

FROM PENTECOST TO THE PRESENT

— AN APOSTOLIC CHURCH HISTORY —

ONE FAITH. ONE GOSPEL. ONE CHURCH.
JESUS IS LORD.



PENTECOST
33 AD



APOSTOLIC AGE
33 – 100 AD



EARLY CHURCH
100 – 313 AD



MEDIEVAL CHURCH
313 – 1500 AD



REFORMATION
1500 – 1900 AD



APOSTOLIC
RESTORATION
1900 – PRESENT



PRESENT &
BEYOND

 **Life Church**
— OF NEW JERSEY —

FROM PENTECOST TO THE PRESENT • WEEK 5 • A.D. 325–500

After Nicaea: Holding the Line

The Council of Constantinople and the World the Creeds Made • Life Church of New Jersey

Four Weeks, Four Turning Points

Week 1

A.D. 0–100

Pentecost. The apostles preach Jesus' name; the church is born in the book of Acts.

Week 2

A.D. 33–100

The Apostolic Age. The gospel reaches the empire; the apostles finish their course.

Week 3

A.D. 100–325

Holding the Faith Under Fire. Persecution, then Nicaea — is Jesus truly God?

Week 5

A.D. 325–500

Tonight. The creed is finished, the empire turns Christian, and a long eclipse begins.

RECAP

Where We Left Off: Nicaea, A.D. 325

- 318 bishops gathered at the emperor Constantine's invitation to settle one question: is the Son of God truly God, or a created being?
- Arius taught the Son was a created being — “there was a time when He was not.”
- The council answered with the word *homoousios* — “of one substance” with the Father — a non-biblical word pressed into service to defend a biblical truth.
- **Our verdict last week: Nicaea was right about Christ's deity, wrong in its method. The apostles never needed a council or a Greek philosophical term to say “God was manifest in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16).**

STILL UNRESOLVED

- Nicaea said nothing definitive about the Holy Spirit.
- Arian bishops, exiled at Nicaea, were not gone — many returned to imperial favor within a decade.
- The word *homoousios* itself was so disliked that even some orthodox-leaning bishops feared it sounded Sabellian (modalist).

Words We'll Hear Tonight

TERMS FROM THE COUNCILS

- **Orthodox / Orthodoxy** — The teaching officially recognized as correct by a council; here, belief in Christ's full, eternal deity.
- **Arianism / Arian** — Arius's teaching that the Son was a created being, not eternally God — “there was a time when He was not.”
- **Heresy / Heretic** — A teaching (or teacher) formally judged by church leaders to contradict essential Christian doctrine.
- **Creed** — A short, formal statement of belief, agreed on by a council, meant to be recited or confessed.
- **Homoousios** — Greek for “of one substance” — Nicaea's word affirming the Son shares the Father's very being.
- **Council / Ecumenical Council** — A formal gathering of bishops, claiming to represent the whole church, called to settle disputed doctrine.

TERMS FOR TONIGHT'S DEBATE

- **Bishop / See** — A chief pastor over a city's churches; his “see” is the city or region under his authority.
- **Trinity / Trinitarian** — The doctrine that God is three co-eternal, co-equal persons — Father, Son, Spirit — sharing one substance.
- **Modalism / Sabellianism** — Label for teaching that God is strictly one, appearing in different “modes” — condemned alongside Arianism at Constantinople.
- **Hypostasis / Ousia** — Cappadocian technical terms: hypostasis = “person”; ousia = “substance” or “essence.”
- **Canon (this sense)** — A binding church ruling issued by a council — not to be confused with “the canon of Scripture.”
- **Apostolic Oneness** — Our own confession: God is absolutely one, revealed as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost — not three eternally distinct persons.

A.D. 325–360

A Fragile Peace: Arianism Returns

- Constantine dies in 337. His empire splits among three sons — Constantine II, Constans, and Constantius II.
- Constantius II favors Arian and Semi-Arian bishops. Orthodox leaders — including Athanasius — are exiled again and again. Athanasius is banished from Alexandria five separate times.
- **“Athanasius contra mundum” — Athanasius against the world — becomes the saying for his lonely stand.**
- The Arian party itself fractures into factions: some say the Son is wholly unlike the Father; some say merely like Him; the Semi-Arians say like Him “in every respect” but stop short of “one substance.”

