

BRIEF BAPTIST HISTORY: WHO WE ARE, WHERE WE HAVE BEEN, AND WHERE WE ARE GOING!

"The most reliable historical evidence confirms that the Baptist denomination, as it is known today, originated in the early seventeenth century. This does not mean, however, that Baptist viewpoints did not exist before that time. Those who hold the Baptist faith believe their distinctive doctrines, such as salvation by grace through faith, a "gathered church," believer's baptism, authority of Scripture, and religious liberty, reflect the doctrines of New Testament Christianity. Baptists did not invent these doctrines; they rediscovered and articulated them afresh for a new era."

-H. Leon McBeth

"God has always had His people. Wherever people have the Bible in their language, they will follow a Biblical faith."

"The greatest discovery, therefore, of the age was not the New World, but a Book." -J.H. Shakespeare

Background

1. Circulation of English Bibles
2. Protestant Reformation
3. Formation of the Church of England
4. English Separatism
5. Puritan Movement

1609 - General Baptist Church, John Smyth - Believer's baptism

1611 - First Baptist Church on English soil - Thomas Helwys - Free Will, Church Autonomy, Men and Women as Deacons

1638 - Particular Baptist Church, Baptism by immersion 1640.

The name *Baptist* came into use in the early 1640's. Opponents referred to them as "Baptists", they referred to themselves as "Brethren/ "Baptized Churches," "Churches of the Baptized Way." The group had begun to use the name for themselves by the mid-1650's, but *Baptist* would not be accepted until the 1750's.

1639 - The Baptist Church at Providence, Rhode Island - Roger Williams, Missions, Religious Liberty, Separation of Church and State, Democracy

1644 - First Baptist Church, Newport, Rhode Island - John Clarke

1682 - Baptist Church, Kittery, Maine - William Screven. Congregation moved to Charleston, South Carolina in 1696. (Regular Baptist) Later pastors - Thomas Simmons, Oliver Hart, and Richard Furman.

1700 - 24 Baptist Churches in America, 839 members. By 1790 there were 979 churches with 67,490 members, 42 associations.

- 1755 - First Separate Baptist Church in the South, Sandy Creek, NC - Shubal Sterns, Daniel Marshall
- 1771 - Branch of Fairforest Church at Enoree
- 1787 - First record, Church of Christ at Jamey's Creek
- 1790 - First record of Church of Christ at Jamey's Creek as a member of the Bethel Association
- 1798 - Church of Christ at Jamey's Creek changes her name to The Baptist Church of Bethel
- 1814 - The Triennial Convention, FBC, Philadelphia
- 1821 - Churches in the Charleston, Edgefield, and Savannah River Associations form the South Carolina Baptist Convention
- 1826 - Furman University established
- 1836 - The Baptist Church of Bethel joins the Tyger River Association
- 1838 - Tyger River Association Churches join the South Carolina Baptist Convention
- 1845 - Southern Baptist Convention Formed, Augusta, Georgia 4,126 churches, 351,951 members. Foreign Mission Board and Domestic Mission Board appointed.
- 1859 - The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary established.
- 1876 - The Baptist Church of Bethel joins the Spartanburg Association as a charter church.
- 1876 - Central Committee of Baptist Women in South Carolina formed
- 1888 - Women's Missionary Union formed
- 1891 - Sunday School Board formed
- 1908 - Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary established
- 1911 - The Baptist Church of Bethel changes her name to First Baptist Church, Woodruff
- 1912 - First Baptist Church, Woodruff joins the Spartan Association as a charter church.
- 1917 - Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention formed
- 1918 - Annuity Board formed
- 1919 - Southern Baptist Convention launches the "Seventy-Five Million Campaign"
- 1925 - Cooperative Program established
- 1925 - New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary established
- 1950 - Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary established
- 1951 - Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary established
- 1957 - Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary established
- 1983 - First Baptist Church, Woodruff joins the Spartanburg County Baptist Association as a charter church.

