

Lesson Three - Life in America

In the last section you learned that there was great trouble in Europe over the different ideas of religion. The dark ages had begun when Jews began to control governments and churches through the tyranny (force) of usury. King James was now the ruler of Great Britain and was encouraging the idea of settlers going to America. For some time now, Englishmen had been fishing off the coast of north America. But there were no families coming to build towns. King James encouraged the idea and he hoped towns in America would be built and begin trading with England. The pilgrims saw this as a great opportunity to come to America and advance the Kingdom of God and to form a Christian government.

What was life like for early pilgrims you may wonder and what was life in early America?

First, let's talk about the trip coming over. It was very difficult to say the least. The size of the Mayflower was about the size of a tennis court. There were 102 passengers on the Mayflower and it took them 66 days to cross the Atlantic ocean. Now, we can fly across from the United States to England in about 8-12 hours. Imagine 66 days on very rough water. In fact, the ship even started to leak when the main beam that holds the entire ship together broke. While in the ocean the pilgrims had to do repairs on the ship so they wouldn't all sink and drown. The main beam that holds the entire ship together had broke.

The pilgrims had intended to move to the southern part of the coast, which was under the ownership of the Virginia Land Company and English company. But God wanted the pilgrims to go to a place where there would be no company to boss them around. God caused the wind to stir up terribly and the pilgrims could not sail to the southern part of the coast and so instead ended up on the north eastern part of what became Massachusetts, but was known at this time as New England. Remember throughout the Bible when Jesus would cause the storms on the sea of Galilee to become calm. God can command the storms any time he chooses.

Had they arrived on the north eastern coast a few years earlier they would have found no place to settle. These Indians had murdered many white men who landed on their shores, but in 1617 a plague had mysteriously wiped them all out (except for one named Squanto). Neighboring tribes were afraid to come near the place for fear that a great spirit had destroyed them.

When the pilgrims came into the bay, it was in the middle of winter. If you ever watch the reality show "Survivor", you know how hard it is to survive in a wilderness area. But even the stars on Survivor can get medical attention if they get too sick, and there is always a helicopter near by in case of a real emergency.

The pilgrims were real survivors. At the end of the first winter over half of the pilgrims had died. At one point William Bradford tells how everyone was desperately sick for weeks and there was 7 people who weren't as sick as the others who had to chop all the wood, build fires, feed and care for the others and do all the work - and in the middle of the frozen bitterly cold winter.

Even before they got onto land, they had to live on the Mayflower while houses were built on land.

Of the eighteen women that came with their husbands (no single women came on the Mayflower), all but five died--a 72% death rate. Three women, Mrs. Susanna White, Mrs. Mary Allerton, and Mrs. Elizabeth Hopkins all boarded the Mayflower at least six months pregnant. Elizabeth would give birth to a son Oceanus while the Mayflower was still at sea. Susanna White gave birth to a son Peregrine on the Mayflower while it was anchored in Provincetown Harbor. Perhaps the rough voyage had already taken its toll on Mary Allerton, who gave birth to a stillborn son on the Mayflower while it was anchored in Plymouth Harbor. A fourth woman, Mrs. Sarah Eaton, came to America with a small baby. Both Mary Allerton and Sarah Eaton died the first winter. Susanna White's husband William died, and she remarried Edward Winslow, whose first wife Elizabeth had died that winter as well.

On December 7, 1620, Mrs. Dorothy Bradford accidentally fell off the Mayflower into the cold waters of Cape Cod, and drowned.

The men went on land and were cutting down trees to build houses, for fire wood, to build fences to hold animals in, to hunt for food and so on. Food was very scarce and the people were very hungry. The women and children stayed on board to guard the ship and belongings. Every so often they would go on land to wash clothes with water they had melted from ice. Juniper branches were gathered to do cooking on ship.

After two very long months of exploring missions, the men returned to the Mayflower with good news--they had found a place to settle. But while the men were constructing the houses, and carrying supplies on shore, the women continued for yet another two months living on board the Mayflower--coming ashore only to do an occasional laundry, or for some Sunday services. Disease began to spread among men and women alike, but the close living quarters afforded by the Mayflower certainly contributed to its spread among the women. Mrs. Rose Standish, Elizabeth Winslow, Mary Martin, Alice Mullins, Ann Tilley, Joan Tilley, Alice Rigdale, Susanna Chilton, Sarah Eaton, Mary Allerton and several other women all fell victim to the rampant disease of the first winter.