KEY NAME

Athanasius of Alexandria

c. 296–373

- Attended Nicaea as a young deacon; became Alexandria's bishop in 328.
- Exiled five times over roughly 17 years of his 45-year ministry for refusing to compromise on Christ's deity.
- Died in 373 — just eight years before Constantinople finished the work he gave his life defending.

A.D. 361–363

The Pagan Interlude: Julian the Apostate

An unexpected gift to the orthodox cause

Julian, Constantine's nephew, renounced Christianity and tried to revive Roman paganism. He tolerated every Christian faction equally — hoping they would tear each other apart.

- Julian recalled all exiled bishops — orthodox and Arian alike — as part of his strategy of tolerance.
- Athanasius returned to Alexandria — then was banished again by Julian himself as “an enemy of the gods.”
- Julian died in battle against Persia in 363. His successor, Jovian, recalled Athanasius once more — this time for good.
- **The unintended result: with paganism as a common enemy, Christians briefly stopped fighting each other and the Nicene position quietly regained ground.**

Meet the Cappadocian Fathers

Basil of Caesarea

"The Great"

- Bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia (modern Turkey)
- Organized the orthodox resistance; died in 379, two years before Constantinople

Gregory of Nazianzus

"The Theologian"

- Basil's close friend; preached in Constantinople from 379 in a tiny house-chapel called Anastasia ("Resurrection")
- Briefly presided over the Council of Constantinople in 381, then resigned amid political conflict

Gregory of Nyssa

Basil's Younger Brother

- Bishop of Nyssa; a subtle philosophical theologian
- Present and influential at Constantinople in 381 (Basil himself had already died)

Is the Holy Spirit God?

- Nicaea (325) settled the Father-Son question but said almost nothing about the Holy Spirit.
- Once the church began speaking of the Son as a distinct divine person, the same logic pushed the question further: is the Spirit a third divine person too?
- **Views multiplied quickly — a warning sign whenever the plain apostolic confession is set aside:**
- Some said the Spirit is simply God Himself in spiritual manifestation — not another person.
- Some said the Spirit is God's impersonal power or energy.
- Macedonius, bishop of Constantinople, taught the Spirit is a created being — an angel.
- Athanasius and the Cappadocians insisted the Spirit is a third, fully divine, co-equal person.

WORD TO KNOW

Pneumatomachi

("Spirit-fighters")

- Also called Macedonians, after Macedonius.
- Also called Semi-Arians, since many denied the Spirit's full deity while affirming (or nearly affirming) the Son's.
- **This is the party the Council of Constantinople was called to answer.**

A.D. 379–381

Theodosius I and the Edict of Thessalonica

- Theodosius I, a Spaniard raised in the Nicene faith, becomes emperor in 379 — the first emperor since Constantine to rule with unwavering commitment to Nicene orthodoxy.
- **In 380 he issues the Edict of Thessalonica (“Cunctos Populos”), requiring all subjects of the empire to hold the Nicene faith — the first time Christianity is made the official religion of Rome by law.**
- Entering Constantinople, Theodosius removes the Arian bishop Demophilus and installs Gregory of Nazianzus as bishop of the capital, ending forty years of Arian control of the city's churches.
- To give these actions lasting legal and theological force — and to unite the whole empire around one confession — Theodosius calls a new ecumenical council to meet at Constantinople in May, 381.

CUNCTOS POPULOS, 380 A.D.

“It is our will that all the peoples ruled by the administration of Our Clemency shall practice that religion which... the religion introduced by the Apostle Peter... according to the apostolic discipline and the evangelic doctrine.”

