



Fifth Century Theologians and Controversies

Chrysostom, Jerome, Augustine, and
Pelagianism

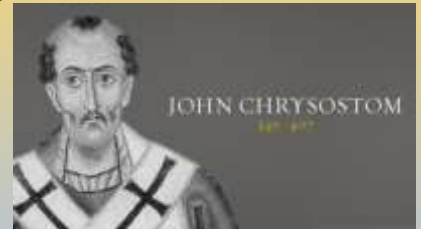
Introduction

- Historians see the 4th and 5th centuries as the golden age of church fathers. There were simply many outstanding church leaders.
- In this lesson, we will focus on three great leaders who's lives and works begin in the 4th century and end in the 5th century.
 - John Chrysostom
 - Jerome
 - Augustine of Hippo
- We will also discuss the Pelagian heresy.



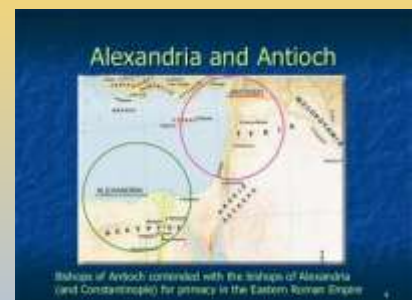
John Chrysostom, 349-407

- He is considered one of the best preachers in all of history.
 - As a youth studied Law under the famous Pagan rhetorician, Libanius.
- At 18 years old, John became passionately devoted to studying the Scriptures. He was reacting against the paganism of his education.
- He became a disciple of Meletius the Confessor, the bishop of the orthodox Christians in Antioch.
 - Height of Arian controversy; orthodox believers met in open air.
 - John was baptized by Meletius on Easter in 368.
- John studied under the renowned Bible teacher, Diodore of Tarsus, Meletius's assistant. Diodore was formative in how John approached Scripture.



Two Schools of Theology and Thought

- In the last lesson, I spoke of the two schools of interpretation, Antiochene and Alexandrian. John was trained in Antioch.
- The Alexandrians were not too concerned about the historical and plain meaning, but focused heavily into deeper or allegorical meaning.
- Diodore, in contrast, emphasized the straightforward historical meaning of the text, and he was very critical of those that strayed from this.
- John will follow his method very closely.
- He would perform meticulous scholarly study of the meaning of words and historical backgrounds.
- In addition to John, Basil of Caesarea (on the Cappadocian fathers) was a great advocate this "grammatico-historical method."



John's Path to Ordination

- In 372, John left Antioch to join hermits in Silpios.
 - Antioch wanted to ordain him as bishop, but he felt unworthy.
- He retreated to monasticism due to feelings of unworthiness (re: sexual desire).
 - Unfortunately, he took his monastic discipline so far that he permanently damaged his health (sleep deprivation and starvation).
- He returned to Antioch in 378. The Arians at this point were losing their political status, and the orthodox were able to repossess the church buildings in Antioch.
- In 380, Meletius made John a deacon. He started to make a name for himself as an eloquent speaker for the orthodox faith.
 - The next bishop of Antioch, Flavian ordained John as a Presbyter in 386. This gave him access to the pulpit.



John the Preacher

- Over the next 12 years, his preaching in Antioch granted him a great reputation. After his death, he was nicknamed by the church "Chrysostom" which means golden mouth.
 - He preached verse-by-verse through whole books of the Bible.
 - He would call out sin among believers, especially the sin of compromising with worldly standards of behavior. His sermons were so impactful that people would hand make copies of them. That is why they survive to us.
- He also wrote Christian treatises, such as *On the Priesthood*, which is a handbook on pastoral ministry. This is his most reprinted work. He also wrote a book on how to raise children, the first of its kind by a Christian writer.
- By the year 398, there was no preacher in the Eastern half of the Empire that was celebrated or esteemed as Chrysostom. In that year, the bishop of Constantinople died, and the new emperor had his eyes set on Chrysostom for it.
- There was a lot political intrigue in the process, but in the end, the choice of Chrysostom prevailed. In fact, Chrysostom had to be tricked and kidnapped to make it happen! The people of Constantinople received him with joy since he was the East's greatest preacher. Constantinople loved him as much as Antioch.
- Sadly, when he invited a guest preacher, the congregation walked out in protest. Like in Antioch, he preached against rich misusing their wealth and he preached against worldly attitudes of his congregants. This made him enemies among some of the wealthy of Constantinople (Needham, 257).

