

Notes for discussion and context.

The Medieval Period- from the Latin-Medius “middle” and Aevum “ age”

From about 476 to 1500

Dominant Political system-Feudalism-

A. Feudal Society—Man is tied to station on earth determined by birth/God.

1. Peasants tied to land and kings rule because this is the way God wanted it. The Chain of Being: all creatures connected to a divine hierarchy.
2. Man at his core is flawed. Original Sin means that man is weak and needs guidance; therefore we have the King and the Church.
3. Church and State are tied together—support each other. Corruption becomes a major issue.-common interests
4. Knowledge and understanding are controlled by the church.
Individualism for the masses is nonexistent/ dead.

Plague of 1348-50- 30% to 60% of population dies

B. Coming into the light (Renaissance 1400-1700ish):

1. 1450 printing press is invented—leads to literacy and the dissemination of ideas on a large scale.
2. Life becomes more and more secular (non-religious).
3. Ideas of the ancients become more known—through translation.
4. Middle/merchant class develops and diversifies society, not everyone is working = more time for learning/thinking. Belief in individualism.
5. Artists re-emerge and bring back themes of Athens and ancient world.
6. Moving toward capitalism = focus more on earthly life, rather than eternal rewards.
7. Martin Luther = questions Catholic idea that only kings/nobles have access to God. Says all people do. Diesm becomes popular. Belief in God w/o belief in revelation. Important distinction.

C. Scientific Revolution/Renaissance

1. Investigate the earth and surroundings. Examination. Need for “reasonable answers.”
2. Copernicus(1543) , Kepler (1630), Galileo (1642), Newton (1727).
Ideas contradicted the church. Use reason to search for truth.

Astronomy , philosophy and mathematics become primary tools to search for answers.

3. **Enlightenment (1700's):** through examination of the physical and intellectual world, we can come to know truth and reality through reason. Individualism, freedom and change try to replace values of authority(especially by kings and churches), community and tradition.
4. **Enlightenment thinkers: John Locke (England), Jean Jacques Rousseau and Voltaire(France), Jefferson/Franklin (colonies)**

Tabula Rasa-nature v nurture- Can make and re-make institutions .
Individual shaped by experiences in an environment- the power to reform.

Reason