

More Than 200 Fascinating Events in Church History

Christian History Time Line



ROSE
PUBLISHING

- 4? BC** Birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem of Judea.
- AD 29?** Beginning of Jesus' public ministry, about age 30. He preaches, does miracles and claims to be God.
- AD 33?** Jesus crucified, resurrected, appears to more than 500 disciples at one time (I Cor. 15:6). Jesus gives his followers the Great Commission: "Go ye therefore and teach all nations . . ." (Matt. 28:19). After 40 days, he ascends into heaven (Acts 1:3, 9).
- 33** Pentecost: the Holy Spirit descends on the disciples in Jerusalem. Some 3,000 people become Christians. They spread the Gospel (the good news about redemption through Jesus) throughout the Roman Empire (Acts 2:8).
- 35** Stephen, the first Christian martyr, is stoned to death in Jerusalem. Believers scatter through Judea, Samaria.
- 35** Conversion of Paul, formerly Saul, the persecutor of Christians. Paul goes on three missionary journeys starting in AD 48 to preach to Jews and Gentiles. He writes 13 letters (epistles) to the new churches.
- 41** Conversion of Roman centurion, Cornelius. Peter and other Christians evangelize Gentiles. Converts among Roman soldiers return to Italy and preach.
Followers of Christ first called Christians at Antioch.
- 44** Christians are persecuted under King Herod Agrippa. James is executed, Peter is imprisoned. Famine strikes Judea; Christians in Antioch send relief.
- 45-100** The Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) and the other New Testament books are written.
- 49-50** Council of Jerusalem agrees with Paul that Gentile converts are not required to follow Jewish law. Paul's work with Gentiles recognized.
- 53** Jews expelled from Rome. Jewish believers Priscilla and Aquila flee. They meet Paul in Corinth during his second missionary journey.
- 64** Great fire in Rome blamed on Christians. Emperor Nero tortures and kills thousands of Christians.
- 67-68?** Peter and Paul taken to Rome. Paul evangelizes while under house arrest. Both executed under Nero.
- 66-70** Jewish revolt against Romans. Emperor Titus destroys the Temple in Jerusalem. Jews and Christians flee to all parts of the empire, including Alexandria, Carthage, and Rome. Antioch becomes the center for Christianity.
- 71-81** Colosseum in Rome built. Christians thrown to beasts.
- 81** Roman persecution of Christians under Domitian. Jews oust followers of Jesus from synagogues.
- 85-150** Writings of apostolic fathers (early church leaders) Barnabas, Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Polycarp.
- 90** Rise of Gnostic heresies within the church. Some gnostics deny Jesus' humanity (Docetism), saying that he merely appeared to have a body. Gnostics claim to have secret knowledge beyond divine revelation and faith.
- Christianity spreads to Egypt (Mark), Sudan (Ethiopian eunuch), Armenia (Thaddaeus, Bartholomew), France, Italy, Germany, Britain, Iraq, Iran, India (Thomas), Greece, Yugoslavia, Bosnia, Croatia (Titus), Asia Minor (Turkey today), Albania, Algeria, Libya, and Tunisia (Africa).

- c. 100** Death of John, the only one of Jesus' 12 disciples to die a natural death. All others are martyred.
- c. 107** Martyrdom of Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, who wrote letters of encouragement to the early churches.
- c. 125** Gnosticism spreads.
- 132-135** Second Jewish rebellion. Jerusalem destroyed. Most of the population dies or flees.
- c. 144** Marcion is excommunicated for heresy. He taught that there was no connection between the Old and New Testament, between the God of the Jews and the God of the Christians. He rejected the Old Testament. The heresy persists in some areas for several centuries.



Early Christians created this mosaic floor in a church in Galilee to depict Jesus' miracle of the loaves and fishes.

