



ROMAN EMPIRE

CHAPTER XVIII 451 A.D - 1204 A.D.

Page 380

WHAT CAUSED ISLAM?

By 476 A.D. the city of Rome was overrun by the marauding Barbarians from the North. The formal church was the only stable institution left in the Western Empire. In the East, the empire fared some better as the formal church built some huge buildings in and around Constantinople. One was called Hagia Sophia which was finished in 537 A.D. This monstrous building remains in Istanbul as a tourist attraction at the present time.

Rome had a population of eight hundred thousand in 400 A.D. but by 500 A.D., the population shrunk to less than five hundred thousand. In 546 A.D., the barbarians broke the cities' aqueducts and the population dwindled to a measly thirty thousand. The Tiber River flooded in 589 A.D. and the former great city almost went back to a swamp.

Spiritually the formal church continued its downward spiral through a succession of corrupt "Popes". In the meantime there was a man down in Arabia watching all this with interest. His name was Mohammed and he came up with a religious system of his own. He proclaimed that Alla, one of the pagan gods worshiped by the Arabians, was the same god as the God the Jews worshiped in the Old Testament. He said Jesus was a good man but only a prophet of the Old Testament God. Mohammed proclaimed that he was the main prophet of Alla and wrote the Koran (writings) from revelations received from the angel Gabriel. What he respected about the Old Testament God was his willingness to use force to further his cause. This use of force was expressed many ways in the tenets of the Koran. Mohammed completely ignored the teachings of Jesus and was against all aspects of Christianity.

Mohammed defeated his enemies and forced Islam (submission to the will of god) on all Arabians before he died in 632 A.D. His followers continued his quest to dominate the world and Islam moved across the Christian world like a desert whirlwind. The Muslims with their excellent horsemen willing to live off camel's milk were a formidable foe. They took over Jerusalem in 638 A.D., Egypt (Alexandria) by 644 A.D.

and were stopped at the gates of Constantinople in 673 A.D. By 698 A.D., the Muslims had moved across North Africa through Carthage (Tertillian and Cyprian) and Hippo (Augustine). They jumped across the Straits of Gibraltar and by 711 A.D. had conquered all of Spain. The Muslims were finally stopped by Charles Martell (the Hammer) in France in 732 A.D.

When the Muslims came to take over a town they would say, "You may keep your life, your goods, and your churches, but you must pay a "jizya". This was a payment for not becoming a Muslim. And further "you are not allowed to ride a horse (military precaution), no crosses displayed, and no church building higher than the mosques. You may not speak ill of a Muslim nor can you marry a Muslim woman". If people didn't agree to this, they suffered the consequences. This sounded pretty rough, but we must realize how corrupt the formal church had become under the one-man rule (Pope). In many cases the Muslims were actually welcomed by the people.

How did all this happen so fast? Three quarters of the Christian world gone in less than a century. Look what the formal church fostered on the world by not having the power of the Holy Spirit. Don't let anyone tell you the Holy Spirit, or God in you, is not important. Without the Holy Spirit, God was not in the formal church. If God was absent from the formal church the people had no strength to resist Satan.

As far as I'm concerned, the learned ones of the formal church have never recognized or admitted why this shocking loss occurred and why there was no defense against these Muslim forces. Let's go back to the council of Chalcedon where five hundred and twenty bishops of the formal church agreed Leo I would be the "Pope" and decide all things relative to the formal church. After the council, the Emperor proclaimed the decisions of this council would prohibit all future discussions about religious matters. This solidified the theology of Augustine and Leo I whereby the Holy Spirit was practically eliminated from the formal church. Because of this God had no way to be a part of the church or the people. They could only follow their leaders or be branded heretics.

What won these lost areas to the Lord in the first place was the action of Jesus' ekklesia, and the Body of Christ described by Paul. In these, the Holy Spirit was very much in evidence by the signs and wonders exemplified through His Gifts. There was freedom to approach God and for Him to manifest Himself to each and every person. This was gradually lost to the formal church in these areas. At that time, the leaders were so dull spiritually, they were unaware SATAN was ready to take advantage of a formal church with no power.

As a nation and as Christians we have ignored the Muslims for much too long a time. We only began to take notice when our economy became dependent on their oil. Now because of the terrorists attack of "9-11" and the war in Iraq, they are in our face and something must be done about the situation in order for peace to exist in the world. This is not a physical force that can be bombed into submission but a spiritual one of monumental proportions.

To contend with this spiritual force, we must go back to what worked in the beginning. First there needs to be a democracy. God knew this in 500 B.C. Each man must be free to express himself freely both to his own kind and to others. Jesus used this democracy to launch His ekklesia right under the Jewish noses in the Roman built Temple Mount area in Jerusalem. This ekklesia-church-Body of Christ needs to be seen by man once again, so that he can experience the Holy Spirit and see the power of God through His manifestations. We are not going to make much progress in this regard with leaders that are gay or leaders that may be child molesters. The large organizations with top heavy management will also not do the job. We need to again see the ekklesia free of these encumbrances.

In the world today, there is no question the immature democracies must be supported and maintained, especially in the Middle East. The democracy in Iraq is as much a part of God's over-all plan as the role the U.S. has played in the support and protection of the new State of Israel since 1948. We can easily see the forces of Satan at work opposing these new democracies by the antics of the suicide bombers. It seems their targets of choice are the innocent and unsuspecting.

After the Muslim fiasco, the formal church looked to the northern areas because the southeast, south and western areas were all under the control of Islam.

In 800 A.D. Charlemagne had conquered most of Europe and was made emperor by the Pope. He created schools and scholarships and was probably the instigator of the Renaissance Period.

Since there was no more Roman Empire the civil system reverted to the land-based feudalism. This was similar to the old city-states in Greece before the advent of democracy. Nobleman and lords put limitations on individual lives. It was said, "there were those who fought, there were those who worked, and there were those who prayed". This kind of regression was typical of the "Dark Ages", without the benefit of the democracy.

The "Popes" became more and more corrupt and as a consequence took the formal Church to an all-time low. Simony began during this time where priest's jobs were sold by the formal church. Indulgence also began where your sins were forgiven by the priest for a price.

By this time the tensions with the Muslims had relaxed to where Christians could visit the Holy City of Jerusalem; however, some were harassed by militant Muslims and this incited the militant Christians. So, military action began to free the Holy City from the Muslims. The first crusade started in 1095 A.D. and by 1098 A.D. the Christians had conquered Jerusalem. After many battles, the Turks recaptured Jerusalem in 1187 A.D. The fighting continued back and forth until 1204 A.D. when it was agreed the Christians could again visit Jerusalem, just like they were doing before all the commotion.