Of all the women, only Mrs. Susanna White, Mary Brewster, Elizabeth Hopkins, and Ellenor Billington survived through April 1621. So these four women, with the help of older girls like Priscilla Mullins, Desire Minter, and John Carver's maidservant Dorothy, would have had to cook, keep house, and do laundry for the entire colony, not to mention raising all the young and orphaned children. To make matters even worse, on November 9, 1621, the ship Fortune arrived with 35 more passengers--only one or two of which were women!

The important thing to remember is that the pilgrims were made up of families. They did not come to dig for gold or for adventure. They were families who would work together to build their colony.

In about March of the following Spring another miracle had happened. First they had gone to New England instead of the Virginia Bay. Secondly, there were no savage Indians in the area to harm them, Then God has seen fit, to keep an Indian in the area to help the pilgrims. His name was Squanto and an Indian friend of his was named Samoset..

Squanto was kidnaped by Captain Thomas Hunt, an associate that Captain John Smith had left behind to continue trading with the Indians after their mapping expedition in 1614. Captain Hunt betrayed John Smith, and kidnaped 27 Indians who had been lured aboard his ship to trade beaver skins.. Captain Hunt was so totally despised by the English for this act of treachery (he jeopardized English trading relations with the Indians), that his career as a ship captain was over. Catholic friars in Spain had rescued him from the Captain Hunt. Later Squanto boarded an English ship that happened to be in Malaga, Spain, and it took him to Newfoundland. Thomas Dermer wrote a letter to Sir Ferdinando Gorges in 1618 pointing out the usefulness of having an Indian guide on an exploring expedition to New England, and requested to know what he should do with him. Gorges requested Dermer to bring Tisquantum to England and they would discuss their options .

While in England, Squanto lived for a time with John Slainey, treasurer of the Newfoundland Company, and associate of Sir Ferdinando Gorges

Gorges decided to send the two on an exploring mission to New England, where Dermer was to release Squanto to his homeland at the conclusion.

Samoset learned his English from fishermen who came each year to fish off the coast of Maine, where Samoset lived.

William Bradford (written 1630-1654) states: "But about the 16th of March, a certain Indian came boldly amongst them and spoke to them in broken English, which they would well understand but marveled at it . . . his name was Samoset. He told them also of another Indian named Squanto, a native of this place, who had been in England and could speak better English than himself."

Squanto had been the last member of the tribe that had been wiped out by the plague and now the pilgrims were living in the land where once Squanto's family had lived. Not only had he learned in English, but he had also been told about Christianity. He had been treated well by the Christians he had met in England and so he in turn would treat the Christian pilgrims well. He helped them by teaching them how to plant corn which he had learned about in Europe, where the best hunting places were and where to find edible berries. The Pilgrim leaders had a meeting with the chief of the nearest Indian tribe with Squanto being the interpreter. The Indian chief told the Pilgrims, " "Englishmen, take possession of the land, for there is no one left to occupy it. The Great Spirit came in his anger and swept the people from the face of the earth."

William Bradford said, "Squanto was a special instrument sent of God for their good."

While a church came to New England (the Pilgrims) in 1620. Thirteen years earlier, Jamestown was founded in Virginia. This was the pilgrims intended to go, but God had directed them somewhere else. It was a good thing, because he wanted Christian families to be the foundation of America.

The people of Jamestown did believe in God. One of the first acts in Jamestown was for their preacher Reverend Robert Hunt to lead 149 men from the Virginia company in public prayer where they had erected a wooden cross on the shore at Cape Henry. The Virginia Charter of 1606 had stated that part of

their reason for coming to America was to bring the encourage the "Christian Religion to such People, as yet live in Darkness and miserable Ignorance of the true knowledge and worship of God.