Chrysostom in Constantinople

- As the Patriarch, he was a reformer.
 - Stopped the expensive banquets of his predecessor; used the saved revenue to care for the poor.
 - He also expanded the funding of the hospital attached to the church and built several new hospitals. He led the Christians houses for the poor and homeless as well, giving as many resources as he could afford to them.
- In Constantinople, he had two relationships that greatly effected him (one good; one bad).
- The good relationship was with Olympias, the leader of the nuns of the nun ministry in Constantinople.
 - She was from a really wealthy family, and widowed after only two years of marriage. She dedicated her life as a nun afterward and focused on the care of the poor and sick. She used her own wealth toward that end. The nuns under her also helped with this work.
 - She was in her early thirties when Chrysostom entered Constantinople. She was pretty, highly educated, and loved the Bible.
 - Well, Chrysostom got to know her, and a profound friendship grew. She became devoted to him, taking care of his clothes and meals. Yet, there was no hint of a sexual relationship. They would not even be alone in each other's company. They both left an impact on each other.

Chrysostom in Constantinople

- The second relationship was with the Emperor, Arcadius and his wife Eudoxia.
 - Eudoxia was beautiful, but superstitious. Because of her, the relationship between the emperor and Chrysostom turned sour.
 - He was unworldly and critical of the excesses of the rich. He was also uninterested in politics. He also would not soften his hard-hitting style of preaching to appease them.
 - Eudoxia's female court hated his statements against the rich women flaunting their wealth. They turned her against him.
- She definitely turned against him after he preached a sermon on Naboth's vineyard from 1 Kings 21.
- Well, it turns out Eudoxia recently seized the vineyard of a poor widow. Most people assumed he was talking about her.
 - She now hated him, but her disdain alone could not overthrow the beloved preacher of Constantinople. She had to use factions within the church against him.
- Among eastern clergy and monks there was an anti-Chrysostom faction. Some hated him because of his zeal and his reforms.
 - They were complacent and he threatened that as the Patriarch of Constantinople.



An Alexandrian Enemy

- Theophilus, bishop of Alexandria, was his most dangerous enemy.
 - He resented Constantinople eclipsing Alexandria in influence. Destroying the bishop could hurt the city's prestige.
 - He personally hated Chrysostom since he supported four monks that he condemned.
- By 403, Chrysostom had enough enemies in Constantinople that Theophilus saw his opportunity.
 - Toured the Eastern Empire to spread lies to many bishops about Chrysostom.
 - Stayed in the Empress's palace in Constantinople lobbying Chrysostom's enemies.
- He then convened a council of bishops opposed to Chrysostom and falsely accused him of greed, sexual immorality, gluttony, and violence.
- Chrysostom refused the council's summons since it was illegitimate. They then voted to depose him, and informed the court and the whole city of his removal.
 - Emperor Arcadius agreed and sent soldiers to arrest John. But the people prevented the soldiers from getting to him.
 - Not wanting to put the people in danger, however, he surrendered to the authorities.
 - They then put him on a ship bound for the black sea. But before the ship could get far, Arcadius and Eudoxia reversed their decree and canceled the exile.
 - Some disaster struck the capital after they removed him, and they assumed God was punishing them. Theophilus had to return to Alexandria in humiliation. Chrysostom was still the Patriarch.



Chrysostom's Downfall

- Eudoxia had a silver statue of herself set up near the church that led to wild celebrations that interrupted church service. So Chrysostom publicly spoke against the celebrations, which enraged the empress.
 - She and her husband refused to receive communion from his hand on Christmas day, 403.
- An opportunistic Theophilus wrote the emperor, claiming a 60 year old law said a bishop deposed by a council cannot resume his duties unless another council reinstates him.
- Eudoxia seized the opportunity to use this as an excuse. Chrysostom was put on house arrest.
 - He ordered his priests to carry on with the baptisms on Easter Eve. The government sent 400 soldiers into the church to stop it (since the bishop was absent), and they actually killed people in the church.
 - On Easter day, the people met outside for worship, and the soldiers still attacked them. Many clergy were arrested (those loyal to Chrysostom).
 - Clergy opposed to Chrysostom tried to have him assassinated, but it failed. Popular support of Chrysostom made things difficult for the government, and continued to do so.
- So Arcadius was convinced by enemy clergy to depose Chrysostom and exile him.
 - Had Chrysostom called on the people to riot and attack the emperor, they would have. But he chose peace and submitted to the banishment.

Chrysostom's Downfall

- He was sent to Armenia where he was under military guard dragged from city to city for three years. A new bishop was appointed in Constantinople, but the people would not accept him.
 - They met in the open air for worship rather than government churches. This division spread far beyond the capital city, and would remain for 30 years.
- In 407, Arcadius and Eudoxia decided to make Chrysostom's exile worse. They deported him to Pityus, the furthest fortress on the eastern extremity of the empire.
 - The military escort was to pay no attention to his health or safety. They made him march without food or water in scorching heat toward Pityus. He collapsed and died within hours.
 - He was 58 years old, and his last words were "Glory be to God for all things."