— Theodosian Code XVI.1.2

The Council of Constantinople Convenes

- 150 bishops gather at Constantinople — far fewer than Nicaea's 318, and this time entirely Greek-speaking.
- The Latin (Western) church sends no representatives at all.
- 36 Pneumatomachian (Semi-Arian) bishops attend, then walk out rather than affirm the Spirit's full deity.
- Meletius of Antioch presides first, but dies during the council. Gregory of Nazianzus succeeds him — then resigns amid political conflict over his legitimacy as bishop of the capital.
- **Nectarius, a layman freshly baptized for the occasion, is elected bishop of Constantinople and finishes presiding over the council.**
- Emperor Theodosius attends the opening session in person, giving the proceedings his full imperial weight.

WHY THIS MATTERS

- This is why Constantinople is called the Second Ecumenical Council — it ranks with Nicaea in authority for both Catholic and Orthodox traditions.
- **Unlike Nicaea, it wasn't fully “ecumenical” in practice — no Western bishops were present, a fact rarely mentioned when people cite its authority.**
- Its third canon elevated Constantinople to second rank after Rome — “new Rome” after “old Rome” — a decision that would fuel centuries of East-West rivalry.

What Constantinople Decided

ON THE CREED

- No brand-new creed was written. Instead, the Nicene Creed of 325 was expanded, with a much fuller confession about the Holy Spirit added.
- New wording: the Spirit is “the Lord and Giver of life... who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified.”
- **This expanded creed — not the shorter 325 original — is what most churches today actually mean when they say “the Nicene Creed.”**

ON THE CANONS

- Seven canons (rulings) were issued, condemning: the Eunomians (extreme Arians), the Eudoxian Arians, the Semi-Arian Pneumatomachi, the Sabellians, the Marcellians, and the Apollinarians.
- Canon 1 re-confirmed the Nicene faith as binding and final against Arianism in every form.
- Canon 3 ranked Constantinople second after Rome — “because it is new Rome.”
- Emperor Theodosius ratified the decrees by law within months, in July 381 — ordering churches handed over to bishops who confessed the equal divinity of Father, Son, and Spirit.

The Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, 381

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds... very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father... who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man... and the third day He rose again... and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father; from thence He shall come again... to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceedeth from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spake by the prophets. In one holy catholic and apostolic Church; we acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The Trinity Doctrine Is Finalized

THE FORMAL DEFINITION

The Trinity: one God eternally existing as three distinct persons — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — each fully and equally God, sharing one identical divine essence, yet genuinely distinguished from one another and not merely three roles or masks of a single person.

NICAEA · A.D. 325

- Answered one relationship: is the Son homoousios (one substance) with the Father?
- Described only two — Father and Son — in relation to each other.
- Its own creed condemned language of more than one hypostasis in God.
- Left the Holy Spirit almost entirely undefined — three bare words.
- **Result: “the Son is fully God” — not yet a complete doctrine of the Trinity.**

CONSTANTINOPLE · A.D. 381

- Answered the remaining relationship: is the Spirit also fully, personally God?
- Formally added the Spirit as a third worshipped, glorified, co-equal person.
- Supplied the technical vocabulary (three hypostases, one ousia) that makes a three-person Godhead expressible for the first time.
- **Result: the first time in official church history the complete, three-person doctrine of the Trinity is formally and legally defined.**

Three Persons, One Being

THE FORMULA

Three hypostases, one ousia

(“three persons, one substance”)

- Basil and the Gregorys split two Greek words — hypostasis and ousia — that had until then been used as synonyms.
- Borrowing from Plato: every human is a particular instance of the universal form “humanity.” Likewise, Father, Son, and Spirit are three particular hypostases sharing one ousia of deity — the way Peter, James, and John share one common humanity.
- Distinguished by relation, not nature: the Father is unbegotten, the Son begotten, the Spirit proceeding.

SCHOLARLY HONESTY

- Even Athanasius worried this language divided God too far — the original Nicene Creed had condemned speaking of more than one hypostasis in God.
- Historian Reinhold Seeburg's blunt assessment: the Cappadocians left the church with “three personalities and an abstract, impersonal essence.”
- **Even the Cappadocians conceded that “begotten” and “proceeding” cannot actually be defined — the very terms meant to distinguish the persons are admittedly beyond human language.**
- David Bernard's assessment: despite denials, the formula tends toward tritheism — belief in three gods sharing a label.