Captain Smith begged the settlers to plant and sow that they might have plenty and be happy. But they would not listen to the wise man, and in the early summer of that year, he turned from Jamestown in disgust, and with a few of the more sensible men he went in an open boat to explore the Chesapeake Bay and its numerous tributaries. In the space of three months, he made two voyages. During the first he went up the Potomac River to the Falls near George-town, and up the Rappahannock to the Falls near Fredericksburg, and then returned to Jamestown. During the second voyage he went up the Patapsco to the site of Baltimore and up the narrower part of Chesapeake Bay into the Susquehanna River, a short distance above Havre-de-Grace, where he heard of the powerful Iroquois Confederacy in the present State of New York. In these two voyages, Smith not only explored the shores of great waters, but penetrated into the country, made friendly alliances with several chiefs, and smoothed the way for the future planting of settlements on the borders of the noble Chesapeake. He had voyaged about three thousand miles in an open boat and made a map of the region explored, remarkable for its accuracy, which is preserved in London.

When Captain Smith returned to Jamestown early in September, he found the colony in confusion again. His advent was hailed with delight by the better sort of the settlers, and three days after his return he was chosen President of the Council. This wise measure soon produced some good fruit. The new president organized labor, and compelled the performance of the same; and when, a little later, Newport again came with two ships bearing supplies and seventy emigrants, he hoped to find among the latter better materials for a state. There were two women (the wife of Thomas Forrest, and her maid, Anne Burrows, who soon afterward married John Laydon, a carpenter), the first of European blood who had trodden the banks of the James; but the men were no better than the other emigrants. And yet the greedy corporation who had sent out such men for the founding of a state, disappointed and unreasonable, demanded impossibilities. They sent a message to the settlers by Newport, saying, in substance: "Unless you shall send us back in these ships sufficient commodities to pay the charges of the voyage [Pound 2,000]; unless you shall also send us a lump of gold, the product of Virginia; assurances of having found a passage to the South Sea (Pacific Ocean), and also one of the lost colony sent to Roanoke by Raleigh, you shall be left in Virginia as banished men." To this threat Smith replied with spirit, showing them the absurdity of their demand, assuring them that it was as much as the settlers could do to sustain life with the assistance of the Indians, and saying: "I entreat you rather send but thirty carpenters, husbandmen, gardeners, fishermen, blacksmiths, masons and diggers of trees' roots, well provided, than a thousand such as we have."

This threat assisted the president in enforcing rules for labor. He demanded six hours of work each day from every able-bodied man. "He who will not work shall not eat," he said. Very soon the "gentlemen" became expert in the use of the axe, and the little village showed signs of an orderly community; but so little attention had been given to agriculture that at the end of two years from the first arrival, and with two hundred emigrants in the settlement, not more than forty acres were under cultivation. They were compelled to depend upon the bounty of the red men for their sustenance during the winter of 1608-9.

When the commissioners arrived in the spring of 1610, of the four hundred and ninety persons whom Smith had left in Virginia, only sixty remained alive. More than four hundred had perished within six months upon a soil out of whose generous bosom some moderate labor might have drawn ample sustenance for them all. Many a time during that winter and spring, which was ever afterward referred to as "the starving time," did those wretched men lament their folly and wickedness in not following the advice of Captain Smith, who was their true friend. His labors for their good had been disinterested. For his sacrifices he had received no reward but the approval of his conscience. Brave, honest and true, he won the imperishable honor of being the first planter of the Saxon race on the soil of the United States, and is entitled to the endearing name of Father of Virginia.