Church History at a Glance

1st Century

- The words and sayings of Jesus are collected and preserved. New Testament writings are completed.
- A new generation of leaders succeeds the apostles. Nevertheless, expectation still runs high that the Lord may return at any time. The end must be close.
- The Gospel taken through a great portion of the known world of the Roman empire and even to regions beyond.
- New churches at first usually begin in Jewish synagogues around the empire and [Christianity](#) is seen at first as a part of Judaism.
- The Church faces a major crisis in understanding itself as a universal faith and how it is to relate to its Jewish roots.
- Christianity begins to emerge from its Jewish womb. A key transition takes place at the time of Jewish Revolt against Roman authority. In 70 AD [Christians](#) do not take part in the revolt and relocate to Pella in Jordan.
- The Jews at Jamnia in 90 AD confirm the canon of the Hebrew Scriptures. The same books are recognized as authoritative by Christians.
- Persecutions test the church. Jewish historian Josephus seems to express surprise that they are still in existence in his Antiquities in latter part of first century.
- Key persecutions include Nero at Rome who blames Christians for a devastating fire that ravages the city in 64 AD He uses Christians as human torches to illumine his gardens.
- Emperor Domitian demands to be worshiped as "Lord and God." During his reign the book of Revelation is written and believers cannot miss the reference when it proclaims Christ as the one worthy of our worship.

2nd Century

- The Lord has not returned as soon as expected, so organization is needed to continue the ministry, resist persecution, oppose heretical teachings, and spread the word. Thus the office and role of the bishop becomes stronger.
- While persecution continues intermittently from without, heresies pose major dangers from within and must be answered. Heresies include:
- GNOSTICISM -- A kind of New Age movement that claimed special knowledge.
- MARCIONISM -- An attempt to reduce the Scriptures--both the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures -- to a few select books
- MONTANISM -- A charismatic movement that got carried away with new revelations, prophecies, and judgmental attitudes toward other [Christians](#).
- Apologists, or explainers of the faith, emerge to combat heresy and answer the church's opponents. Key apologists include Irenaeus and Justin Martyr.
- The churches are not legal and have no public forum or church buildings. Local persecution can break out at any time. A profound public witness emerges as Christians are put to death because they will not deny the faith at any cost. Examples: Martyrdom of 84-year-old bishop Polycarp (AD 155) and a whole group mercilessly tortured at Lyons in AD 177.
- The strongest centers of the Church are Asia Minor and North Africa. Rome is also a center of prestige.
- The church continues its amazing spread reaching all classes, particularly the lower. Callistus--a former slave--actually becomes bishop of Rome and makes claims for special importance of the Roman bishop.

3rd Century

- At beginning of century, Edessa (Urfa in modern Turkey) becomes first Christian state.
- Emperor Septimus Severus (202-211) persecutes; forbids conversion to [Christianity](#). Then a generation of peace for the church. Amazing growth and spread of faith continues and church buildings begin to be built.
- North Africa a key Christian center. Egypt alone has a million [Christians](#) by the end of 3rd century. Carthage and Alexandria leading centers of Christian theological development with such figures as Origen, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria.
- AD 248 the 1,000th anniversary of Rome but all is not celebration as threats to the empire increase from neighboring populations on borders.
- **The first empire-wide persecution instituted under Decius in AD 250. Everyone must offer pagan sacrifice and show certificate of proof.**
- Church has to deal with the difficult problem of how to handle the "lapsed"--those who relented during the persecution and now want back into the church.
- Church problems not only political. Intellectual attacks must also be answered. Porphyry writes Against the Christians attacking apostles, church leaders, Gospels and Old Testament. Origen around 245 answers attack of Celsus written 70 years earlier and apparently still a threat to the church.
- The role of the bishop continues to grow in strength.
- Before 300 Anthony goes into desert as a hermit, an important early step in development of monasticism--which will be a kind of protest movement against worldly Christianity and an alternative approach to spiritual commitment.