Recap: Where We've Been

THE STORY SO FAR (SLIDES 1–8)

- Nicaea (325) settled Christ's deity; the Son declared homoousios — one substance — with the Father.
- Arianism returned under Constantius II; Athanasius was exiled from Alexandria five separate times.
- Julian the Apostate's brief pagan revival (361–363) ironically gave the Nicene cause room to recover.
- The Cappadocian Fathers — Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa — rose to build out the vocabulary of the faith.
- The Holy Spirit's deity became the new unresolved question — opposed by the Pneumatomachi (“Spirit-fighters”).

THE COUNCIL ITSELF (SLIDES 9–15)

- Theodosius I made Nicene Christianity imperial law (Edict of Thessalonica, 380) and convened the Council of Constantinople in May, 381.
- 150 bishops met — no Western bishop attended — and expanded the Nicene Creed, adding a full confession of the Spirit's deity, plus seven canons.
- We read the completed Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed aloud — the text most churches still recite today.
- **This is where the doctrine of the Trinity was formally finalized: three distinct persons, one being — completing what Nicaea alone began.**
- We weighed the evidence: right that the Spirit is God; wrong to require Greek philosophical categories Scripture never uses.

What Constantinople Got Right — and Wrong

GOT RIGHT

- Affirmed the Holy Spirit is fully God, not a creature — against Macedonius and the Pneumatomachi. Scripture agrees: Acts 5:3–4 calls lying to the Spirit lying to God.
- Reaffirmed Christ's full deity against every remaining form of Arianism.
- Condemned Apollinarianism, defending Christ's full and complete humanity — body, soul, and mind — which Scripture requires (Heb. 2:17, 4:15).

GOT WRONG (OR OVER-COMPLICATED)

- Required a philosophical vocabulary — hypostasis, ousia — found nowhere in Scripture to settle a question the apostles never needed it to settle.
- **Condemned Sabellius and the Marcellians (modalists) as heretics in the same breath as the Arians and Apollinarians — treating the strict oneness of God, poorly stated by Sabellius, as equally dangerous as denying Christ's deity.**
- Elevated Constantinople's political rank (Canon 3) for imperial reasons, planting seeds of the East-West schism six centuries later.
- Never claims apostolic authorship or scriptural citation for its precise wording — it argues from philosophy and church consensus, not “thus saith the Lord.”

No Council Required

1 Timothy 3:16

“God was manifest in the flesh.” The whole question of Christ's deity and the Spirit's identity is answered in one apostolic sentence — no council, no Greek philosophy required.

Colossians 2:9

“In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” Not a person alongside God — God Himself, embodied.

John 14:16–18

Jesus promises “another Comforter” and then says, “I will come to you.” The Spirit is not a separate divine person from Jesus — the Spirit is how the risen Christ comes to dwell within His people.

Acts 2:38

One name — Jesus — for repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. Father, Son, and Spirit are not three persons to negotiate — they are one God, revealed in three ways of relating to His creation.

More Scriptures on Oneness

GOD DECLARES HIS ONENESS

- Isaiah 43:10–11 — “before me there was no God formed... I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour.”
- Isaiah 44:6 — “I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God.”
- Isaiah 9:6 — the child born is called “The mighty God, The everlasting Father.”
- Zechariah 12:10 — the LORD says, “they shall look upon me whom they have pierced.”
- Deuteronomy 32:39 — “I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me.”

JESUS CLAIMS THAT NAME

- John 8:58 — “before Abraham was, I am” — Jesus takes the covenant name of Exodus 3:14.
- John 10:30 — “I and my Father are one.”
- John 14:9 — “he that hath seen me hath seen the Father.”
- Colossians 1:15 — Christ is “the image of the invisible God.”
- Revelation 1:8, 17–18 — “I am Alpha and Omega... I am the first and the last... I am he that liveth, and was dead.”

