

06_Locked Down, pt 1 (The Catholic Church, the Middle Ages, and Scripture)

How We Got the Bible (2016), Patrick Mead, Fourth Avenue

Now, I've got way too many notes for the day, but I knew that I did, so we're going to end on time, but we're going to end somewhere halfway through this.

That by the way, that was well before this announcement, and I like that's not a comment about that at all.

We have a lot to cover, and it's an adventure story, but it's also a tragic human story.

Nothing happens in isolation.

Everything happens at the same time.

How the Bible is being handwritten, copied, and moving into our current set of 66 books.

There are a lot of political and religious changes that are taking place.

The early church was organized on the synagogue system.

Local areas gathered their people together.

It might be your neighborhood, it might be your small village or your town, and these gatherings were known in the Greek as the gathered people, ecclesia, the word we use for church.

This word synagogue really means congregation, so all of these words mean the same, and they would gather together, and this was a very common thing.

You would gather together for political as well, to decide legal issues.

Every time you see the word ecclesia in Scripture, it doesn't necessarily mean a Christian gathering.

It can mean a political gathering, a community meeting about something.

This is the way they were organized among the Jews.

Generally, you would have a male synagogue and a female synagogue, so that each could speak freely, but then also there were gathered times together where people could just share their needs.

They could share what they were going through.

They could share stories.

The work of the community took place in these community gatherings.

But as the church spread, it entered into places where the Jewish way of thinking, these communities, had not yet spread.

While it was shocking to many, we have learned recently in our current conflicts over the last two decades that not every country wants democracy, and not every country is ready for it.

In fact, time after time, Morocco just did this yesterday, or the day before time changed.

Finally, democracy is given to the people, and they have a free vote.

They immediately vote to end democracy and hand it over to the theocrats.

They did it again in Morocco.

They've done it again and again, and they've done it in Iraq after all of the.

.

.

They did it in Afghanistan after all of the blood and all of the gold spilled there.

Give it right back into the hands of the dictators.

Doing this was difficult, and they couldn't, because how do you impose a community system on an area that doesn't have community?

It would be, for example, in Britain, we are brilliant at queuing, lining up.

Absolutely brilliant at it.

You walk into a store, let's say the post office, and there might be six windows open.

There's one line.

You can always tell the foreigners, because they'll walk up to one of the empty ones, and the British people are generally too nice to do much more than Haramph, Haramph.

But they will make a tisk, and they might wag their head if they are very upset.

But the point is, we're very good at queuing, but if you go to Asia and you get in line, you're never going to be served.

You need to learn how to rush it.

Just get past and get there.

And that's, again, it's a cultural thing.

Well, among the Jews, all men were equal.

But among other societies, while all people are equal, some are more equal than others to borrow a line from George Orwell's Animal Farm.

And if you've never read it, this would be a really good month to read Animal Farm.

I think you might want to.

Eventually, the men that were more equal than others gained more and more power over their local faith community.

And so instead of all of the men having a say, the important people had a say.

And then the most important person has a say.

Some of us were raised in churches where, although we had four or five or how many elders, there was a chief elder, and he wasn't called chief elder, was he?

And if ever you said you're being a chief elder, he would deny it.

But nothing happened if he didn't want it to.

Everybody understand that?

That's what happened to the church within the first couple of hundred years.

After a while, these important men began to gather around to meet with the other important men.

So instead of elders over one congregation, it was the most important guy meeting with the most important guy of that church.

And you know what happened then?

As soon as they got into that circle, who's the most important man among us?

And that's how you went from and took only 200 years.

That's how you went from communal system early church to a bishop over many churches.

It only took a couple hundred years because the people weren't ready for the synagogue, the congregation system.

The king of the hill was generally the most powerful, wealthy man, but rarely was he the most spiritual man.

And that led to corruption early on in the church.

In the Bible, words like elder, shepherd, bishop, presbyter are all the same word, but in our society it changed.

In our society, the word pastor generally means somebody who does what I do, who's the teacher of the church, who's the voice of the church, and who leads the church on a day-to-day basis.

However in Scripture, the word pastor generally referred to the elders.

However, in Scripture, the elders were also teachers.