The commissioners and their fellow-passengers, who had been wrecked on a fertile but uninhabited island, found sufficient food in fruits there to sustain them whilst building two small vessels in which they embarked for Virginia. They hoped to find a happy and prosperous colony at Jamestown; but instead of the bright faces of contented people, they saw the horrid visages of sixty starving men in the depths of despair. They were perishing for want of food without a prospect of obtaining more. Gates, to whom the other commissioners had agreed to commit the administration of affairs in Virginia, saw no other way to save the lives of the starving men than to abandon the settlement, sail to Newfoundland, and distribute the settlers among the English fishermen there. So, embarking them in four pinnaces which were in the river, and giving them a share of his own stores, he sailed immediately for the far northeast. Some of the settlers desired Gates to set fire to the fort and dwellings at Jamestown, on their departure, but he would not consent. It was well he did not, for at the evening twilight the next day, the whole company, with others, were again at Jamestown offering thanksgiving to God for a great deliverance. At dawn that morning, the eyes of the disconsolate fugitives had been greeted by the apparition of white sails moving up the James River as Gates and his followers were approaching its mouth. They were the wings of Lord De la Ware's ships, which were filled with provisions and emigrants, accompanied by the governor, a pious, prudent, generous and humane man. Back to Jamestown they all sailed. The governor landed first. The emigrants followed, and when all were on shore, his lordship fell upon his knees and with bowed head engaged in a long silent prayer whilst the people stood reverently by. When he arose, he and the Rev. Mr. Bucke, who had come with him to supply the place of Mr. Hunt, led the people in procession to the unfinished church, where the new pastor preached a sermon, in the evening twilight, and a large portion of the congregation joined in signing anthems. After the religious services were ended, the governor presented his credentials and addressed the people. Some Indians were seen in the woods near by, listening in wonder to the songs of praise that went up from the lips of the grateful multitude on that warm June evening.

The dignity and amiable character of Lord De la Ware commanded the respect of the settlers, and the future seemed full of bright promises. He caused the church to be rebuilt, and to be dedicated with as much pomp and ceremony as circumstances would permit. It was daily garnished with white flowers; and; and there, every morning, a large number of the settlers were gathered to engage in common prayer, after which each man was required to work six hours during the day. The dwellings were improved and many more acres were cultivated. But the health of Lord De la Ware failed, and he returned to England in the spring of 1611, leaving the government in charge of Percy, Smith's successor.

At the same time Sir Thomas Dale, a brave soldier, was out on the ocean in a ship with supplies, and on his arrival, which was hailed with delight, he assumed the reins of government and ruled by martial law both the church and state. He encouraged the Company to persevere in the dignified work which they had begun, and they sent Sir Thomas Gates with six well-furnished ships and three hundred emigrants. They arrived at the close of summer. These emigrants were a much better class than any who had yet appeared in Virginia. A greater portion of them were sober and industrious, and their influence upon the earlier settlers was salutary. Gates assumed the functions of governor, and Dale went up the river and planted settlements at the mouth of the Appomattox River (now Bermuda Hundred) and at the Falls (now Richmond). Over these the Rev. Mr. Whittaker was placed as pastor.

Another charter was now obtained for the Company, which allowed the powers of the association to be distributed in a democratic manner among all of the members, who met in mass for deliberation and legislation. The most important feature affecting the welfare of the settlement was that which allowed every man to cultivate a few acres of land for his own sole use and benefit. Before that time the land was tilled in common, and the industrious provided food for the lazy. There was no special incentive to industry in that system; but in the new arrangement there was such a stimulus to exertion that the privilege was enlarged, an ample supply of provisions for all was easily obtained, and the community system was abandoned. Although no political privileges were granted to the settlers by the new charter, they were contented.

And now a wicked act, which became a fortunate circumstance for the settlement, made a salutary change in the relations between the English and the Indians. Ever since the departure of Captain Smith, Powhatan had evinced hostility to the settlers, and the powerful Chickahominies, their nearest neighbors, sympathized with him, and allowed no food to be carried to Jamestown. Provisions there became scarce, and Captain Argall, the sort of buccaneer whom we met in Acadie, and who was then in Virginia, was sent with a vessel on a foraging expedition up the York and James Rivers. Being near the residence of Powhatan, he bribed an Indian with the gift of a copper kettle, to entice Pocahontas on board his vessel, where he detained her a prisoner, expecting to get a large quantity of corn from her father as a ransom for his daughter, and to recover some arms and implements of labor which had been stolen by the Indians. The emperor rejected the proposition of ransom with scorn, and refused to hold any meetings with the pirate, but, declaring to the authorities at Jamestown, that if his daughter should be released, he would forget the injury and be the friend of the English. They would not trust his word, and the maiden was taken to Jamestown and detained there several months, but was always treated with respectful consideration. John Rolfe, distinguished citizen of Jamestown wed the American Indian Pocahontas. Before he did he remembered the Bible story of the visitation of the sons of Levi by God in his anger, because they married strange women. Unfortunately, not all words of the Bible had been translated correctly. The English believed that strange meant Pagan or not Christian. But in fact, strange meant of a different race. God had told our ancestors to never ever marry outside of their white race. The story of Pocahontas has been made famous and is often used as proof that the white Christian founders of America did not believe that race mixing was wrong, but we will show later on that in America, laws were passed forbidding intermarriage.