4th Century

- The fourth century, like the sixteenth, and perhaps our own twentieth, is one of those periods in [church history](#) when momentous changes take place that stand out as pivotal turning points in the history of God's people.
- The century witnessed major changes and transitions in church relations with state and society. Here are six:
 - Empire Persecutes Church -- At the beginning of the century the church went through the "Great Persecution"--the last and the worst. Instituted by emperor Diocletian in 305, it was intended to wipe out the church. It failed.
 - Empire Tolerates Church -- Emperor Constantine professed [Christianity](#) and the church was given legal status. Often you will hear that Constantine made Christianity the official religion of the empire. He didn't. But he did restore its losses and gave it favored treatment as one among many tolerated religions.
 - Empire Challenges Church -- Paganism didn't give up without a battle. Emperor Julian (361-363) attempted unsuccessfully to reestablish paganism.
 - Empire Adopts Church --Christianity was officially made the state religion under emperor Theodosius IX in the year 381.
 - Church Challenges Empire -- In a dramatic confrontation that foreshadowed centuries of church-state jockeying for position, Bishop Ambrose of Milan defied the emperor.
 - Church Persecutes Opponents -- It started off the century as a persecuted minority. By the end of the century the persecuted church had turned into a persecuting church. Its motives made sense. It saw itself as combating heresy, false religion and evil forces. In many ways it was a different church and a different world at the end of this century.
- **Canon of New Testament confirmed. In the 367 AD Easter letter of Athanasius, and at Councils in 382 and 397, final recognition was given. These do not create the Christian scriptures but confirm what was already generally recognized and accepted.**

- Millions of new members pour in. Becoming a Christian is no longer a risk, but can even be politically and socially opportune, so the church has to deal with a new laxity in standards of belief and behavior.
- Persecuted Church turns into persecuting church. By the end of the century the church that had for so long endured persecution as a minority faith, now becomes a persecutor.
- Major Councils - Church now needs to clarify and define what it believes. Long time required to understand and explain person and nature of Christ. Under emperor Constantine the first major council of church held in Nicea (modern Turkey) in 325. Second major Council held at Constantinople in AD 381.
- Donatists Arise in 311 - No sooner does the church achieve toleration than a severe rupture occurs within the North African church that would continue for three hundred years. What had been one of the strongest early centers of the church is so weakened it was eventually lost to Christianity.
- Major Missionary Advance as Ufilias takes Gospel to the Barbarian Goths in mid-century.
- Church Buildings Flourish -- After legalization the church gets big into real estate. Often its great basilicas are built on the sites of what were formerly pagan temples.
- Capital of Empire moves to Constantinople -- In 324 city founded. City dedicated on May 11, 330. Rome no longer the center of power for the empire and church begins to fill in the gap at Rome.
- Eusebius' Church History -- Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea becomes the first significant church historian and gives us invaluable documentation on the early church.
- Augustine converted in AD 386. He would become one of the most important theologians in all of church history.

5th Century

- As the barbarians increasingly threatened the Empire, sacking the city of Rome, Augustine wrote City of God (413-426), showing that the true movement of history was the unseen conflict between sin and [salvation](#), between the city of man and the kingdom of God.
- Nestorianism spreads in the eastern church, emphasizing a distinction between Christ's human and divine natures. Chalcedon creed describes Jesus Christ as fully human and fully divine, with the two natures existing together without confusion.
- As the emperor's power declines, the Bishop of Rome's increases. Pope Leo I (440-461) negotiates and saves Rome from Attila the Hun (452). He asserts authority over other bishops, claiming bishop of Rome is successor to Apostle Peter.
- Patrick (c. 390-460) sold as slave at age 16. He later escapes, goes to Ireland where he undertakes monumental mission.
- 496--Frankish King Clovis converted to [Christianity](#) and baptized. Conquers half of France and paves the way for Charlemagne's "Holy Roman Empire."
- Church calendar with the Christian year begins to be in place. Cult of martyrs and relics widespread, and glorification of Virgin Mary grows. Incense is first introduced into a Christian church service in the West.
- With upheavals and disintegration of secular society, church hierarchy becomes more established and influential.

6th Century

- At the risk of gross oversimplification, let me suggest 9 "M" words to give some overview hooks for the Middle Ages:
 1. Migrations of barbarian tribes that reshaped Roman world
 2. Missions--often heroic ventures that over seven centuries reached all Europe

