Compass Life Adult Sunday School

Jay Wertin - September 15, 2019

**“The Church in the Time of the Tsars”**

**I. The Rise of the Romanovs**

After the death of Ivan the Terrible in 1584 and his 51-year reign there was a period of succession problems, wars, economic difficulties and social struggles. Ivan had killed his heir in a fit of rage, which left the empire to his weak and mentally challenged son, Feodor I. Feodor ruled through his father-in-law Boris Godunov who was eventually elected tsar when Feodor I died in 1598. Godunov had to deal with a three-year famine that killed 2 million people, false tsar claimants and an invasion by Poland. The Orthodox Church was granted increased \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ when Godunov established a self-governing patriarchal see in Moscow headed by a metropolitan (patriarch). This position was equal in authority with the tsar and began the First Patriarchal period in Russia (1589-1700). Moscow was considered the “Third Rome” as the new center of Orthodox Christianity. In 1612 the defeat of Poland in the Battle of Moscow and subsequent election of Mikhail Romanov in 1613 ended the Times of Troubles and began the Romanov Dynasty. Mikhail’s election was coupled with the pronouncement of his father, Filaret, as the Patriarch of Moscow and the title of Great Sovereign. Filaret was the real power until his death in 1633. He kept the nobility in check with exile or punishments, but was kind to the clerics and a strong believer in maintaining the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of the Orthodox Church. During this time, the cities were rebuilt, the army strengthened, economics improved, the church was controlled more by the state and laws were passed that tied the peasants more to the land. Mikhail I’s son, Alexei Mikhailovich continued his father’s modernizing reforms. However, heavy taxation, government corruption and the unpaid military gave rise to a rebellion in 1648. The rebellion was quelled and certain taxes removed, but Alexei responded with a stricter legal code and severe penalties for those who challenged the government or Orthodox church. The laws also tied the peasants legally and indefinitely to the land. Within the church Alexei began a reform movement, which caused a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in the Orthodox Church that is still in effect today. Alexei continued to modernize and expand the empire until his death in 1676, which paved the way for more radical changes by future tsars.

**II. Peter the Great (Reign 1682-1725)**

After Alexei’s death, Feodor III, a son from his first marriage, reigned until he died in 1682. After a brief revolt, a joint reign was agreed upon between Ivan V (16), Feodor’s younger brother, and Peter I (10), a son from Alexei’s second marriage, with Ivan’s sister Sophia as regent for the young tsars. By 1689 Peter and Sophia were vying for power. Ultimately Peter drew enough support that Sophia retired to a convent. Peter was fascinated with the military and especially naval vessels and he used both to expand Russian land holdings. Peter was also intrigued by his foreign friends and the modern ideas they brought from Europe. Peter was relentless in modernizing Russia and embarked on “The Great Embassy” in 1697-1698 to seek out new technology and to strengthen and make new diplomatic ties. When Peter returned he began a militant westernizing campaign reforming all manner of Russian life and none more so than the church. He abolished the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ privilege of the church and when the Patriarch died in 1700 he did not appoint a replacement. Instead, Peter placed the church under the control of the Monastery Department taking control of all revenue of the church. He promoted churchmen who preached the absolute authority of the tsar and made bishops take an oath of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to the tsar. In 1721, Peter abolished the patriarchate completely and placed the church under the control of a Holy Synod led by a Chief Procurator that was appointed by the tsar. This led to the weakening of the church’s position. The church became more closed and access to the clergy from other social classes was limited.  All clergy virtually became \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ officials. The Synod Period of the church would last until the revolution. His military reforms allowed Russia to expand the empire in all directions. Connecting Russia to the west was a primary goal for proximity to Europe and warm water seaports. When Peter captured the Neva delta in 1703, he began planning a great seaport city. St. Petersburg was built and Peter moved his family there in 1710. He married his second wife Catherine there in 1712. St. Petersburg became the new capital of Russia. In 1721 Peter declared Russia an empire and he became the first emperor. Peter died in 1725 without naming an heir, leaving a struggle for succession.

