

## **CHRISTIAN-RELATED EVENTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

[Up to Discovery of the New World and Subsequent Colonization]

[abridged by Philip D. Spiess II from his  
“Outline History of Christianity” (2014)]

- ca. 30-312 A.D.:** After the Resurrection, the Romans persecute Christians for heresy and treason.
- 69-70 A.D.:** Vespasian, Roman emperor, has his son Titus (later emperor) put down a Jewish revolt in Judea; Titus destroys the Temple and Jerusalem (70 A.D.); the Temple treasures reputedly are taken to Rome. This marks the beginning of a definitive split between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians.
- 303-305 A.D.:** The emperor Diocletian starts the last and worst of Christian persecutions, including the seizure of valuable altar vessels and the burning of scriptures. By this time Christianity has spread throughout the empire, into Africa (especially Grecian Egypt), Jordan, Syria, and southern France.
- 312 A.D.:** The Roman general Constantine has a dream before the Battle of Milvian Bridge: he sees a cross in the sky and hears the words “*In hoc signo vinces*” (“In this sign conquer”). He has this Christian symbol painted on shields and wins the battle. He thus becomes the Roman emperor and shortly thereafter allows Christianity, making it legal in the Empire.
- 324-330 A.D.:** Constantine moves the capital of the Roman Empire from Rome in the West to the town of Byzantium in the East, calling it Constantinople (“city of Constantine” – now the Turkish Istanbul).
- 325 A.D.:** The emperor Constantine calls together all of the Christian bishops for the Council of Nicaea, the first of a number of important worldwide meetings of the leaders of the Christian church.
- 392 A.D.:** Emperor Theodosius makes Christianity the Roman Empire’s official religion.
- 395 A.D.:** The Roman Empire is divided into the Western and Eastern empires, in order to more effectively administer it. The Western capital is Rome (i.e., the Roman Empire); the Eastern capital is Constantinople (i.e., the Byzantine Empire).
- Post-395 A.D.:** Because of the two centers of power in the Roman Empire, the Roman Empire splits – and so does the Christian church: the church in the West (Rome) becomes the Roman Catholic Church (“catholic”=“universal”), headed by the Pope (Italian=“papa”); the church in the East (Constantinople) becomes the Eastern Orthodox Church (“orthodox”=“sticking to the original practices or rites”), headed by the Patriarch (Greek=“father”).

<b>Late 4<sup>th</sup> Cent. A.D.:</b>	With Christianity becoming official, Christian activity moves from conflict with governmental authority to conflict among varying interpretations of Christian theology, the various sides accusing each other of heresy and divergence from Church teachings. As a result, a number of prominent and still-influential church fathers emerge, among them Ambrose, who championed the authority of the Church against the authority of the State.
<b>476 A.D.:</b>	Odoacer overthrows the Roman emperor Romulus, declaring himself “King of Italy,” thus disdaining the title of “Roman emperor”: this is therefore considered the traditional date (by historians) of “the fall of Rome.” Thus the “Dark Ages” begin -- the “lamp of classical learning” (that of Greece and Rome) has been extinguished. But only in the West: the Byzantine Empire in the East continues as the “New Rome.”
<b>532 A.D.:</b>	The emperor Justinian builds his great Christian church, Hagia Sophia (“Church of the Holy Wisdom”), at Constantinople. (In 1453 it becomes a Muslim mosque when the Turks capture Constantinople.)
<b>[622 A.D.:</b>	Mohammed founds the religion of Islam, which is based on both Judaism and Christianity – and which worships the same one God (that of Abraham).]
<b>[638-on A.D.:</b>	Capture of Jerusalem by the Muslim Caliph Omar; Islam spreads throughout the Middle East and into Africa, and conquering much of the Byzantine Empire.]
<b>[732 A.D.:</b>	Charles Martel (“the Hammer”) of France stops the advance of the Muslims (i.e., the Moors) through Spain into Europe at the Battle of Tours.]
<b>[800 A.D.:</b>	On Christmas, Charlemagne is crowned the new “Roman” emperor by the Pope, and the Frankish empire becomes the Holy Roman Empire of the Germanies (1 <sup>st</sup> Reich); it lasts for 1,000 years, until abolished by Napoleon.]
<b>1054 A.D.:</b>	The one worldwide Christian Church formally divides into the Western Church (Church of Rome or Roman Catholic Church) and the Eastern Church (Church of Constantinople or Eastern Orthodox Church) when the Bishop of Rome (Pope) and the Bishop of Constantinople (Patriarch) excommunicate each other.
<b>11<sup>th</sup> Cent. A.D.:</b>	With the Church divided, the Muslims close the trade routes to the Holy Land to Christian pilgrims.
<b>1095-1096 A.D.:</b>	Pope Urban II preaches the First Crusade to recapture the Holy Land; this “People’s Crusade” is led by Peter the Hermit and Walter the Penniless.
<b>1099 A.D.:</b>	Jerusalem is captured by the Crusaders; the Knights Hospitallers of St. John are founded to house and protect Christian pilgrims to Jerusalem.