Most of the leaders who came to Jamestown, like South America, had good intentions and wanted Christianity to spread. But they made two major mistakes. 1) They did not encourage families to come and 2) they encouraged an interracial marriage in order to make peace with the natives. God would have delivered the people of Jamestown from their misfortune, without them feeling the need to bind the whites and non-whites together through marriage. The Bible explicitly forbids it.

With no respect for the rights of the settlers already in Virginia; with no desire to build up an industrious and prosperous colony on the banks of the James River, but with an intense longing for the speedy accumulation of wealth by the discovery of rich mines in America and a quick passage to India, the London Company sought to grasp all power and to abolish all freedom among the settlers, so making them little better than serfs. For this purpose they obtained wealthy and influential allies; and in the spring of 1609, the Company was composed of twenty-one peers, several bishops, ninety-eight knights, and a multitude of doctors, esquires, gentlemen, merchants and other citizens. They obtained a new charter in May under the title of "The Treasurer and Company of Adventures of the City of London for the First Colony in Virginia," by which the boundaries of their domain were enlarged; the offices of president and council in Virginia were abolished, and all laws for the settlers were to be framed by the council in England and administered by officers appointed by that council. The rule of the governor was made absolute, and the lives, liberty and property of the settlers were placed at his disposal, whilst they were compelled to contribute a certain share of their net earnings to the proprietors. They were vassals, without any recognized power to cast off the yoke. Not a valuable civil privilege was conceded to them.

Nine ships were fitted out by the new Company, and freighted with stores and more than five hundred emigrants. These were placed under the general command of Captain Newport, and sailed for Virginia early in June, 1609. Sir Thomas West Lord De la Ware, had been appointed governor and captain-general of Virginia for life, with Sir Thomas Gates as his deputy. Sir George Somers was made admiral of Virginia, with Newport as vice-admiral; Sir Thomas Dale, high marshal, and Sir Fernando Wainman, general of cavalry. Gates, Newport and Somers were commissioned to administer the government until the arrival of Lord De la Ware, who was not then ready to go. As there had been no adjustment of precedence between these three men, and they could not settle that point, they agreed to go in the same vessel, the Sea-Venture, Newport's flag-ship. When she was near the coast of Virginia, a hurricane separated her from the rest of the fleet, and wrecked her on the shore of one of the Bermuda Islands. Another small vessel perished in the gale, but seven of the ships arrived at Jamestown, leaving a large company of emigrants composed of some of the worst classes of the population of England. These were licentious and profligate young men sent by their friends with a hope that amendment in their lives might follow, or to screen them from justice; tradesmen broken in fortune and spirits, and vagabonds of every grade, from idle "gentlemen" to dissolute criminals. The only things brought by the fleet that were valuable accessories to the settlement were horses, swine, goats and sheep, and domestic fowls. To these were added, two years later, one hundred cows and other cattle.

Such emigrants were calculated to corrupt rather than improve the settlement, and mischief ensued. They had their leaders among the "gentlemen," who, on their arrival, proclaimed the new charter, and in the absence of the wrecked commissioners refused to obey the president. Anarchy menaced the colony, but Smith, with his usual energy, asserted his authority in the absence of legal agents of the

Company, and now, as on other occasions, became the savior of the settlement from utter ruin. He devised new expeditions and new settlements that the vicious herd might be employed, and the libertines were kept in restraint until the autumn, when an accidental explosion of gunpowder so wounded Smith that he was compelled to go to England for surgical aid. He delegated his authority to George Percy, a brother of the Duke of Northumberland, a man of excellent character, but deficient in force. Smith never returned to Virginia.