

HENRY VIII - THE KING'S GREAT MATTER and THE BREAK FROM ROME.

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What was the "THE KING'S GREAT MATTER"?

By the late 1520s, Henry VIII was attempting to get a divorce from his first wife, Catherine of Aragon.

What was the "BREAK FROM ROME"?

Having failed to get a divorce from the Pope, Henry declared that the English Church was separate from the rest of the Catholic Church in Europe and that the Pope had no authority in England. Henry granted himself a divorce in 1533 and then made himself Supreme Head of the Church IN England in 1535.

What Were the Causes of the Break from Rome?

- Henry strongly disapproved of the Protestants and had no wish to damage the Catholic faith.
- He had defended the Catholic faith against Martin Luther and the Pope had given him the title "**Defender of the Faith.**"
- His quarrel with the Pope was purely **personal and political not religious.**
- It was the need for a divorce that drove Henry to taking such action...he didn't do this lightly. He had tried to get the Pope to agree to a divorce for **SIX YEARS** before he broke from Rome.

LONG TERM CAUSES OF THE BREAK FROM ROME.

- There was some dissatisfaction with the Catholic Church in England already. The wealth of the Church was criticised. Taxes had to be paid to the Church. Some Bishops and priests held more than one job (Cardinal Wolsey, Henry's Lord Chancellor, was a **CARDINAL**, **BISHOP** for Lincoln, Bath and Wells, Durham and Winchester; an **ABBOT** for St Albans and **ARCHBISHOP** of York).
- In the past, some **Popes** had abused their position of authority by becoming involved in **political** activities rather than religious. This has resulted in a loss of respect for the Papacy (the name given to the office of Pope).

- The ever-increasing **wealth of the Church** and in particular certain clergymen was a cause for concern. Henry was short of cash!
- Large sums of money had to be paid to the Pope. Henry could make better use of it! He could finance his foreign wars and support his lavish lifestyle.
- Henry VIII and Cardinal Wolsey wanted to make England a '**Sovereign nation state**' with no allegiance to any foreign authority. Henry was not the first English King to think like this, but he was the first to achieve it!

SHORT TERM CAUSES OF THE BREAK FROM ROME - THE KING'S GREAT MATTER - DIVORCE.

- By 1527 Henry and Catherine of Aragon had been **married for 18 yrs.**
- That marriage had only produced one surviving child, a **daughter - Mary.** (5 children had died)
- **Male pride** and a fear of what might happen if no son was inherit his throne made Henry desperate for a male child.
- A daughter would not do, as there had been no Queens allowed up to this point in history.
- Sadly, **Catherine** at forty was now **passed child-bearing** age.
- Henry himself was now 34. Henry had a **riding accident** in which he nearly drowned. This made him even keener to have a son to take over if necessary.
- Henry began to believe that his **sonless marriage** was a **punishment from God** for marrying his dead brother's wife (Arthur and Catherine).
- The Book of **Leviticus** says "**If a man shall take his brother's wife, it is an unclean thing; they shall be childless.**" While not technically childless, Henry and Catherine had only one surviving daughter...and a girl was not good enough!
- Henry was having an **affair with Anne Boleyn** and wanted to marry her.
- In 1527, Henry sent **Cardinal Wolsey** to see the **Pope (Clement VII)** to **seek permission** for an **annulment (cancelation)** of his marriage to Catherine on the grounds that the **marriage was not legal** (it was against the laws of God) and that the Pope should not have issued a dispensation (special permission) to Henry VII, allowing the marriage between Henry and Catherine
- **Divorce was virtually unheard of** and only offered to kings as a **favour**, so an annulment was the only answer.

- **Pope Clement VII** was a prisoner of **Charles V**, nephew of Catherine of Aragon.
- The Pope was in a **no win situation** as he did not wish to offend either monarch.
- **Wolsey also didn't want to upset the Pope** as he possibly had ambitions to be the Pope himself one day!
- In 1528, the Pope played for time by sending a representative to England to hold a trial to look at the evidence and try to come to a solution. The trial lasted **TWO YEARS**
- The Pope hoped that during the delay, the situation might change. Henry might change his mind, Catherine might become pregnant or even die. **Henry was furious at the delay!**
- **The trial ended without granting Henry's request for annulment.**
- Henry blamed Wolsey for failure to get the result he wanted. **Wolsey was sacked** as Lord Chancellor and fell from power.
- **Wolsey summoned to London** to answer charges of treason but died on route.
- **Thomas Cromwell** was waiting in the wings to take over from Wolsey.

