faith and criticised the belief in Purgatory, pilgrimages, worship of saints and veneration of relics, as being all unscriptural. He was known as the ‘morning star of the Reformation’. He organised bands of preachers to travel throughout the land.

John Hus (1360-1415) – Rector of Prague University He became a zealous preacher against abuses in the church and particularly in the clergy. He was eventually summoned to appear before the catholic cardinals and was arrested, thrown into prison and in 1415 burnt at the stake.