3. Monasticism--first a reaction against worldliness, becomes preserver of learning, Scripture and spearhead of missions and education
 4. Men of the papacy
 5. Manorial culture and economy
 6. Mutuality of Church and State
 7. Menace of Church divisiveness--quest for truth has never been easy nor always clean -- Islam which overtook established Christian centers and posed grave threat to [Christianity](#)
 8. Mentality of accommodation to paganism as "the stream imbibes the color of the soil through which it flows."
 9. Mysticism of High Middle Ages
- The Latin church was preserved from extinction, and European civilization with it, by the two ecclesiastical institutions that alone had the strength and efficiency to withstand the impress of the surrounding barbarism: ...monasticism and the papacy. *The Civilization of the Middle Ages*, p. 146 - Ken Curtis
 - 529--Responding to growing secularization of the church, Benedict of Nursia establishes monastery of Monte Cassino and the Benedictine Order. Benedict's "Rule" for monks (c. 540) will become the most influential over future centuries.
 - 530-532--Boniface II, first pope of Germanic ancestry
 - Church and State are becoming more closely intertwined. Emperor Justinian (483-565) closes 1,000-year-old School of Philosophy in Athens 529, issues Code of Civil Laws reflecting Christian morals, sends missionaries as spies to China to smuggle out silkworms, reconquers N. Africa from the Vandals.
 - Church buildings become more monumental. Justinian builds Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, dedicated to Christ as the "Holy Wisdom." Constructed 532-537.
 - Dionysius Exiguus (d. c. 550), a monk in Rome, establishes modern system of dating, using events after Christ as "Anno Domini," in the year of our Lord. (It is possible he missed the date of Christ's birth by a few years.)
 - Columba (c. 521-597) goes as missionary to Scotland. Mission headquarters at Iona.
 - Conversion of barbarian groups continues. Recared, Visigoth King in Spain and an Arian, becomes Roman Catholic.
 - By the end of century the Western church tolerates magic and other manifestations of pagan spirituality as diverse cultures are incorporated into the church.
 - Pope Gregory the Great (c.540-604) gives the mass much of the shape it has today.

7th Century

- 600-636--Isidore, Bishop of Seville. His writings provide invaluable and encyclopedic knowledge for the Middle Ages. He is known for important efforts to resist barbarism and heresy in Spain, found schools and convents and evangelize Jews.
- 609--Pagan pantheon in Rome consecrated as church of St. Maria Rotunda. As part of the dedication, Pope Boniface (609-610) confirmed All Saints' Day.
- Organs begin to be used in churches. Church bells are used to call people to worship and to give the hours to the monks in the monasteries.
- Learning flourishes in Anglo-Saxon monasteries
- 648--Emperor Constans II issues "The Typos" limiting Christian teachings to that defined in first five ecumenical councils. Pope Martin I (d. 655) refuses to sign Typos. Martin is seized and banished to Crimea and dies. He is last pope to be venerated as a martyr.
- 664--After conflict between the original Celtic church and the Roman missionaries, England adopts the Roman Catholic faith at the Synod of Whitby.
- Mohammed (c. 570-629) begins the [religion](#) of Islam, which begins to supplant [Christianity](#) across the Middle East and North Africa.

- 638--Islamic capture of Jerusalem
- 690--Two Anglo-Saxon bishops, Kilian and Willibrord, carry on extensive evangelistic mission on the continent among the Franks.

8th Century

- 731--The "Venerable Bede" (c. 673-735) completes his Ecclesiastical History of the English People.
- Spain is invaded by the Moors, Moslems from North Africa; Charles Martel defeats them at the Battle of Tours in 732--a decisive juncture in Christian resistance to Moslem advance.
- Boniface of England is a missionary to the Germans for 40 years. Finally is murdered by pagans in 754.
- Iconoclastic controversy over the veneration of images divides the Byzantine Emperor and the Pope.
- Papacy asserts its earthly rule and establishes the papal states in Italy. Pope Leo III (d. 816) separates from the Eastern Empire and becomes supreme bishop in the West.
- Charlemagne becomes sole King of the Franks in 771; later is crowned "Holy Roman Emperor," establishing dream of a kingdom with a Christian king.
- Nestorian [Christians](#) in China develop missionary activities and build Christian monasteries.
- Schools for church music are established at Paris, Cologne, Soisson, and Metz.
- 781--Alcuin of York, England becomes advisor to Charlemagne and catalyzes the "Carolingian Renaissance."
- 793--The North Men invade Lindisfarne and invade Iona in 795.

