

Introduction and the Fall of Rome

Medieval Church History – Session One

“Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His. And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings.”

—Daniel 2:20-21 NKJV

I. Introduction

a. The Flow of History

- i. It is crucial not just to understand the events, but their relations.

- ii. Recommendation: Calvin’s “Dedicatory Epistle to Francis I of France” in *Institutes of the Christian Religion*

b. Parameters of the Series

- i. “Medieval” = “medi” (Lat. *medium*, “middle”) + “ev” (Lat. *ævum*, “age”)

- ii. The Middle Ages – ca. AD 590-1517

- iii. The “Dark Ages”

c. The Importance of Studying Medieval Church History

II. The Fall of Rome

a. Introductory Remarks

b. Four Precipitating Setbacks

- i. Alaric I and the Visigoths – AD 410

1. Barbarians: Germanic peoples who spoke neither Latin nor Greek

2. Augustine, *The City of God*

ii. Attila the Hun – AD 452

iii. Gaiseric and the Vandals – AD 455

iv. Orestes, Romulus Augustus, and Odovacar – AD 476

III. So What?

- a. The fall of Rome left a massive power vacuum.
- b. The fall of Rome opened the way for Christian expansion in Europe.
- c. The fall of Rome changed the landscape of Christendom.

IV. Conclusion

Recommended Reading

Berkhof, Louis. *The History of Christian Doctrines*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1937.

Cairns, Earle E. *Christianity through the Centuries*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996.

Ferguson, Everett. *Church History, Volume One: From Christ to Pre-Reformation: The Rise and Growth of the Church in Its Cultural, Intellectual, and Political Context*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005.

Shedd, William G. T. *A History of Christian Doctrine*. 9th ed. 2 vols. New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1889.

Shelley, Bruce L. *Church History in Plain Language*. 4th ed. Nashville, TN: Tomas Nelson, Inc., 2013.