OVERVIEW OF THE PURITAN ERA

1. CONTEXT: We must understand the extreme turmoil these men faced in order to adequately appreciate the faith, fortitude, tenacity and courage the Puritans possessed to minister for the Lord and His Church.. The Puritans lived in the latter half of the 16TH century and throughout 17th century. The Church of England was established by King Henry the VIII who was crowned in 1509. He gave birth to the Church of England [Anglican/Episcopal], and separated the church of England from the Roman Catholic Church. All Catholic doctrine and ceremony was retained.
2. Queen Mary [“bloody Mary”] is crowned in 1553, She is strict Roman Catholic who did everything she could to stop to stop the Protestant movement. During her five year reign, Mary had 300 Protestants burned at the stake including women and children. Theologians John Rogers, Latimer, Ridley, and Crammer were included in this slaughter. Many flee to Geneva, and come under the teaching of John Calvin.
3. Mary dies in 1558. She is succeeded by her half sister Elizabeth the 1ST. She was sympathetic to Protestant beliefs, but would not remove Catholic ceremonies and doctrine from the Church of England. She ruled for 45 years until 1603. The main issue within the Church was how are we to worship God and do church. Those who fled to Europe under Mary’s reign come back from Europe to England. They are very strong in their faith because they’ve been sitting under John Calvin. They bring with them the manner of worship that the churches in Europe were practicing: the removal of Catholic rituals, crossing the cross, candles, and incense. The reformers sang hymns and prayed, and listened to the reading and preaching of the Word. They want this to take place in the Church of England.
4. The characteristics of a Puritans: Family was to be a little “church” with morning and evening devotions. The father was the pastor of his house, and he was to bring to his family the daily Word Scripture. The children were to take notes during these family devotions. Sunday was the consummation of their home church worship. Home school and small private schools were started because they were forbidden to go to Oxford or Cambridge. They were expository in there preaching. They were sola Scriptura in their doctrine.
5. James the VI of Scotland is coronated in 1557. He will become the King James of the King James Bible, and will later become the King of both Scotland and Ireland. He hated the Geneva Bible because it was the Bible the Puritans used, and the Puritans loved it because it was a Study Bible and it said believers are to give greater allegiance to God rather than to earthly kings. For this reason, the King authorized the King James Bible. His subjects were to give him the greatest allegiance as the supreme head of the church.
6. Elizabeth dies in 1603. During her reign, Puritanism blossoms because she was a compromiser and tolerant of everything. James the 1ST is crowned King of England, Scotland, and Ireland in 1603. He will reign for 22 years. The Puritans thought he was a friend because he was the King of Scotland and Scotland was very Protestant and very Calvinistic. King James had been tutored by reformed instructors and teachers. They set up a meeting with James to present their desires for the Church of England to be purified in her worship and to be very reformed. King James now sees what they want, and goes in the opposite direction. He has the King James Version of the Bible presented, in 1611, as a counter against the Puritans.

1. James the 1ST dies. Charles the 1ST is crowned King of England in 1625. King Charles continues to assert that he as the King determines how the Church is to worship. King Charles marries a Roman Catholic. He then becomes very Catholic. In 1628 he puts a man named William Laud into position as the Archbishop of Canterbury to bring about the King’s pro Catholic agenda. He demands that every Puritan worship in a way consistent with the Catholicism, Arminianism, and anti-Puritanism. When Scotland hears about this, they’re wiling to fight for what they believe is right. In Charles Cathedral a lady named Jenny Getty picks up a chair, throws it at the preacher and starts a riot. The very next year the Scottish National Covenant is enacted and signed in 1638. This covenant asserts that Jesus Christ is the head of the Church and not the King. An understanding of this context will enrich our study of John Owen, John Bunyan and Matthew Henry.
2. As the King of England, Charles controls the Archbishop of Canterbury who determines who the Bishops will be. These Bishops appoint the pastors of each assembly within the Church of England. In Scotland, each pastor is called by their congregations. The local churches are governed by local Elders. War occurs over the bishops King Charles wants to set in place in Scotland.
* War ensues where the Scottish with a smaller army defeat the larger English army. The English Parliament didn’t give the King what he wanted - to levy taxes to pay for this war. Members of the Parliament are replaced by men who are very Puritan. A pro Catholic King is forced to deal with a Puritan Parliament.