9th Century

- 800--On Christmas day Charlemagne (Charles the Great, c. 742-814) is crowned the first "Holy Roman Emperor" by Pope Leo at St. Peters in Rome. Charlemagne noted for military conquests, strong central government, ecclesiastic reform and educational patronage.
- 831--Radbertus (c. 790-865) publishes first writing in the West on the Eucharist. It provokes controversy and **anticipates later Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation.**
- John Scotus Erigena (c. 810-877), one of greatest theologians of early middle ages, helps pave way for scholasticism. Involved in eucharistic controversy with Radbertus and maintains in the supper we partake of the Lord "mentally not dentally."
- Anskar (801-865), "Apostle of the North," lays foundation for [Christianity](#) in Scandinavia.
- Significant missionary efforts make further inroads among heathen peoples of Europe. Cyril (826-869) and Methodius (c. 815-885), the "Apostles of the Slavs," work in Moravia and invent an alphabet for the Slavs.
- Photius (c. 820-895), a renowned scholar and layman, made Patriarch of Constantinople in 858. Later deposed and reinstated at least twice. Conflicts with pope and Rome over spiritual jurisdiction and doctrine ("filioque controversy") foreshadow deepening rift and eventual split between churches in East and West.
- Alfred the Great is King of Wessex in England. Translated Christian writings into the language of the common people. Set up a palace school and founded two monasteries. Devoted half his time and money to religious purposes.

10th Century

- [Christianity](#) continues to spread among the peoples of eastern Europe during this century.
- To the east, Hungarians and Poles begin to convert to Christianity, and Christianity reaches Iceland and Greenland to the west.

- Ecclesiastical leaders were increasingly becoming embroiled in the political struggles of the European continent.
- Benedictine monastery established 909 at Cluny; becomes the center of a reform movement for the church to rid itself of the increasing secularization of its institutions and practices.
- Bohemian people embrace Christianity, but their "Good King [Duke] Wenceslaus" is soon murdered c. 929 by opposing pagan rivals.
- 988--Vladimir, sole ruler of Kievan Rus is baptized. There people were baptized at Pentecost. That same year Vladimir married Princess Anna, sister of Basil II, Emperor of Byzantium.
- Otto the Great (emperor 936-973) revives Charlemagne's dream of a Holy Roman Empire among the German people. In some form Otto's empire continues until the time of Napoleon.
- 993--Saints begin to be officially canonized by the Roman church.
- Private confession develops from public confession in both Eastern and Western Churches. The Roman Church begins the concept of indulgences. (No sure evidence of this before the 11th century.)
- Papacy reaches a low point in morality.
- As the year 1000 approaches, many fear the end of the world and the Last Judgment.

11th Century

- The expansion of Islam continues to occupy Christian thought and activities.
- 1009--Moslems sack Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem.
- 1054 The East-West Schism. Brewing for centuries, rupture finally comes to a head with the fissure that has lasted to this day.
- 1071--Seljuks conquer Armenia, ending the Byzantine Empire in Asia Minor.
- 1095--Pope Urban II proclaims the First Crusade to reclaim Jerusalem from the Moslems.
- 1099--Crusaders take Jerusalem.
- A century and a half of weak popes ends by the middle of the century, and papal authority begins to increase. Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085), "Hildebrand," moves to reform the church with emphasis on priestly celibacy and complete freedom of the Church from the State.
- Renewal of church through new monastic orders
- 1098--The Reform-minded Cistercian order founded at Citeaux
- William of Normandy conquers England, appointing Lanfranc Archbishop of Canterbury in 1070. Lanfranc reorganizes and reforms the English church.
- Anselm succeeds Lanfranc as Archbishop of Canterbury in 1093. Wrote Why Did God Become a Man? explaining the reasons for Christ's death.
- Musical developments: In 1015 Pomposa Monastery near Ravenna introduces sight singing. By the middle of the century, polyphonic singing replaces Gregorian Chant, the harp arrives in Europe, and the first German Christmas carol is written.

12th Century

- Gothic architecture, with its pointed arches and high, vaulted ceilings prevails in church building.
- 1182--Notre Dame Cathedral consecrated
- 1194--Chartres Cathedral begun
- The medieval papacy, at the height of its power and influence, continues to encourage crusades to liberate the Holy Land from the Moslems.
- 1104--Acre taken by the Crusaders, fell to Moslems again in 1191
- 1147--Second Crusade (supported by Bernard of Clairvaux) fails, with most Crusaders dying in Asia Minor.
- 1187--Loss of Jerusalem by the Crusaders
- 1190--German Hospitalers founded (later becoming the Teutonic Order)
- Belief in immaculate conception of Mary spreads.