One More Council on the Horizon: Chalcedon

- Seventy years after Constantinople, a fresh controversy erupts over how Christ's divine and human natures relate to one another in a single person.
- The Council of Chalcedon (451) declares Christ to be one person in two natures — fully God and fully man — “without confusion, without change, without division, without separation.”
- This decision permanently splits off the Oriental Orthodox churches (Coptic, Armenian, Syriac, Ethiopian), who reject Chalcedon's formula — a division that remains unhealed to this day.
- **Let's study it in depth right now — starting with the two men whose opposite errors forced this council to happen.**

Two Extremes and a “Robber Synod”

NESTORIUS • TOO MUCH SEPARATION

- Patriarch of Constantinople, 428–431.
- Objected to calling Mary Theotokos (“God-bearer”), preferring Christotokos (“Christ-bearer”) — fearing the title blurred Christ's two natures.
- Critics heard him dividing Christ into two separate persons, divine and human, loosely joined rather than truly one.
- **Condemned at the Council of Ephesus, A.D. 431 — deposed and exiled.**

EUTYCHES • TOO MUCH MERGER

- An elderly, influential monastery leader (archimandrite) in Constantinople.
- Reacting hard against Nestorius, taught that Christ's human nature was absorbed into His divine nature — leaving, in effect, one merged nature after the incarnation (Monophysitism, “one nature”).
- **In 449, the Second Council of Ephesus — later branded the “Robber Synod” (Latrocinium) — upheld Eutyches by force; Patriarch Flavian of Constantinople was beaten by monks in the proceedings and died of his injuries days later.**

The Council of Chalcedon Convenes

- New emperor Marcian and his empress, Pulcheria, overturn the Robber Synod and call a fresh, genuinely ecumenical council — meeting at Chalcedon, across the water from Constantinople.
- Roughly 520 bishops attend — the largest gathering of any ancient council, and unlike Constantinople (381), this time the Western church sends real representation: legates of Pope Leo I.
- Leo's “Tome to Flavian” (449) — a doctrinal letter on the two natures, written before Flavian's death — is read aloud to the assembled bishops.
- Reports say the bishops cried out in response: “Peter has spoken through Leo!” — a striking early moment of Roman doctrinal authority being embraced by the Greek East.
- Eutyches is condemned; Flavian is posthumously vindicated; the Robber Synod of 449 is formally annulled.

WHY THIS MATTERS

- This is the Fourth Ecumenical Council — after Nicaea (325), Constantinople (381), and Ephesus (431).
- **Unlike Constantinople, real Western participation here gives the council's authority a claim to be genuinely “ecumenical” in practice, not just in name.**
- But size and Western involvement did not produce unity — as we'll see, a significant share of the ancient church will reject this council's conclusions permanently.

The Chalcedonian Definition, A.D. 451

We... confess one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only-begotten, acknowledged in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person and subsistence (hypostasis)...

not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son and only-begotten God, the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ; even as the prophets from the beginning declared concerning Him, and as the Lord Jesus Christ Himself has taught us, and as the Creed of the Fathers has handed down to us.

What Chalcedon Got Right — and Wrong

GOT RIGHT

- Rejected Eutyches: Christ's humanity is real and complete, not absorbed or diminished by His deity. Hebrews 2:17 requires exactly this — “in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren.”
- Rejected Nestorius: Christ is one undivided person, not two separate subjects loosely joined. Scripture never speaks of two Christs, two Sons, or two Lords.
- Preserved both truths the New Testament actually teaches together in a single verse: “God was manifest in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16) — fully God, fully manifest as a man.

GOT WRONG (OR OVER-COMPLICATED)

- Added still more technical Greek vocabulary — *physis* (nature), *hypostasis* (person/subsistence), *prosopon* (person/face) — none of it found in Scripture.
- Could only define the union negatively (four “withouts”) rather than positively — a sign of how far the debate had drifted from plain apostolic language into technical metaphysics.
- **Failed to produce the unity it aimed for: a large share of the ancient church rejected the formula immediately and permanently (next slide).**
- Like Constantinople, never claims “thus saith the Lord” for its precise wording — it argues from philosophy and conciliar consensus.