- c. 155** Justin Martyr, theologian, writes his first *Apology*, a rebuttal to Greek philosophers.
Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna and disciple of the apostle John, is burned at the stake at age 86+. Polycarp refers to Old and New Testament books as "scriptures."
- c. 156** Montanus of Phrygia preaches a form of religious extremism called Montanism.
- c. 180** Irenaeus of Lyons, student of Polycarp and great theologian, writes *Against Heresies*. He lists 20 New Testament books as *canonical* (officially accepted and recognized as authoritative).
- 193** Roman persecution under Septimius Severus.
- 196** Easter controversy concerning the day to celebrate Christ's resurrection. Western Christians prefer Sunday; eastern Christians prefer linking Easter with the Jewish Passover regardless of the day of the week.
- 197** Christianity sweeps the empire. Tertullian writes "There is no nation indeed which is not Christian."
The Apostles Creed and the *Didache* (an important document describing Christian beliefs, practices, and church government) are written during this century.
By AD 200 the church recognizes 23 New Testament books as canonical, but it is unlikely these are collected yet into one volume.
Christianity expands to Morocco, Bulgaria, Portugal, and Austria. Widespread conversion to Christianity in North Africa.

200

- 200** The Scriptures now are translated into seven languages, including Syriac and Coptic (Egyptian).
Christians in Egypt viciously persecuted, thousands martyred.
- 215** Clement of Alexandria, theologian, dies.
- c. **220** Origen, theologian and student of Clement, founds a school in Caesarea. He writes many works, including commentaries on most of the New Testament books. Origen writes, "The gospel of Jesus Christ has been preached in all creation under heaven."
- 235-270** Roman persecution under several emperors. Christianity grows rapidly.
Carthage becomes a major center for Christianity in Africa.
- c. **242** Manichaeism originates in Persia (Iran today). This dualistic heresy denies the humanity of Christ, and reappears in different forms over the centuries.
- 261** First church buildings erected as rectangular shaped basilicas. Previously Christians met in homes.



The Madaba map, a mosaic from the 500s, shows basilicas built by early Christians in Jerusalem.

During this century, monasticism begins in Egypt: *eremitical* (individual hermits) and *cenobitic* (religious groups or orders).

- 287** Mass conversion of Armenia under Gregory the Illuminator; King Tiridates makes Christianity the state religion.
- c. **292** Diocletian divides Roman Empire into East and West. Regions are different culturally and politically. Rome's influence wanes.
- 295** Some Christians refuse military service and are executed. Galerius begins to doubt that Christians in the army will obey orders. He persuades Diocletian to expel Christians from the legions.

The phrase "catholic" is used to mean all churches that agree with the whole apostolic teaching, as opposed to the heretical groups that follow a "secret revelation" or knowledge based on one teaching.

Christianity expands to Switzerland, Sahara, Belgium, Edessa, Qatar, Bahrain (Assyrian Church), Hungary, and Luxembourg.

300

- 303-4** Violent persecution of Christians under Diocletian. Scriptures burned; thousands killed.
- 311-411** Donatist schism in North Africa. Christians who stayed faithful during Diocletian's persecution oppose leniency toward those who lapsed.
- 312** Constantine (emperor of the western provinces) sees a vision of the cross of Jesus that he credits for giving him victory in battle.

Constantine I, legalizes Christianity. His mother, Helena, a devout Christian, goes to the Holy Land to locate key places in Jesus' life, and builds many churches.



- 313** Edict of Milan (Toleration). Constantine and Licinius (emperor of the eastern provinces) agree to end the persecution of Christians, but it continues in the East.
 - 320** Arius claims that Jesus Christ is a created being and not God by nature. His beliefs are called Arianism.
 - 324** Eusebius writes *Church History*.
 - 325** Council of Nicaea is convened in response to numerous heresies. It condemns Arianism and produces an early version of the Nicene Creed—a clear definition of the Trinity.
 - 330** Constantine establishes the capital of the empire at Byzantium and renames it Constantinople.
 - 337** Constantine baptized a few days before death.
 - 339** Severe persecution of Christians in Persia (Iran).
 - 346** Death of Pachomius, father of monasticism in the East and founder of the monastery at Tabennisi, Egypt.
 - 350** Eastern church is mostly Arian. Arianism spreads to the Goths.
 - 361** Emperor Julian the Apostate attempts unsuccessfully to restore paganism to the Roman Empire.
 - 364** Basil, bishop of Caesarea, opposes Arian teachings.
 - 367+** Canon of the New Testament slowly collected and confirmed. Books recognized as authoritative by Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, in the East, and the Council of Carthage in the West.
 - c. **376** Goth and barbarian invasions of the Roman empire begin.
 - 381** Council of Constantinople I finalizes the Nicene Creed and condemns heresies about Jesus.
 - 391** Theodosius makes Christianity the official religion.
 - 398** John Chrysostom, great orator, becomes bishop of Constantinople.
- Christianity expands to Afghanistan and Ethiopia.