You see how things change.

The October, I put it up on Facebook yesterday, October is, it really is not making this up, Pastor Appreciation Month, and I put, or as we call it in churches of Christ, October.

Because there's this, I'll still be at places where people will introduce me as their pastor, and another church of Christ person will do this.

No, it's fine to do that.

Language changes.

The word church has changed.

And we do that.

The word church used to mean a chapel.

Now it means wherever we are.

The church gathers here, the church is gathering there.

Let it, let language do what it does.

But regardless, some elders became bishops, and then among the bishops, you even got some archbishops.

At the time they weren't called that.

That would come when Constantine came.

When Constantine came, he made the church the official religion of the empire, because he liked the structure, and because he could control it.

And so he called in all the most important guys, and he arranged them like his government is arranged.

When you take a look at Roman government, then you take a look over at the Roman Catholic church, you'll find how he does this, emperor, pope.

Then you have his prelates, you have the cardinals.

Then you have his highest officials, archbishops, then you have theirs, and it goes all the way down.

Constantine did that because he said, this works for me.

He organized them, and then he wanted them to be united.

So he called synods.

This was the gathering of the bishops.

Local people had no say.

It was their top guy that went to these things.

And I brought this up last week, I'll just say this again briefly.

Constantine didn't care what was decided at these meetings.

He just wanted you to agree so that we could be united, and there wasn't a problem.

And so he didn't care if you believe that Jesus was a co-equal with God or not.

He didn't care what you believed about the Trinity.

He wasn't even a Christian at this point.

He would become a Christian on his deathbed, which is what we generally call great timing.

But that's what he did.

So he wanted us all controlled, and that was the death of the synagogue.

No longer was the synagogue system in effect, and would not be until the Protestant Reformation 1500 years later.

And even then, we drag a bit of Catholicism in with us.

Even in churches of Christ, who claim each church is autonomous.

Now, what that means is every church gets to decide what it does.

But you let a church like us have a woman speak or use instruments, and the other church is howl and rebel and write us up, and I'm going, wait a minute, that would seem to indicate that there's an ex-church outside a church authority over other churches.

That's Catholic.

Now I want to talk to you about, I want to talk to my Catholic friends in the room.

Those of you that are Catholic, those of you who love Catholics, those of you who have married Catholics, or those of you that were Catholic and kind of miss it, I want to talk to you.

We're going to have to say some things about the Catholic Church, but I want you to understand what we're saying.

We're not talking about you, and we're not talking about your friends.

We're not talking about your priest.

We're not talking about any of those.

It's like this.

In Colorado, I always loved the cowboy mystique.

I always loved that mythos, and in Colorado you got to live that out, and that was great.

But part of that is also going by Dry Creek where they slaughtered women and children just because they were Native Americans, shot them dead.

Now I'm a white guy, and although many people were still painting themselves blue and running around in the heather, I still am a white guy, and I'm part of that culture.

I'm part of the white people who also enslaved the African people.

Now, if I'm talking about the sin of slavery, I'm not insulting you, all right?

This is stuff government people did.

This is stuff the higher up, our betters did, right?

I'm British, I'm also American, but I'm British.

If you would like to list the sins of nations, start with the British.

We have a lot, and we did a lot to a lot of innocent nations.

Please don't be upset when I talk about what the system leaders did in the Catholic Church, because at this time, the lockdown starts.

With the full backing of the Roman government, the church was now an iron fist.

And by the church, we meant the top guys, the top guys who wrangled themselves appointments with the emperor, who now ran the church.

They decided who was a Christian and who was not.

They decided what churches did and what they did not.

They built the cathedrals like the Romans built their temples and their senate houses and places of worship and administration.

They modeled their law, I don't know if you know this, but in the Catholic Church, there are well over 3,500 laws, canon laws.

They modeled the laws after the Romans.

By the way, it used to be a lot more until Vatican II, and Vatican II, they dropped a lot of them.

As the Roman Empire started getting all kinds of problems, the vandals, the Goths, the Visigoths and the like, Rome was sacked many times.

As they kept losing strength, two things happened.

One, the seat of government decamped and they ran over to Byzantium and renamed it Constantinople.