A Church Divided: The Oriental Orthodox Split

WHO REJECTED CHALCEDON, AND WHY

- The Coptic Church of Egypt, the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Syriac Orthodox Church, and the Ethiopian and Eritrean Orthodox Churches all rejected Chalcedon's formula — together known today as the Oriental Orthodox communion.
- Their objection: “two natures” language sounded, to them, too close to Nestorius's error — they preferred to confess Christ as “one united nature, out of two,” fully divine and fully human (a position called Miaphysitism, distinct from Eutyches's outright Monophysitism, though the two were long confused with each other).
- This split happened immediately and has never been formally healed — sixteen centuries later, the Oriental Orthodox churches remain a separate communion from both Rome and Eastern Orthodoxy.
- Modern ecumenical dialogues (from the 1960s onward) have found the two sides may have been arguing past each other linguistically more than theologically — but the institutional division still stands.

THREE FAMILIES OF THE CHURCH

- Oriental Orthodox — split at Chalcedon, 451 (rejects “two natures” wording).
- Eastern Orthodox — accepts Chalcedon; splits from Rome in the Great Schism, 1054.
- Roman Catholic — accepts Chalcedon; splits from the East in 1054; later fractures further at the Reformation.
- **Three separate divisions, three different centuries, three different causes — worth keeping straight.**

Fully God, Fully Man — No Four Qualifiers Required

John 1:14

“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us... full of grace and truth.” The eternal Word Himself becomes flesh — one subject, one verb, no division.

1 Timothy 3:16

“God was manifest in the flesh.” Our anchor verse for the whole series answers Chalcedon's entire four-century question in four words.

Colossians 2:9

“In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” Full deity, genuinely embodied — without confusion, without division, and without a single Greek technical term.

Hebrews 2:14, 17

Christ took part of “flesh and blood” and was “made like unto his brethren” — real, complete humanity, so that He could be a merciful and faithful high priest.

The Divide Begins: East and West

HOW THE RIFT GROWS

- Canon 3 of Constantinople (381) ranked the bishop of Constantinople (“New Rome”) second only to Rome — ahead of the older, more historically significant sees of Alexandria and Antioch — for political reasons alone.
- No Western bishop even attended the Council of Constantinople — the Latin West was already sidelined from a council reshaping its own creed.
- The language gap widens: fewer Western clergy read Greek, fewer Eastern clergy read Latin — the two halves of the church increasingly can't read each other's theology.
- The West later adds “and the Son” (filioque) to the Spirit's procession, unilaterally, at the Synod of Toledo (589) — altering the very creed finalized at Constantinople without Eastern consultation.
- Rome falls in the West (476); the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire, centered at Constantinople, continues for nearly another thousand years — developing separately in law, language, and church governance.

KEY DATES

- 381 — Canon 3 ranks Constantinople second, ahead of older sees.
- 451 — Chalcedon splits off the Oriental Orthodox churches — a separate, earlier fracture.
- 589 — The West unilaterally adds “filioque” to the creed at the Synod of Toledo.
- **1054 — The Great Schism: Rome and Constantinople formally, mutually excommunicate each other.**

A.D. 378–476

The Empire Crumbles

- 378 — The Goths crush the Roman army at the Battle of Adrianople; Emperor Valens is killed. Rome's military invincibility is broken.
- 410 — Alaric the Visigoth sacks Rome itself — the first time in nearly 800 years a foreign army had taken the city.
- 429–439 — The Vandals conquer Roman North Africa, once one of Christianity's great intellectual centers (home to Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine).
- **476 — The last Western Roman emperor, Romulus Augustulus, is deposed. The Western Roman Empire formally ends.**

AN IRONIC TWIST

- Most of these invading peoples — Goths, Vandals, Burgundians — were already Christian.
- But they were Arian Christians, converted decades earlier by the missionary Ulfilas, before Constantinople settled the question in the East.
- **So even as Nicene orthodoxy triumphed inside the empire, Arian Christianity survived for centuries longer among the barbarian kingdoms that replaced Rome — in Spain until 587, among the Lombards until nearly 600.**

A.D. 354–430

Augustine of Hippo: A Bridge West



- Wrote *The City of God* after the sack of Rome in 410, answering the charge that Christianity had weakened the empire — arguing history moves toward God's eternal city, not Rome's.
- His *Confessions* became the template for spiritual autobiography in the Western church for the next 1,600 years.
- **On the trinity, Augustine emphasized God's unity even more than the Cappadocians did — but some of his own analogies (memory, understanding, and will in one mind; the lover, the beloved, and love itself) lean toward describing one Person's faculties more than three distinct persons.**
- His theology of grace, sin, and the will — developed in controversy with Pelagius — shapes Western (Catholic and later Protestant) theology more than any figure between Paul and Luther.

