



## THE REFORMATION: After Darkness Light

### Lesson 8: The Synod of Dort

#### Introduction

#### Dirck Coornhert (1522-1590)

- Coornhert was a Dutch humanist who upheld the goodwill and virtue of man, undermining man's depravity, believing that man was completely free to turn from sin and turn to God.
- The Dutch Reformed church appointed a strong Calvinist theologian to write a refutation against Coornhert's humanistic writings, particularly the idea that man is unable to turn to God on his own.
- The man they chose was one by the name of Jacob Arminius.

## Jacobus or Jacob Arminius (1560-1609)

- The theological faculty at Leiden appointed Arminius as a professor of theology in 1603
- Arminius was born in Holland and studied in Geneva and came with a letter of recommendation from Theodore Beza. Despite a number of concerns Arminius was appointed.
- Arminius continued to be disturbed by the determinism of Calvinism, and he called for a national synod to resolve the conflicts and to look critically at two crucial Calvinist documents, the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism. However, Arminius dies in 1609.
- In 1610 his students prepared a document known as the Remonstrance in which it outlined five key points of Arminius' theology
- At the heart of the document was concerns over five doctrines:
  - **Rejected election/predestination:** They believed faith was the cause of election and not God's pre-determined choice
  - **Rejected total depravity:** They believed prevenient grace gives all people an opportunity to respond
  - **Rejected irresistible grace:** They believed individuals can resist grace
  - **Perseverance of the saints:** They believed you could lose your salvation
  - **Limited atonement:** They believed Christ atoned for all (not just the elect)

## Synod of Dort (1618–1619)

- Giving the growing tensions, Prince Maurits, who had identified with the Calvinist cause, called for a national Synod to meet
- What was originally to be a synod of local attendees became an international synod with representation from the Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, France, Britain, and Scotland
- The result was a dismissal of the Arminian representatives and the joint writing of what is now known as the Five Points of Calvinism
- It must be said that the five points do not articulate Calvinism. Rather, the five points are simply five Calvinistic answers to the five points of Arminianism articulated in the Canon of Dort.
- TULIP is the summary of the five points:
  - Total depravity – Radical depravity/Radical corruption (Sproul)
  - Unconditional election – Sovereign election (Sproul)
  - Limited atonement – Particular redemption (Boice)
  - Irresistible grace of the Holy Spirit – Effectual grace (Sproul)
  - Perseverance of the Saints – persevering grace (Boice)

## Various other points from the Synod of Dort

- How to catechize to protect from ongoing error?

- How should be servants of traders be baptized?
- Is the current Bible suitable?
- Which confession is best to use?
- What should we do about the Sabbath?

## Summary

### *Reformation then*

- God raised up men and women who were ready to stand on the Scriptures despite all else
- He turned many nations to the truth of Scripture and to Himself and away from the idolatrous Roman Catholic Church
- He used people of all stations, great and small
- The greatest factor of these Reformers was that they believed in the Great Commission
  - They were not so much interested in protecting their families from the moral influences of the world
  - But they were interested in protecting nations from the schemes of the devil, laying down their lives for the sake of the gospel

### *Reformation today*

- God has raised up men and women today to do the same
- People who would stand on the truths fought for in the Reformation
- So that in the same manner, individuals, families, and nations come to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