- 1170--Pope Alexander III established rules for the canonization of saints, the same year Thomas Becket is murdered in England. Becket is canonized in 1173.
- 1173--Waldensian movement begins in Lyons, seeking truth in [Bible](#) rather than medieval tradition. The church persecutes these believers sometimes seen as predecessors of Protestant reform.
- Monasticism continues to be main source of reforming church.
- 1115--St. Bernard establishes monastery at Clairvaux. He will become the "greatest churchman of the 12th century."
- 1155--Carmelite Order founded

13th Century

- This century is often called the high point of the middle ages, with the papacy reaching its greatest power, scholastic philosophy reaching its zenith, and Gothic Cathedrals towering over the landscape.
- Crusading cause and spirit continues.
- 1204--Europeans, with Vienna taking the lead, capture Constantinople.
- 1212--Children's crusade
- Mendicant orders of friars established, another effort at church reform. These reemphasize the importance of the sermon.
- 1209--Francis of Assisi establishes Franciscans (canonized 1228).
- 1220--Dominican Friars established as a teaching order, later entrusted by the Pope with the Inquisition. Some became missionaries to Central Asia, Persian Gulf, India, and China.
- Salisbury Cathedral built within one lifetime (1220-1258), a rarity for medieval cathedrals!
- With Pope Innocent III (1198-1216) the papacy was at the height of its powers. Affirmed all churches were under his control. Developed theory of papal power that allowed him to interfere in political affairs of nations. Approved 4th Crusade. Established Dominicans and Franciscans. Instituted Inquisition, joining powers of church and state to punish heretics.
- 1215--Fourth Lateran Council summarized and reinforced medieval doctrines and practices.
- Thomas Aquinas summarizes Scholastic [Theology](#) in his Summa Theologica, 1271, writing, intelligo ut credam "I understand, in order that I may believe."

14th Century

- The Papacy, having reached its high point with Innocent III (1160-1216), begins a decline under Boniface VIII (c. 1234-1303).
- 1302--Papal bull "Unam sanctum" pronounces the highest papal claims to supremacy
- 1309-1377--"Babylonian Captivity" of papacy. Pope resides in Avignon, France, strongly under the control of the French King.
- 1378-1417--Great Schism, with two or three popes claiming authority.
- The Black Death or bubonic plague ravages Europe; 25 million Europeans, over 1/4 of the population, dies.
- Mysticism flourishes in many areas, especially Germany and the Low Countries.
- Meister Eckhardt teaches the nature of God is unknowable except through the inner knowledge of Himself God has placed in each soul.
- Catherine of Siena has a vision joining her with Christ in a mystical marriage; spends her life in serving others, including trying to end the Great Schism of the papacy.
- Seeking forgiveness from sins, bands of "flagellants" roam the countryside beating themselves as penance.
- 1305-1314--Dante writes his Divine Comedy mirroring the heights and depths of the [Christianity](#) of the 13th and 14th centuries.
- John Wycliffe transforms Oxford into the spiritual center of England. Looks to the Scriptures for authority and truth.

- 1382--Wycliffe is expelled from Oxford, translates [Bible](#) into English, and trains lay preachers to spread the Scripture.
- 1398--John Hus begins lecturing on theology at Prague University and spreads Wycliffe's ideas.

15th Century

- 1414 -1417 - The Council of Constance seeks to end the Great Schism, the embarrassment of having two or three popes competing for authority and power. This same council burns Czech priest John Hus as a heretic and condemns John Wycliffe posthumously.
- Religious beliefs continue to be matters of political concern.
- Thomas a' Kempis' classic Imitation of Christ written.
- 1431 -- French peasant woman Joan of Arc is burned at Rouen as a witch.
- 1453 -- The Turks capture Constantinople and turn St. Sophia Basilica into a mosque. The many scholars fleeing west encourage a revival of classical learning - the Renaissance.
- 1453 -- Johann Gutenberg develops his printing press and prints the first [Bible](#).
- 1479 -- The Inquisition against heresy in Spain set up by Ferdinand and Isabella with papal approval. Under Torquemada Jews are given 3 months to become [Christians](#) or leave the country.
- 1498 -- Savonarola burned. He was a great preacher of reform in Florence, Italy.
- Florence under the Medicis becomes the center of Renaissance humanism. Brunelleschi, Donatello, Michelangelo, Botticelli, and Leonardo da Vinci all create important works of art with Christian themes. At the same time the Medicis become supporters of a papacy more worldly than ever before.
- The Vatican Library is founded by Nicholas V.
- 1492 -- Columbus' voyage and a new age of exploration and Christian expansion begin.