You know Constantinople is what today, Istanbul.

Great.

There might be Giants' wonderful song about Istanbul, the Constantinople.

But anyway, it's a brilliant little song and once you hear it, you will regret it because it never leaves your head.

It's one of those earworm songs.

Anyway, it's also featured in an episode of Animaniacs, which is the best cartoon series ever made.

I miss it to this day.

As the government moved over there, what fills the void over in Rome, the church moves up.

And now the church people sit on thrones.

Every bishop has a throne.

Archbishops have a throne and a pope has a throne.

They have thrones and they rule.

The word is rule.

And they make their decisions and they stepped up as a government moves east to protect itself.

And again, Catholic friends, you're no more responsible for this than I am about massacring Native Americans.

But it's history.

And history is not always pretty.

History can be pretty ugly stuff.

When the Roman Empire sputtered and went dark, the church rose in power, but in two centers.

In the east, Constantinople, they felt that they should be in charge of the church.

Rome said, no, we started it.

We're in charge.

We were the first one.

And that tension would grow and eventually in 1053, it would officially split.

The Eastern churches were the Orthodox churches and the Roman Catholic churches, the one we're going to talk about.

Why?

Because the vast majority of us in here are either European or come from European stock.

And even if you don't, even if you're African American, you live in a country run by Europeans and set up by Europeans.

So we got to talk about that.

All right, Rome, the Rome and Roman Catholic Church ran the West.

By the way, the Orthodox Church does not have a pope.

It has various sections of them have metropolitan's who rule very highly, but they're not considered Christ on earth.

The pope is considered Christ on earth, the vicar of Christ, the father of the church.

The pomp and grandeur of the Roman Empire did not go away.

It just went under new management.

And that's what you're seeing when you see papal processions and the like.

You're seeing ancient Rome, but now with a Christian veneer.

Now, if you went to Catholic school or read much of their literature, you know that the Roman Catholic Church takes credit for preserving the Bible throughout the centuries.

It's a highly questionable claim.

They preserved it in one way, but we'll get to that.

The fact is that the Roman Church locked down the Bible literally.

They made sure you couldn't have a copy.

It was locked down and inaccessible by several ways.

One, the only official version was the Vulgate, Latin, but people didn't speak Latin anymore.

And so they couldn't read it.

It's rather like asking anybody under 20 to go read the Declaration of Independence.

They can't.

They don't read cursive.

They've lost that.

They can only read what somebody tells them it says.

It's a little dangerous, don't you think?

But regardless, they also locked it up to the pulpits, literally with a chain.

And most Catholic churches didn't even have a Bible because in the Catholic Church, the Bible is not the ultimate authority.

Rather, it is a authority as interpreted by the church.

Do you understand that?

By the way, every religion in some ways does that same thing.

If you were to read scripture and say, wait a minute, Phoebe's called a deacon.

St.

Junia is called an apostle.

The daughters of Philip preached with him.

So when one can speak, you will find in some churches, they'll set you down and say, no, let us tell you what that means.

They don't.

You see what I mean?

So it's not just the Catholics that do this, but the Catholics were in charge.

And they were the only church who wasn't like, I'm leaving the Catholic Church and going to, there's nowhere.

It was it.

Constantine made sure of that.

Most people were illiterate.

They couldn't even read it had it been in their language.

And in fact, well over half of all priests were illiterate and could not read anything.

But think of the world as it was in Europe for over a thousand years.

No scripture.

Most of your priests couldn't read it if they had it.

Your edicts came from Rome, but you were ruled by whatever priest, bishop, whatever happened to be there at the time.

And if you weren't in good standing with the church, you were excommunicated.

And that meant you were essentially dead because you couldn't have a job.

You couldn't receive alms alms came through the church.

You were kicked out of your community.

Scotland had a king that this happened to.

King Robert de Bruce actually came from a Norman family of Robert de Beau, but by the time he came around, Robert de Bruce, many of you saw him portrayed in Braveheart, changing his mind a few times.

After William Wallace's death, Robert de Bruce actually secures independence for Scotland at the Battle of Bannockburn.

However, he killed his rival, John Balliol, in a church.

