

Early Christianity Visual Timeline

Paul of Tarsus (~30–50 AD)

The ministry of Paul of Tarsus was one of the most important events in the spread of Christianity, and is a large reason of what we consider Christianity as today. Paul was one of the twelve apostles, previously known as Saul, a persecutor of Christians. Seeing a revelation on the way to Damascus (in Syria), Paul eventually become a missionary, traveling around the Middle East and talking of Jesus Christ to as many people as possible -- even the Gentiles (non-Jews). In fact, Paul is probably the second most important person next to Jesus Christ in the development of Christianity -- his letter (also called epistles) have "had enormous influence on Christian theology, especially on the relationship between God the Father and Jesus, and on the mystical human relationship with the divine." (Encyclopedia Britannica)

Edict of Milan (February 313)

The Edict of Milan was the political agreement that solidified Christianity's place in the world religions. Passed by the Roman emperors Constantine and Licinius, the Edict of Milan permanently established religious tolerance for Christianity within the boundaries of the Roman Empire. This edict prompted the rapid spread of Christianity "throughout the Roman empire [and therefore] to Europe". This edict was the most important legal document in the spread of Christianity.

Augustine of Hippo (354–430)

Saint Augustine was a bishop in Northern Africa that was similar to Paul in that he "established anew the ancient Faith". (Jerome). He was one of the pioneers of the concept of original sin (that Christians are born to want to sin) and the just war theory, which was a field of military ethics that helped to ensure that war was morally justifiable. He is considered a saint of the Catholic Church.

Pope Gregory the Great (540–604)

Pope Gregory was the bishop of Rome from 590 to his death. He helped to create the first big mission in Rome, called the Gregorian Mission. (I know, very original). During his tenure as the Pope, Gregory is viewed as a better administrator than the emperors of his time, helping to improve the quality of life of Rome as well as sending missionaries all over Europe. He additionally was responsible for causing the barbarians (Visigoths, Franks, Lombards) to align with Rome in terms of religion. He is known as the "Father of Christian Worship" because he tried very hard to reform Christian worship during his papal tenure.

The Great Schism (1054)

On July 16, 1054, the Patriarch of Constantinople, Michael Cerularius was excommunicated from the Catholic Church, creating the biggest sect in Christianity, Eastern Orthodox. Eastern Orthodox was created because a large group of people didn't agree with the Roman Catholic church on a few beliefs, such as if unleavened bread was to be used as Jesus's body for communion and if clerics should remain celibate.

The Eastern Orthodox church still remains the biggest sect of Christianity today, followed by over 220 million people.

Papal Supremacy (1000–1200)

Papal supremacy is the concept that the Pope wields complete power over the church due to him being an "earthly representation of Christ", therefore having complete power over "his" religion. First introduced in the 400s by Pope Innocent I, the concept that the Pope was the mediator for all religious disputes was further emphasized by the Popes after him; Leo and Gelasius were the main ones.

The 11th century was when papal supremacy truly became a driving force in Christianity. First with the bold attacks on traditional Christian practices by Pope Gregory VII and then with Pope Urban's launching of the crusades, the papacy enjoyed a huge increase in prestige. Later popes, such as Alexander III, Innocent III, Gregory IX, and Innocent IV, began arguing with emperors on matters of state.

