

A Timeline of Church History

From the Early Church to the Protestant Reformation

I. THE EARLY CHURCH • 30-325 AD

- c. 30** **Christ's Death, Resurrection & Ascension** — The risen Christ commissions His disciples to take the gospel to the nations.
- 64** **Nero's Persecution** — After a devastating fire in Rome, Nero blames Christians and unleashes persecution.
- C.156** **The Martyrdom of Polycarp** — An elderly bishop and disciple of John is martyred for his faith.
- 303** **The Great Persecution** — Diocletian launches the most severe persecution of the early Church.
- 312** **Constantine's Conversion** — Constantine becomes a powerful protector and advocate of Christianity.
- 313** **The Edict of Milan** — Christianity receives legal toleration throughout the Roman Empire.

II. LATE ANTIQUITY • 325-500 AD

- 325** **The Council of Nicaea** — The Church clearly affirms the full deity of Jesus Christ.
- 367** **Athanasius & the New Testament Canon** — His Easter Letter lists the same twenty-seven New Testament books we recognize today.
- 387** **The Conversion of Augustine** — Augustine's writings profoundly shape Western Christianity for centuries.
- 395** **Christianity Becomes the Empire's Official Religion** — A dramatic reversal from the persecutions of earlier centuries.

- 405** **Jerome Completes the Latin Vulgate** — It becomes the standard Bible of Western Christianity for roughly a thousand years.
- 432** **Patrick Goes to Ireland** — The former slave returns as a missionary, and the gospel spreads widely throughout Ireland.

III. THE MIDDLE AGES • 500–1517 AD

- 529** **Benedict Establishes His Monastic Rule** — His pattern of monastic life becomes enormously influential in Western Christianity.
- 563** **Columba Goes to Scotland** — He establishes a missionary community at Iona, helping spread Christianity throughout Scotland.
- 590** **Gregory the Great Becomes Pope** — His leadership strengthens the influence of the papacy and shapes medieval Christianity.
- 1054** **The East–West Schism** — The Church formally divides into the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches.
- 1095** **The First Crusade** — Pope Urban II calls for the first of several crusades, with profound and often tragic consequences.

The Road to the Reformation

A growing desire for reform, Scripture, and the recovery of the gospel

IV. EDUCATION, CRISIS & EARLY REFORM

- c. 1150** **The Rise of Universities** — Paris and Oxford become major centers of learning and theological study.
- 1173** **Peter Waldo & the Waldensians** — A reform movement emphasizing preaching and access to Scripture begins.
- 1215** **The Fourth Lateran Council** — Roman Catholic doctrine is reaffirmed and papal authority is further strengthened.

- 1305 The Papacy Moves to Avignon** — Pope Clement V establishes the papal court in Avignon, France.
- 1378 The Great Papal Schism** — Rival popes claim authority, seriously damaging confidence in the medieval Church.
- c. 1380 John Wycliffe & the English Bible** — Wycliffe emphasizes the authority of Scripture and oversees an English translation of the Bible. He is remembered as the “Morning Star of the Reformation.”
- 1415 The Martyrdom of Jan Hus** — Hus teaches many of Wycliffe's ideas in Bohemia and is condemned and burned at the stake.

VI. PRINTING PRESS & RENAISSANCE

- 1456 Gutenberg Prints the Bible** — The printing press revolutionizes communication and allows new ideas to spread rapidly across Europe.
- 1512 Michelangelo Completes the Sistine Chapel Ceiling** — The culmination of Renaissance art.
- 1517 Martin Luther nails his 95 Theses to the door of Castle Church in Wittenburg, Germany**, sparking the beginning of the Protestant Reformation.

The Gospel that Unites Us

The Five “Solas”: The Tenets of Evangelicalism

Sola Scriptura: The Bible alone is the Word of God and the only infallible rule of faith and practice.

- Deuteronomy 4:2 — “You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it...”
- Mark 7:8-9 — “You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men.”
- 2 Timothy 3:16 — “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness...”
- 2 Peter 1:20-21 — “Men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

Every corruption of Christianity begins by compromising the principle of Sola Scriptura.

Solus Christus: Jesus Christ is the only Savior of sinners, and His atoning sacrifice is sufficient to save.

- John 3:16–18 — God gave His only Son so that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.
- John 14:6 — “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”
- Acts 4:12 — “There is salvation in no one else...”
- Revelation 22:13 — “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”

Sola Fide: We are forgiven our sins and counted righteous in God's sight solely by trusting in Christ.

- Genesis 15:6 — Abraham “believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.”
- Luke 18 — The Pharisee and the Tax Collector.
- Galatians 3:11 — “The righteous shall live by faith.”

Sola Gratia: Our salvation is not earned by us in any part; it is the free gift of God from start to finish.

- Psalm 51:1–2 — “Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love...”
- Isaiah 64:6 — “All our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment.”
- Romans 4:4–5 — God “justifies the ungodly,” and faith is counted as righteousness.
- Romans 11:5–6 — “If it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works...”
- 1 Corinthians 15:10 — “By the grace of God I am what I am...”

Soli Deo Gloria: The ultimate end of all God's works in creation and redemption is for His own glory alone.

- Genesis 1:1 — “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”
- Psalm 19:1–3 — “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.”
- Isaiah 42:8 — “My glory I give to no other...”
- Isaiah 43:6–7 — “Everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory...”
- Acts 17:24–25 — The God who made the world “is not served by human hands, as though he needed anything...”