A.D. 270–550

Monasticism Rises

- Antony of Egypt (c. 251–356) withdraws into the desert around 270, becoming the model for the “Desert Fathers” and “Desert Mothers.”
- Their motive: once Christianity became the empire's official religion under Theodosius, martyrdom was no longer a real threat — some believers sought a new, costly way to pursue holiness.
- Pachomius organizes the first communal monasteries in Egypt, gathering hermits into disciplined communities.
- **Benedict of Nursia (c. 480–547) writes his Rule around 530 at Monte Cassino in Italy — balanced, communal, sustainable — and it becomes the blueprint for Western monasticism for a thousand years.**

WHY IT MATTERS FOR WEEK 5

- Monasteries become the medieval West's libraries, schools, hospitals, and farms — preserving classical and Christian texts through the coming centuries.
- **But monastic spirituality also increasingly separates “serious” holiness (monks, nuns, priests) from ordinary believers — a two-tier Christianity in tension with the New Testament's call to every believer.**
- This shift is part of what our curriculum calls “the long eclipse” — the medieval centuries where access to Scripture and direct devotion increasingly required an institution standing between the believer and God.

Entering the Long Eclipse

- By A.D. 500, the pieces are all in place for what our curriculum calls the medieval eclipse: a Western empire in ruins, an Eastern empire increasingly its own separate Christian world, a fixed and philosophically dense creed, a rising institutional church, and monasteries replacing the marketplace as the center of serious devotion.
- None of this erases the gospel — God continued to save souls in every century — but access to plain Scripture, and the plain apostolic confession of 1 Timothy 3:16, will grow harder to find beneath centuries of accumulated tradition, politics, and philosophy.
- **Next week: Week 6 begins that eclipse in earnest — and, centuries later, the Reformation's first cracks of light.**

Key Takeaways: A.D. 325–500

- Nicaea (325) settled Christ's deity but left the Holy Spirit's identity unresolved.
- Julian the Apostate's brief pagan revival (361–363) ironically gave the Nicene cause room to recover.
- The Cappadocian Fathers — Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa — gave trinitarian theology its lasting vocabulary: three hypostases, one ousia.
- Theodosius I made Nicene Christianity the law of the empire (Edict of Thessalonica, 380) and convened the Council of Constantinople (381).
- Constantinople expanded the creed to affirm the Holy Spirit's full deity, condemned six heresies in seven canons, and elevated Constantinople's rank — planting seeds of the later East-West schism.
- Apostolic verdict: right that the Spirit is God; wrong to require philosophical “persons” where the apostles preached one God, manifest in the flesh (1 Tim. 3:16).
- As councils refined doctrine, the Western Roman Empire collapsed (410 Rome sacked, 476 last emperor deposed) — opening the door to the medieval centuries ahead.

Questions to Carry Home

- Read 1 Timothy 3:16 aloud together. What does this verse settle that took the fourth-century church over fifty years and two major councils to work through?
- The Cappadocians said even they could not define what “begotten” and “proceeding” actually mean. What does that admission tell us about building doctrine on philosophy rather than plain Scripture?
- Constantinople condemned strict oneness teaching (Sabellianism) as a heresy equal to Arianism. How would you gently and biblically explain to a trinitarian friend why Apostolic Oneness is not what the councils meant by “Sabellianism”?
- Most believers in the barbarian kingdoms after Rome's fall were Arian Christians for generations. What does that teach us about how quickly clear doctrine can be lost within a single generation — and what should we do to guard it in our own homes?



IC
XC

*“God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit,
seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles,
believed on in the world, received up into glory.”*

1 Timothy 3:16

Next Week: Week 6 — The Long Eclipse Deepens (A.D. 500–1054)

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