And the church liked John Balliol better and excommunicated him.

Excommunicated Robert de Bruce.

He had to fight a long time to get that taken off.

And had he not gotten it taken off, he could not have been king.

He would have died a death like a leper.

By the way, he did get leprosy later and a pope said, that's what you get.

And he did die of it eventually.

It was a pretty sad story.

Anyway, so how are you going to know about God?

Well, you go to the movies.

Well, there aren't movies.

There are stained glass windows.

They were the multiplex of the time.

You would go and see the stories.

And the stories were more often about the saints than about Scripture.

But regardless of what the story was, the paintings or whatever, and some of those are fantastic.

You've got to go see the cathedrals.

They're fantastic.

As you look at them, you'll see some souls ascending to heaven, but others down here in hell getting poked and brutalizing them in the most horrid situation.

And that was constantly put on you.

This is what's going to happen to you unless you stay good with the church.

And the control was constant.

You had to baptize your baby and baptize them quickly.

Remember, a good portion of babies died.

But if you didn't baptize your baby, your baby couldn't go to heaven, and it would float in limbo for eternity crying for its mother.

And they made a big deal of this, so that you'd got a baby in there.

And by the way, let's back up a bit.

You couldn't even get married unless you were good with the church.

If you were married outside the church, it wasn't a marriage.

Do you remember that?

That was true until Vatican II, and that's only a few decades ago.

No marriages were recognized by the Catholic Church, except those done by the Catholic Church.

Some of you are nodding because you're Catholics.

You understand this.

And to become, to be married, what'd you have to do?

You had to sign a paper, didn't you, that said you will raise your children in the Catholic Church.

Yup.

So, you can't even get married unless you're Catholic.

You can't have your children baptized, and if you don't, and they die, they will be crying for their mommy throughout all eternity, and you did that.

It's all your fault.

Oh, but it goes further.

You cannot go to heaven if you have unconfessed sin.

Well, how do you confess your sin?

You tell it to the priest, and I've had people say, yeah, but that's anonymous.

You're in Ireland.

You're in Cork, let's say.

You go in.

Yeah, no, it's Father Murphy on the other side.

Oh, there you are again, Patrick.

Shall we just start with the list you made last week, you know, and you know who it is.

And now there's a person who knows everything you've ever done wrong.

Now, I want to say that I want to make this very, very plain.

The vast majority of priests, they would die rather than reveal what was in confession.

They take it seriously.

And every priest I've met, I believe I can say this.

Every priest I've met is a good man, a good man.

They didn't make these rules.

So please, if you see a priest or a nun, don't think our enemy, no, they're not.

They believe in Jesus Christ, yay.

Let's just be aware of a history time, shall we?

A historical time, because it becomes important.

By the way, that whole marriage thing, also you couldn't get divorced if they didn't allow it.

That's where we got the Church of England.

Henry VIII got tired of killing all of his ex-wives, and then decided he's just going to divorce one, and the Pope said you can't.

So he started a new church, then he killed her.

That's a good basis to start a church.

And by the way, I love Episcopalians.

I love their ritual and such, but I always go, this has not walked too far back up that creek to see where it comes from.

Anyway, if you, remember the Kennedys?

The Kennedys, Ted Kennedy and Ethel, they wanted a divorce and couldn't get one.

And so they just went off and lived with other people, and because the Pope said, no, I'm not going to know all this.

It took a long time to sort that out.

But what happens if you die outside the church?

Oh, then you can't be buried in sacred ground.

What does that mean?

Well, demons have access to people that's not in sacred ground.

That's why you learn to bury people in church yards.

You're safe.

Outside?

No.

And by the way, in Europe, the older churches had to add on because more people died and so they have to add some more sacred ground, and they go out and they bless the ground.

They have a liturgy for this.

It went on and on.

They controlled the bedroom.

By this time, the doctrines had forced them to take other doctrines.

This is a problem.

When you start a rule, you have to make other rules to enforce the first rule, and then the more rules start.

It's awful.

They started with, Mary must have been very pure to give birth to Jesus.

Therefore, she was a virgin forever.

The Bible says Jesus had brothers and sisters.

They say that word means cousins.