* English Civil Wars took place from 1642 to 1651. Oliver Cromwell becomes the General of the new army. He became the champion for the Puritan cause. Three English civil wars ensued engaging King Charles against the Parliament”.
1. The English Parliament called for the Westminster Assembly to write a Puritan confession of faith, a Puritan way to worship God, and a Puritan way for parents to teach their children systematic theology and sound doctrine.
2. In 1647, the Puritans produce the Westminster Confession Of Faith. It will be the most important doctrinal statement the Church has produced in over 1000 years.
3. From 1648–1649 War resumes between King Charles the 1ST and the Royalists against the Parliamentary members who were Presbyterian Independents. Cromwell becomes the leader of the Parliament’s military forces. He defeats the Royalists, and gains control of England. The king of England, Charles the 1ST, is put on trial for treason against his own people. He is tried and publicly executed.
4. The Monarchy of England is now abolished, by Parliament. They empower Cromwell to continue to fight against the pro Catholic forces in Ireland. On September 3, 1650. Charles the VI flees to France where he stays for the next several years. Victorious Cromwell returns to England and orders a new Parliament. They realize that without the king there was a need for a strong leader. In 1653 they appoint Cromwell and make him Lord Protectorate of England. He dies five years later. He protects the religious freedom and worship. He I installed in 1653, and dies five years later. England looks to Richard Cromwell as the Lord Protectorate from 1658-1659.
5. An English governor from Scotland named George Monck has an army and defeats the Puritans. He resurrects the Monarchy. Charles the 2ND is brought back to England. He is very pro Catholic and anti-puritan. He passes the Sedition Act in 1661. In this Act, it becomes treason to deprive the king of his crown or to levy war against him.
6. In 1662, the Act of Uniformity mandates that every pastor in England must read prescribed, pre-written, public prayers and must administer the Lord’s supper. The Acts requires kneeling, and includes many other rituals and rights. It requires that anyone who holds public office must subscribe to what is required here. It strips the ordination of all Puritans pastors. They must be re-ordained into the church of England and swear allegiance to the Book Of Common Prayer. Any Puritan pastor in the Church of England who does submit to this Act was to be put out of his pulpit. Over 2000 Puritan pastors are removed from their pulpits in one day. This was then followed by the First Conventicle Act of 1664, which bans unlicensed churches from having religious assemblies. Mo more than five people may gather together in one place if it were unlicensed by the government.
7. In 1665, all Puritan preachers who have been removed from the pulpit are not allowed within 5 miles of their previous church. They cannot come within 5 miles of any city or any town. Over 2000 Puritan preachers must live in the woods, in open fields in the wilderness. It forbids Puritan preachers from teaching in schools and it forbid them to be buried within the city limits of any city in England.
8. That very same year the great plague of London hit in 1665–1666. The last major epidemic of bubonic plague occurs in England killing 100,000 people. That was immediately followed by the London fire the next year in 1666. King Charles the 2ND, imposes fines on anyone who attends a religious meeting that does not have his license of approval. He prevents anyone from taking office that does not submit to the doctrine of Catholic transubstantiation and no one can hold office who does not swear allegiance to this. In 1776 a census is taken to find out who the Puritans were.
9. In 1680, a preacher named Richard Camron, a Scottish Covenanter, stands in the public square and reads a declaration of war against Charles the 2ND.
* Between 1680-1688, thousands of Scottish Covenanters were put to death because they swore allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ as a true head of the church. Both men and women are massacred in open fields and city streets.
* Charles the 2ND died in 1685, and his brother, James the 2ND, is crowned. He is pro Catholic, pro France, believes in the absolute right of kings, and continues this persecution. An invasion of England from the Netherlands takes place in 1688. They land on English soil with an armada of ships and there’s virtually no resistance. William and Mary become joint monarchs over England, Scotland, and Ireland. William is extremely reformed and protestant. The protestant overthrow of James the 2ND leads to a new era. and William and Mary are joint Monarchs of Britain and Scotland and British Catholics are denied the right to vote. They cannot sit in Parliament or hold commission in the army. The monarch can never be a Catholic and can never marry a Catholic.
1. In 1689, the Toleration Act permits Puritans to return to the pulpits, to hold assemblies, and to pastor and worship. The Bill of Rights, 1689, gave basic civil rights to its citizens that had been taken away by these previous kings. In 1701, anyone who marries a Catholic is not allowed to hold office in England. At the beginning of the 18TH century this whole period of church history comes to an end.