<b>ca. 1118 A.D.:</b>	The Knights Templars are founded to safeguard pilgrims going to Jerusalem.
<b>1147-1149 A.D.:</b>	The Second Crusade is launched by Pope Eugenius III; it is led by Louis VII of France and Conrad of Germany.
<b>1187 A.D.:</b>	Jerusalem falls to Saladin, the Muslim commander; Pope Gregory VIII calls for the Third Crusade in response. Three rulers – Richard I (“Lion-Heart”) of England, Philip II of France, and the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick I (“Barbarossa”) – are to take part with their armies.
<b>1190-1192 A.D.:</b>	Emperor Frederick dies while crossing a river; Cyprus and Acre fall to Richard and Philip; the Crusade ends with the Treaty of Jaffa between Saladin and Richard I, permitting pilgrims to visit the Holy Land.
<b>1202-1204 A.D.:</b>	The Fourth Crusade finally gets under way four years after its proclamation by Pope Innocent III, taking Zara from the Hungarians (fellow Christians), rather than heading to the Holy Land; the Crusaders end up sacking Constantinople, the Christian capital of the Eastern Church.
<b>1212 A.D.:</b>	The Children’s Crusade, led by Stephen, a 12-year-old shepherd who “had received a letter from Jesus”; a total disaster: thousands of children from Europe left their parents, died, or were sold into slavery in the Middle East.
<b>1218-1221 A.D.:</b>	The Fifth Crusade: A motley army under John of Brienne lands in Egypt.
<b>1228-1229 A.D.:</b>	The Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II arrives in the Middle East for the Sixth Crusade; Jerusalem is won back through his diplomacy.
<b>1249-1250 A.D.:</b>	Louis IX of France lands in Egypt for the Seventh Crusade; a major city is captured. But defeat of the Christians ends this crusade.
<b>1291 A.D.:</b>	The last remaining Frankish (i.e., Western European) territory in the Middle East (won in the Crusades) falls to the Muslims, but the Crusades have broken down feudalism (expanding the authority of kings) and opened up the West to new ideas, consumer products, and Greek/Arab science.
<b>1453 A.D.:</b>	Constantinople, and hence the remains of the Byzantine Empire (which is Christian), falls to the Turks (who are Muslims).
<b>[1478-1834 A.D.:</b>	Pope Sixtus IV establishes the Spanish Inquisition, which gains notoriety through a heritage of blood and torture (especially under Torquemada) directed at wiping out all non-Roman Catholics (initially Jews, thus driving them into exile; later Protestants, etc.).]

[1492 A.D.: Ferdinand (King of Aragon) and Isabella (Queen of Castile) drive the Moors (Muslims) from Spain, thereby consolidating the country with the help of the Pope; also, Columbus discovers the “New World” under their auspices.]

[1522-on A.D.: Religious wars in Europe: Protestants in the North, Roman Catholics in the South.]

[1753 A.D.: An act of the English Parliament permits the naturalization of Jews.]

[1763 A.D.: Touro Synagogue, America’s first synagogue, built in Newport, Rhode Island.]

[1858 A.D.: Jews get full “emancipation” in Great Britain.]

[The 18<sup>th</sup> century sees an increase in European Christians traveling in the Middle East, heading up archaeological expeditions in the Middle East, and, indeed, colonizing parts of the Middle East, which is controlled by the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire (covering vast territories and numerous countries) in Istanbul.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century sees all of this activity increase, with Sir Richard Burton (English explorer and translator of the *Arabian Nights*) being the first European to sneak into Mecca (disguised as an Arab), the French building the Suez Canal in Egypt (inaugurated with Verdi’s opera *Aida*, commissioned for the canal’s opening), and European Jews, expelled from various countries and territories, slowly migrating to the Middle East, considering it their “homeland.”

Thus, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the birth of Zionism comes to fruition; the rest is history.]