

# 14<sup>th</sup> Century: The Black Death and another Schism

Historical Theology

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## Black Death

### I. What was the Plague?

- A. Bubonic
  - 1. Gets most of the attention
  - 2. Bacteria: *Yersinia pestis*
  - 3. Fleas (Rats carry the fleas) bite from the flea or contact with open sore
  - 4. Swollen, tender lymph glands called buboes.
- B. Pneumonic
  - 1. Perhaps killed even more than Bubonic
  - 2. Bacteria: *Yersinia pestis*
  - 3. (Fleas on rats) particles in the air from the sick
- C. Infections in the lungs Septicemic
  - 1. Certainly caused death
  - 2. Bacteria: *Yersinia pestis*
  - 3. Bite from the infected flea
  - 4. Abdominal pain; bleeding under the skin; bleeding at mouth and nose; nausea and vomiting; occasionally no symptoms preceding death

### II. Where did the plague originate?

- A. Had hit Europe earlier, e.g. Justinian's Plague around Constantinople
- B. Probably came from Asia
- C. Mongol army attacking a Genoese trading post on the Black Sea
- D. Catapulted corpses into the city
- E. The Genoese fled the city on ships taking with them rats, fleas and death.

### III. What were some effects of the Plague?

- A. One-fourth to more than half of the population died.
- B. Families sent into disorder

- C. Changes in the society—peasants could demand higher wages
- D. For many places it meant more food although fields often went untended
- E. Only small pox has claimed more lives
- F. Hit Europe mainly 1347-1352

### IV. Why isn't the Plague still causing panic and death?

- A. Little Ice Age led to poor crops which led to under-nutrition and malnutrition.
- B. Good medical treatment
- C. Diseases tend to weaken as they mutate.
- D. Still around today and causing problems, particularly in Africa.
- E. In Madagascar in 2017 more than 2,500 cases
- F. The U.S. averages 7 cases a year.

### V. What effect did the Plague have?

- A. On the Church
  - 1. Many priests abandoned their responsibilities.
  - 2. People questioned the Church especially after they did what the priests admonished them to do. (repent, processions, more masses, more gifts to the church)
  - 3. With the death of many priests, the men who took their place were poorly educated and were not up to the tasks.
  - 4. Many monasteries saw the loss of all of the monks as they succumbed to the plague. (side note: One monastery in Italy tried to develop perfumes,

- disinfectants and salves to combat the plague.)
- 5. People seem to question the Church without questioning God which helped lead to the Reformation.
- B. On the average person's 'spiritual' condition
  1. Pilgrimages to "holy sites"
  2. Flagellants
  3. Persecution of Jews
  4. (Islam followers were less likely to question their religious leaders. Since the leaders continued to insist that the plague was a gift since it made them martyrs and transported them instantly to paradise.)
  5. Superstitions

#### VI. Discussions and Study

- A. In what ways did the Church fail?
- B. How do we react to difficulties (e.g. drought, sports, finances)? Do we turn to superstitions or making 'deals' with God?
- C. I Sam 28:3-7
- D. Acts 8:17-20
- E. John 9:1-4
- F. I Timothy 4:7
- G. Proverbs 3:5-7
- H. II Kings 21:2-6
- I. Col 2:8-10

#### The Great Western Schism

##### J. Serious issues of the papacy in Avignon

- A. Countries (especially England) began to see the pope as an extension of French politics
- B. If a church position was vacant for a year the popes began to have the income for that church come to Avignon.
- C. This meant that the Papacy benefitted greatly by having prolonged vacancies

- D. The Church began to sell the positions again (Gregory VII had put an end to this practice)
- E. Some men held several positions to gain the money but were often totally absent from that parish
- F. Several of the Avignon pops practiced nepotism.

##### II. A Move to Normalcy or maybe not

- A. The election of Pope Gregory XI saw the papacy returned to Rome
- B. When Gregory XI died, the people of Rome did not want to see the papacy go back to Avignon, which was a possibility since there were more French cardinals than Italian cardinals.
- C. A mob entered the building where the College of Cardinals was meeting to elect a new pope.
- D. The mob refused to leave unless an Italian was elected. Hence, an Italian got the nod and became Pope Urban VI.
- E. Urban was a man who preferred a humble NOT extravagant life, he was wanting reform
- F. He denounced the cardinals that did not live and work in their dioceses. They were "traitors to Christ"
- G. He planned to increase the number of Italian cardinals through appointments to try to wrest the power away from the French.
- H. To try to improve his power to make reforms he appointed many of his family members to positions of importance. (Why would that be a problem?)
- I. His moves caused many Italian cardinals join the French ones in declaring that the election of Urban had been made under duress and therefore invalid.
- J. The cardinals reconvened and elected a new pope who took the name: Clement VII.

- K. Who was the real pope? Urban was pious but not wise in his political moves. Clement was a smooth diplomat, but was not very 'spiritual'
- L. Clement attacked Rome but was unsuccessful, so he set up court in Avignon.
- M. France, Scotland backed Clement. England, Scandinavia, Poland and Germany backed Urban. Many countries switched allegiances many times.
- N. The schism continued well after these two popes died.
- O. The schism encouraged simony because they needed money to compete against each other.
- P. The continuation of the schism led to men such as Jan Hus and John Wycliffe stepping up to criticize and call for drastic reform.
- Q. It also led to the Conciliar Movement which the strength of it is in the 15<sup>th</sup> century



The European physicians had lots of advice on how to avoid the plague:

- Flee as the plague approaches.
- Avoid exercise and bathing.
- Burn incense and carry flowers.
- Smell strong odors as from a latrine to overcome the plague vapors.
- Wear religious medals and papers with magic words