400

- 395-430** Augustine, bishop of Hippo (N. Africa), authors numerous theological works including *City of God* and arguments against Donatists, Pelagians, and Manichaeans. His writings dominate Christian theology in the West for centuries.
- 404** In Bethlehem, Jerome finishes translating the Old and New Testament into Latin after 22 years of work. The Vulgate, as it is known, is the Bible used for the next 1000 years.
- 410** Arian Visigoths sack Rome.
- 428** Nestorius, patriarch of Constantinople, teaches that there are two distinct Persons in Jesus Christ (Mary is mother of the human part only), therefore some of Jesus' actions were human and some were divine.
- 431** Council of Ephesus condemns Nestorianism and Pelagianism (which claims man can attain salvation by works). The council defines Mary, Jesus' mother, as *Theotokos*, "bearer of God" to show that Jesus has one nature that is fully human and fully divine.
- 432** Patrick evangelizes Ireland. Over the next 30 years most of the country has been converted.
- 440** Leo the Great becomes pope. He persuades Attila the Hun to spare a weakened Rome.
- 451** Council of Chalcedon focuses on the divine and human natures of Christ. It confirms Pope Leo's *Tome* and condemns Appollinarianism, Nestorianism, and Monophysitism (also known as Eutychianism, which denies the humanity of Christ). Copts of Egypt and Ethiopia divide, the majority form monophysite or "One Nature" churches.



Early Christians commemorate this location on the Mt. of Olives, as the place where Jesus wept over Jerusalem.

- 476** Fall of the western Roman Empire. Emperor ousted. This marks the beginning of the Middle Ages.
- 496** Clovis, king of the Franks, converts to Christianity.
- 499** By the end of this century, the Scriptures have been translated into 13 languages.

Christian spreads to Western No. Africa, the Isle of Man, San Marino, Liechtenstein, the Caucasus, Ireland, and tribes in Central Asia.

500

- 500** Syrian Orthodox church establishes a monophysite monastery in Ethiopia.
- 520** Irish monasteries flourish as centers of learning, spiritual life, and training for missionaries to other parts of the known world.
- Nestorians gain converts throughout Asia and continue to influence religious life for many centuries.



The monastery of St. George of Koziba in the Judean Wilderness was built in 480.

- 525** Christianity spreads throughout the Middle East, including the Arabian Peninsula (Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Oman today).
- 529** Monk Benedict of Nursia, founder of Monte Cassino Abbey in Italy, writes the *Rule*, a guide for monastic life. Benedict is considered the father of monasticism in the West.
- 545?** Death of Dionysius Exiguus, a monk, who was the first to date history by the life of Christ, leading to the B.C. and A.D. designations. His calculations were off by at least four years.
- 553** Council of Constantinople, convened by Emperor Justinian, condemns the "Three Chapters," (the writings of several theologians including Theodore of Mopsuestia) for alleged heresies.
- 589** Third Council of Toledo. Visigoth king renounces Arianism, accepts church teachings.
- 590** High ranking Roman official, Gregory, resigns his post and donates his wealth to church relief efforts for the poor in 574. He is elected pope in 590. Known as Gregory the Great (or Gregory I), he institutes reforms and sends missionaries (including Augustine of Canterbury) to re-evangelize England, after Angle and Saxon pagans force Christian Britons to Wales. He also promotes liturgical music and the growth of monasticism. He is the first of the medieval popes.
- 597** Death of Columba, evangelist of Scotland and founder of an important monastery at Iona, Scotland.

Christianity spreads to North Yemen, Ceylon, Malabar, Nubia (Sudan), Channel Islands, and Andorra.