

King Henry VIII

Proof that God Uses Evil for Good

When we think of King Henry VIII, we usually don't think of a Christian man on the front lines fighting for the Reformation. Instead many think the exact opposite, of an evil man full of pride willing to do anything to fulfill his selfish desires. King Henry VIII is a vivid example of God's ability to take man's evil nature and provide good for His Church. Studying the history of the English Reformation and King Henry VIII is as much political and social as it is religious. It is necessary to unpack England's royalty and its social, and religious policies in order to grasp why and how England turned away from the Catholic Church and became the Church of England with strong Reformation theology. Several characters took part in this stage in history, the most prominent being King Henry himself. At the age of 18, Henry became King of England, upon the death of this father, King Henry VII. We must examine some of the political plot at this time. Henry's brother, Arthur, was first in line for the throne and had been politically joined in marriage with Catherine of Aragon, daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain. However, Arthur died unexpectedly prior to his father. Upon Arthur's death, King Henry VII agreed to a pre-arranged marriage with young Henry and Catherine, the widow of Arthur. The stage was now set for the first request to the Papacy in Rome. The Papacy nullifies the law of Leviticus 20:21 and gives permission for Henry and Catherine to marry. All ends happily--not quite. Henry's marriage to Catherine lasts 24 years. It may have gone on for a lifetime had it not been for the fact that Catherine did not yield a son for the throne. The year is now 1533 and the religious landscape of Europe has changed with the Reformation. Men like Luther, Zwingli, Bullinger, and Calvin have laid the foundation for a new Church. This is a bloody time for Christianity. Whether you are a Catholic or Protestant, your life depends on who is in power. King Henry VIII vaulted the power of the throne to a new high. He made drastic changes to the constitution and policies of England using any means necessary, including torture and death, to increase and secure his power.



Henry, wielding his new-found power, now requests the Papacy to annul his marriage to Catherine so he can marry Anne Boleyn in hopes of having a son. Rome denies his request, the stage in England is set and the battle begins. "King Henry passes the Act of Supremacy, naming



himself head of the Church of England" (tucker 302).

Henry starts a brutal assault on the church and its monasteries, and takes all the money in the Church's coffers for his treasury. Because of Henry's power and his brutal attacks, most church and state officials agree to his changes. Exceptions worth noting are Sir Thomas More and William Tyndale, who were both executed for treason. King Henry VIII is excommunicated from the Church in Rome and now splits the English Church from Rome, opening the door for the Protestant Reformation in England. King Henry now controls the Church and State. With the aid of Thomas Cranmer, who Henry names as the archbishop of Canterbury, his marriage to Catherine is officially annulled by the Church of England. His second wife Anne supports the Protestant Reformation and it

gains ground throughout England. Henry soon loses interest in Anne, blaming her for not giving him a son. Anne's fate is much different than Catherine's. Henry has Anne framed and charged with adultery and treason. She is beheaded on Henry's orders and he marries Anne Seymour. She gives Henry a son, the future Edward VI.

However, Anne dies in childbirth. His marriage to his fourth wife, Anne of Cleves, was very short lived. Henry had pictured her as a very attractive woman. However, upon seeing her, he was disgusted by her appearance and the marriage was annulled. His fifth marriage was to Catherine Howard who was later beheaded for adultery in 1542. His sixth and last wife was Catherine Parr. They were married until his death. In his final years, Henry's physical condition rapidly deteriorated due to unhealthy diet and he dies in 1547. One would think that King Henry's rule is now over, but not necessarily. Prior to his death, Henry initiated legal documents allowing his son Edward to become king, thus bypassing both his daughters; Mary from his first marriage and Elizabeth from his second marriage. All his children would eventually rule England. However, if Queen Mary had ruled first, the Protestant movement may have come to an abrupt halt in England. As it happened, Edward ruled first.



Even though Edward's reign was short, only six years, it was enough time for the Protestant Reformation to take a permanent hold in England. The Church of England adopted doctrinal theology from the Protestant Reformation during King Henry VIII's reign. After Henry's death Thomas Cranmer enjoys much more freedom from King Edward VI and advances the Reformation to a new height. When Mary became Queen of England, the Protestant Reformation was too strong for her desire to bring the Catholic Church and Rome back to England as the only Church. Although, her efforts to destroy the Reformation movement earned her the nickname of "Bloody Mary" (tucker302). King Henry was a Catholic all his life in his beliefs. Even though he was excommunicated, he refuted the doctrines and theology of the Protestants and maintained the ideology of Catholicism? However, through his marriages and his obsessive desire to control the church, the Protestant Reformation took hold. Early in Henry VIII's life, Pope Leo X had given Him the title "Defender of the Faith" (tucker302). Henry had made brutal attacks against Martin Luther and the Reformation, but through his selfish desires, the Protestant Reformation expanded in England. Proof that God is always in control. A Bible verse I often turn to is Romans 8:28, "We know that all things work together for good for those that love God, who are called according to His purpose." This year as we Christians celebrate the 500th year anniversary of the Reformation, I challenge each of us to read about and to remember those who made a path for us, and to know, that at the end of the day, God is still in control.



For further information on King Henry and the Reformation or questions on Christianity, please see our web-site <http://www.fpcbelton.org/> or visit our Church Library. This blog is posted on the web-site. In addition, the following is a good web-site for Christian information; www.christianhistoryinstitute.org/blog Note: I used three books for reference material; Parade of Faith Ruth A. Tucker, The Story of Christianity Justo L. Gonzalez, and A Reformation Reader Denis R. Janz for today's blog.

Grace and Peace

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