GETTING THE DIVORCE- HENRY DOES IT BY MAKING LAWS IN PARLIAMENT.

- **Thomas Cromwell** was the mastermind behind getting Henry a divorce.
- **Thomas Cranmer** advised Henry to seek **advice from the Universities of Europe**. These universities had Protestant sympathies. Their advice was that Henry could if he wanted, **take matters into his own hands**.
- Having failed with his attempts with Wolsey, Henry decided to exert more pressure on the Pope.
- Thomas Cranmer visited the Pope to try again to get a annulment/divorce. He failed.
- Henry decided to hurt the Pope by stopping all money that was paid to the Pope. Taxes paid to Rome went straight into Henry's own pocket! Still no success...
- On **25th January 1533**, Henry **secretly married Anne Boleyn**. (Anne was pregnant)
- In **March 1533**, Parliament passed the **Act of Appeals** that brought the Church Courts under the control of Henry. The Act made it illegal for anyone to appeal to the Pope if found guilty in a Church Court.

- On **May 23rd 1533**, Thomas **Cranmer**, the newly created Archbishop of Canterbury, **granted the divorce**.
- In **September 1533**, Elizabeth was born.
- In **1534**, Parliament passed the **Act of Succession**, which declared Henry's and Catherine's marriage illegal and supporting Henry's marriage to Anne Boleyn. The Act also restricted the succession to the children of this new marriage. Princess Mary Tudor was no longer heir to the throne. It also made it a treasonable offence to oppose or criticise the marriage.
- A **Treason Act** followed this, which said that anyone who wrote or spoke any criticism of Henry in his dealings with the Pope was guilty of treason. Henry and Cromwell now had the ultimate weapon at their disposal. Opposition could be dealt with severely.
- In 1535, Parliament passed the **Act of Supremacy** which declared Henry the '**Supreme Head of the English Church**'.
- By law, the Pope no longer had any power in England. The Break from Rome was now completed.
- Emperor Charles V was occupied elsewhere with his own troubles fighting the French and he was unable to intervene to attempt to stop Henry.
- Ordinary people were horrified at the idea of the divorce. There was a feeling of sadness for Catherine of Aragon and Mary and the way that they had been treated.
- However, this had to be balanced against people's feelings towards the Church. The Church was not popular, it had become rich and greedy and the Pope was seen increasingly as a foreigner who was only interested in raising taxes.
- In the end, the majority sided with Henry. They had to...all this was now law and treason if you disagreed openly.
- The church services in English churches remained unchanged.

Countdown to Divorce

1. Wolsey to Rome - 1527
2. Legatine Trial 1528-1530
3. Advice from universities
4. Secret marriage - 1533
5. Act of Appeals - 1533
6. Divorce granted - 1533
7. Act of Succession - 1534

8. Treason Act - 1534
9. Act of Supremacy-1535.

It is important to remember that although the Church of England had broken away from Rome and that Henry VIII not the Pope was now head of the Church of England, there was **no change of religion**.

- Henry remained a **devout Roman Catholic** and was not influenced by Protestant ideas.
 - In his eagerness to obtain a divorce, he created a situation that was to send some of his best friends to the block. Among them were **Thomas More and Cardinal Fisher** who refused to take the Oath of Supremacy and to accept Henry as Head of the Church.
 - In 1535, many monks were arrested and then publicly hanged, drawn and quartered for refusing to take the Oath of Supremacy.
 - In 1539, Henry VIII stated his Catholic beliefs by issuing the '**Act of Six Articles**' which was a list of what people were expected to believe. These beliefs were CATHOLIC.
 - The Act of Six Articles led to the persecution of a number of Protestants.
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- **In his eagerness for a divorce, Henry unwittingly began the Reformation in England (the change from the Catholic religion to the Protestant).**