No, it doesn't.

It means brothers and sisters.

They had to make her a virgin, but for her to be pure, to be the mother of God, Theotokos, she had to be born of a virgin too.

You see where this is going.

It is official Catholic doctrine, but not until 1300 that Mary was a virgin perpetually and that she was born by a virgin as well.

And that meant sex is bad.

So you're not allowed to have sex unless you're trying to make a baby.

No sex for fun.

In fact, and I'm serious, you read the Irish priest on this, have you ever read Leon Urus' book, Trinity?
I recommend it.

It's about that thing.

It's about the early Irish rebellions, but he puts in a lot of priest material there that you can make babies, but you can't enjoy it.

And it's a bit shameful.

Yeah.

Yeah, you can't use birth control.

Sex is only for making babies.

By the way, most Catholics, I don't know most, a large number of Catholics ignore that rule.

You know, I, what's up to you, what you think about that?

The highest calling would be to be celibate.

So you can be a celibate priest or celibate nun.

Now married men can become priests.

You know, let's say coming from the Anglican tradition or the like, they can, but they can't go up any higher than that.

They can never be a bishop.

They can never, they have to stay down at that level because sex has made them lesser.

They controlled for a thousand plus years, all entertainment, all education, all publishing and almost all rulers in Europe.

If you wanted to read or engage in law or commerce, you had to learn to speak Latin.

Well, if you, most people couldn't speak Latin, therefore you could be cheated easily at a court, you know what was going on.

You didn't have to say everything was done in Latin.

By the way, I come from a country where judges wear mops on their head.

So please understand, I'm not trying to knock everybody.

This is, history is not always pretty.

The latest estimate, like I said, more than half of the priests and bishops were completely illiterate.

So is that enough control?

No.

The foundation was launched to root out any disloyalty to the church.

The church became a vast empire.

You go into towns and cities where it is desperately poor and there'll be a super rich church.

You see it in Mexico, you see it in Ireland, you see it in Italy, you see it wherever you go.

By the way, the only competition for grandeur is the government houses.

You go into places that are desperately poor, there's one beautiful building in town.

What is it?

It's a courthouse.

Government and church were linked.

This is the way they did things.

It was kept in the hands of church officials.

In that sense, they kept the Bible safe because nobody could read it, touch it, or change it.

It was locked until the 1960s, Vatican II, again, gave Catholics some permission to read the Bible on their own, however it was limited by what the priests decreed.

Most of mine going to school were excited that they got to read the Bible, came to me to ask me what sections they could read.

I was just a kid, so I was trying to give them what I could give them, but they could only read 15 minutes a day because that was what their priest had said.

So I gave them Leviticus, so they wouldn't mind.

No, I didn't.

No, I didn't.

I did what I've always done, go to the Gospels.

The church controlled all access to Jesus.

No personal faith, no personal Savior, and they became a blend of pagan mystery religions.

You have incense, and you have all that, you know, statuary and the like, an Old Testament.

You cannot come to God except through us.

You have to pray as an acceptable way.

We tell you to pray, you know, we have Ave Maria's, you have, you know, Peter Noster, your fathers, you have all of that, all regimented.

And sadly, the church was always looking for more ways to get money.

In a Catholic church to this day, if you have a funeral you pay, marriage you pay, whatever, I don't charge for funerals or weddings, for members.

If it's a non-member, I'll charge, because I'm taking my time, no light.

But if you're a member, you're already given.

You're already part of this process.

But they charge for everything.

In fact, when they stepped up the Inquisition, well, hang on, I'm going too early.

I'm backing up to point 16 on the notes, guys.

Even at Communion, you remember the wafer, and you couldn't touch the blood.

You couldn't touch the wine.

That has changed.

You are now allowed to receive the wafer in your own hands.

But you don't have to put it in your pocket for later.

I mean, there's a rule.

It has to be right back into your mouth.

You still don't get the wine.

The richest people in every area were the bishops and archbishops.

They rivaled the king for riches, and often were more wealthy than the king of whatever, you know, France or the Teutonic Knights or whatever.

And then when somebody dies, they were good.

They were in good with the church, but they're not good enough to go to heaven yet.