Chrysostom's Legacy

- Thirty-one years later, in 438, the son of Arcadius and Eudoxia, Theophilus II was emperor and he had Chrysostom's bones brought back to the city and publicly begged for forgiveness of the sins of his parents.
 - By this point, no one was left who would vilify Chrysostom or his memory. The divisions in the East ended.
- Chrysostom has gone down as one of the greatest preachers, theologians, commentators, and martyrs in the history of the church.
- But his downfall showed that no bishop in the Eastern empire could stand up against the emperor and win.
- This is greatly contrasted with the West where Ambrose stood up to Theodosius I. That shows the difference between Caesaropapism and the developing papism.



Jerome, 347-420

- Next, we will look at Jerome (347-420).
 - He is known as the most accomplished scholar of the early church.
- He was born in Dalmatia, studied logic, philosophy, and rhetoric in Rome. He was baptized as a Christian in 370.
- In 374, he became a hermit in the Syrian desert. There he learned Hebrew, thus making him unique among Christians of the era.
- He was ordained as a presbyter in Antioch in 379.
 - Afterward, he traveled to Constantinople and studied theology with Gregory of Nazianzus (one of the Cappadocian fathers). Gregory was Patriarch of Constantinople at that time and they became close friends.
- Next, in 382, Jerome visited Rome where Pope Damasus (pope from 366-384) asked him to prepare a new Latin translation of the Bible.
 - It will take Jerome 23 years to complete the task.



Latin Bible

- There were a lot of Latin translations floating around in his time, but none of them were good.
- Jerome started fresh, using the Greek New Testament and the original Hebrew of the Old Testament. He finished his masterpiece in 405, the Latin Vulgate.
- This became the accepted translation of the Bible in the Western Church until the Reformation of the 16th century.
 - Ironically, the term Vulgate comes from the Latin vulgar, which meant common. It was the common Bible for common use. It was to provide Western Christians the Word in their own common tongue.
 - Once it becomes the accepted translation of the RCC, it takes on a different role.
 - Eventually, very few in Europe spoke Latin, and during the Reformation, the Reformers simply sought to do what Jerome did—present the Bible in common languages. The RCC resisted and killed people over this. Ironic indeed.



The Apocrypha

- Jerome's skill in Hebrew allowed him to discover something most Christians did not know. The LXX had books in it that were not found in the Hebrew Old Testament.
 - Greek speaking Christians simply assumed what was in their LXX was all legitimate Old Testament.
- Jerome argued that Christians must only accept as part of the Old Testament the books which the Jews included in the Hebrew Bible.
- The Church called these extra books the *Apocrypha* which means hidden things.
 - They were titled this because they were not read out loud in church since they were considered a lower level than the rest of the Scriptures.
- Protestants today use the Old Testament as Jerome identified it. The RCC Council of Trent, 1546, however, decreed that the Apocrypha is part of the inspired OT, and it anathematized all who disagreed (another irony).
- The EO church has not arrived at a universal consensus on the subject. Greek Orthodox accept it, but Russian Orthodox merely see it as instructive.



Jerome in Rome and After

- While in Rome, Jerome won the favor of many aristocracy, and he used his influence to convince them to embrace the monastic life.
 - Pagans were in awe at the sight of affluent people giving all their wealth to the poor and transform their wealthy homes into monasteries.
- When it came to Roman clergy and political class, however, Jerome made enemies since he attacked their worldliness and low morality.
 - When they insulted and mocked him, he returned fire, but with far greater rhetorical skill. And when someone started a quarrel with him, he turned it into an all out war.
 - When his patron Pope Damasus died in 384, Jerome had to flee the city due to all the enemies he made.
- From 386 onward, he lived out his days in a monastery in Bethlehem, leading other monks.
 - He wrote many works. He penned scholarly commentaries on different books of the Bible. He also translated important Greek theological works into Latin.
 - He opened a school for neighborhood children.
- He participated in major controversies, like the Pelagian controversy. In fact, Pelagians of Palestine burned down his monastery in Bethlehem, forcing him to flee into hiding for two years.



Paula of Rome

Jerome's Legacy

- In his writings, he wrote to persuade people of the goodness of celibacy and monasticism.
 - He agreed marriage was good, but celibacy is a superior form of Christian life.
- He convinced many women of celibacy, and many followed him from Rome to Bethlehem.
 - The most famous was Paula (347-404). She hailed from two of the most ancient and noble families of Rome—Gracchi and Scipios.
 - She used her wealth to build a monastery, three nunneries, and a hospital.
 - She was so inspired by Jerome that she took the rare step of learning Hebrew so she could study the Old Testament better.
- Jerome died around 420 ill and blind. His influence in Western Christianity was only surpassed by Augustine.