**III. Catherine the Great (Reign 1762-1796)**

After Peter the Great’s death, the military and government took control and were instrumental in selecting tsars. A thirty-seven year period saw 6 different tsars come to power before Catherine II seized control through a coup d’état from her husband Peter III. Though she had a weak claim to the throne as a Prussian wife to a nephew of the previous Empress Elizabeth, she was highly skilled politically and cunningly strategic. She quickly secured her position through popular laws and reforms and projected an enlightened and progressive Russia to the world. She embraced all things Russian including \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, but that didn’t stop her from nationalizing all the church lands in 1764. She closed down monasteries and put priests on small salaries, which forced many of the clergy to become farmers and churchmen for hire charging fees for baptisms and marriages. Catherine read the Enlightenment philosophers and corresponded with Voltaire. She attempted to create a commission in which all classes of people were represented and proposed a new code of laws called the *Bolshoi Nakaz* or *Great Instruction*. She believed the authority of the state should be used to regulate and improve morality, public health and commerce. Ultimately, war with Turkey hindered these talks and were never resumed. But Catherine had a concern for the people of Russia and was able to improve education, religious tolerance for non-Orthodox, non-Christian, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and Jews who lived in Russia. She was concerned about the peasants, as 90% of the population were serfs, but was more fearful of the nobility whom she appeased to accomplish her goals. She died in November of 1796 fearful of the revolutions spreading across Europe and of an heir that would not carry on her work.

**IV. 19th Century Tsars (1796-1917)**

Catherine’s son Paul became Tsar in 1796. His short reign was characterized by censorship, military discipline and a police-state which led to his overthrow and murder in 1801. His son Alexander I was aware of the planned overthrow, but murder was not intended. Alexander I (1801-1825) spent much of his early time dealing with the Napoleonic Wars. He brought in the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to distribute Bibles in the Russian language but at the end of his reign he was urged by an Orthodox monk to dismiss them. During his reign he attempted to bring change to Russia while still holding to the imperial prerogative of rule. Alexander I had designated his brother, Nicholas I (1825-1855) as his heir and when he became tsar, Nicholas I was immediately confronted with the Decembrist uprising. These soldiers and officers had served abroad and exposed to various forms of government. They believed that the key to Russian progress was a new \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and freedom for the serfs. Nicholas I quelled the uprising and then governed with high vigilance, discipline and repression. Upon his death, his son, Alexander II (1855-1881) became tsar. Alexander II started out with progressive reforms highlighted with the liberation of the serfs. However, these reforms did not go as well as planned and revolts, uprisings and talk of revolution became common. A Pole uprising in Russia, caused the tsar to enact russification measures. All history, religion and culture other than Russian was banned. Alexander II was plagued by a number of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ attempts, which ultimately led to his death in 1881. His son, Alexander III (1881-1894) became tsar and felt that the reforms his father implemented weakened the monarchy. He reversed many of the laws and ruled by repression and a heavy hand. During his tenure the alliances with European powers slowly fell apart until Russia was completely isolated by the end of his reign. His hatred of Poles and Jews led to violent persecution of both and Alexander III tightened his father’s russification laws regarding religion, allowing only the Orthodox church. Alexander III’s health deteriorated after being injured in a train derailment and he died in 1894. His son Nicholas II (1894-1917) was a reluctant tsar who was ill-prepared for the weight of the office and coming events. He promoted an autocratic rule in the face of rising reform and revolutionary sentiments. The 1905 Revolution was violently crushed, but forced Nicholas II to allow governmental reforms. Within the reforms, the tsar still maintained much of the control, but the new ministers and departments managed to temporarily appease most of the populace’s revolutionary impulses. Unfortunately WWI upset any progress that was being made. Russian losses, food shortages, and hyperinflation resulted in the 1917 Revolution which forced the abdication and imprisonment of Nicholas II and his family. The \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ took control in October of 1917 and Nicholas II and his family were executed in July of 1918.

**9/22 “Christianity & Revolution”**