They go to Purgatory, a place where they will be in misery and pay for their sins until they are cleansed enough to go to heaven.

However, you can get them out quicker with monetary gifts or by paying somebody to pray for them until enough prayers are prayed to get them out.

Many nuns, that's their job, is to go into a room and pray.

The church is being paid for them to pray for a certain soul.

When the Kennedys died, when Jack Kennedy died and then Robert Kennedy died, they in interviews talked about how much money they had given to the church for people to pray 24-7 for their souls to get them out of Purgatory sooner.

You see how this is a money-making thing?

Again, by the top, not by the average person, by the top, gets even worse.

They stepped up the Inquisition and gathered people's territory.

It's kind of like the drug wars are today, frankly.

Somebody comes into my house and they've got a few marijuana seeds, and we're not in Colorado, let's say, and later the doors kicked in and they come into my house.

I didn't even know it was in there.

According to the laws of the state of Tennessee, you can seize my house.

I don't get a penny.

Well, by the way, that's not just Tennessee.

I think that's almost every state.

The drug wars have become a real income producer for the government.

Well, that's what the Inquisition was.

They'd go and say, you're unfaithful, and you've been accused, well, who are my accusers?

Well, you can't, we're not going to tell you, they're faithful people, and you could put a spell on them or something, but we're taking your stuff.

They also launched crusades.

They then sold indulgences, and that's where we're going for our last few minutes to date.

For those of you that don't know what an indulgent was, it was a way for you to buy forgiveness, buy forgiveness for your sins, even if you hadn't committed them yet.

You could buy them in advance.

If somebody was stuck in purgatory, you could buy indulgences for their sins to get them out sooner.

The church published a list of sins and the cost to get forgiveness.

It was widespread, and nobody knew it was wrong because they didn't know their Bible.

They just did what they were told.

There are simple sins.

These were called simple sins, such as lying or raping a virgin.

Those were all considered simple sins, low cost.

By this time, the clergy was very immoral.

Boniface said committing adultery was of no more consequence than washing one's hands, and he raped women a lot.

That was kind of his thing.

So glad that our high leaders don't do anything like that anymore, and that was sarcastic.

Others could be negotiated up or down.

I'm not going to try to explain because the way money changes in each area, but you can look up Tetzel, T-E-T-Z-E-L, was the biggest marketer of indulgences for the church.

But there were many people who sold indulgences, and here's the kicker.

Although it enraged a lot of people, they didn't have any power to do anything because only nobles and church people could have weapons.

Some people were not allowed to own them, or anything that looked like a weapon you weren't allowed to have.

But the rich people, the lords, they could.

And I'm going to do this, and then I've got to quit, and I'm only halfway through my notes.

But again, I told you, I already, in fact, I told Laurie Lee, I said, there's no way we're getting through these notes this week.

I want to start with a name.

In 1348, a thousand years after Jerome translated the Volgate Bible, a comet streaked across the sky.

The people had always assumed that comets were a sign that something awful was coming, and in this case, they were right.

In 1348, right after the comet went by, the Black Death entered Europe, the Bubonic Plague.

To this day, historians cannot figure out exactly where it got there.

They think it was a sailor from somewhere in the Middle East entering an Italian port.

However, many historians say that it was an act of war because the plague was already in the Middle East, and Arab ships coming to Genoa, fighting the Genoese, Italians, put bodies in catapults and fired them over the walls to spread the disease, regardless.

In many places in Europe, it killed 70% of the population, and killed them so quickly, it was said you could wake up with a fever and be buried that evening.

In Oxford, England, Oxford at that time had 15,000 inhabitants when the comet streaked across the sky.

Five years later, 15,000 was turned into 3,500.

One of those who survived was a first-year student named John Wickliffe, and John Wickliffe is the first one to start the movement to getting the Bible in our language, but we can't tell his story because we're out of time.

So next week, John Wickliffe and another fascinating individual, John, although he's often called John Huss, H-U-S, in English, John Huss, H-U-S-S, in Bohemian, in Czech, language, John, J-A-N, H-U-S, one S.

So look it up both ways if you want to read ahead.

But that's what then starts a movement, and I'm excited about it.