16th Century

- The printing of books begun in the fifteenth century now develops swiftly, propelling the spread of the Reformation.
- Michelangelo, Albrecht Durer, Raphael, and Lucius Cranach create art with Biblical themes.
- 1517 Martin Luther posts his 95 theses at Wittenberg which stir Germany and Europe in a matter of months.
- The Scriptures become more available for the common person as Luther translates into German and Tyndale into English in the 1520's.
- The Protestant Reformation spreads throughout Europe with Zwingli in Switzerland, the Anabaptists in central Europe, and John Knox in Scotland. Henry VIII's quest for dynastic security causes him to separate from Rome and establish himself as head of the Church of England. John Calvin's ministry in Geneva and his Institutes begin a Scriptural reexamination of theology and society.
- 1530 Beginnings of the Lutheran Church
- 1534 Church of England separates from the Roman Catholic Church
- The Counter-Reformation defends traditional Catholicism against Reformation ideas. The Council of Trent (1545-1563) reaffirms Catholic doctrine. The Jesuit order becomes the defender of the Catholic faith and begins sending missionaries abroad.
- Religious convictions produce martyrs among both Catholics and Protestants -- Sir Thomas More, William Tyndale, and Thomas Cranmer among the many executed. Huguenots in France begin to be persecuted. Foxe's Book of Martyrs (actually titled Actes and Monuments) records the persecution believers in Christ have endured through the centuries.
- In England, Puritans begin to fashion a church they believe to be more closely based upon the Scriptures.
- Beginnings of the Presbyterian Church – John Calvin.

17th Century

- The Protestant Reformation begun in the last century continues to affect the religious and political life of Europe.
- 1609 General Baptist Church, John Smyth – Believer's baptism
- In England the Puritan Revolution removes King Charles and executes him while attempting to establish a Puritan Commonwealth.
- In France, the Protestant Huguenots rebel against King Louis XIII.
- 1618-1648 -- In central Europe, the Thirty Years' War brings destruction as Protestants and Catholics vie for power.
- England begins to establish colonies in North America, many with the purpose of spreading [Christianity](#) or establishing more Biblical Christian governments -- Jamestown begins in 1607, Pilgrims land in 1620, Massachusetts Bay Colony established by Puritans in 1630.
- "King James Version" translation of the English [Bible](#) released in 1611; will shape and mold the English language for over three centuries.
- 1639 Baptist Church at Providence, Rhode Island (Oldest Baptist Church in North America)
- 1633 - Galileo forced by the Inquisition to abjure Copernicus' theories. New scientific studies often pursued by men seeking to learn the ways of their Creator - Johann Kepler, Isaac Newton, Francis Bacon, Robert Boyle.
- 1634 -- the first Oberammergau Passion Play
- Classic works of Christian literature are written: 1667 - John Milton's Paradise Lost; 1670 - Blaise Pascal's Pensees; 1678 - John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress.
- "Enlightenment" writers question Christianity and seek to base knowledge on human reason-- Leibnitz, Hobbes, and Descartes.
- 1697 First Baptist Church, Charleston (The congregation had formed in 1682 and moved from Kittery, Maine to Charleston, SC It is the oldest Baptist Church in the South.)

18th Century

- 1700 There are 24 Baptist churches in America with 839 members.
- Voltaire, one of many Deists, further develops the rationalism of the "Enlightenment," attacking [Christianity](#) and finding in man the center of all things. The French Revolution of 1789 overthrows the traditions of the Church and briefly establishes the goddess of Reason.
- An Evangelical Awakening spreads throughout England and America under the preaching of George Whitefield, the Wesley brothers, and Jonathan Edwards.
- Pietism brings new life to German Lutheranism, and Lutheran J. S. Bach writes his music "only for the glory of God."
- Count Zinzendorf establishes Herrnhut as a Moravian settlement in Saxony, from which the Moravian Brethren begin their missionary work.
- [Christians](#) Handel and Haydn write classical music, including masterpieces of religious art, while Isaac Watts and the Wesleys write hymns for congregational singing.
- Practical application of Christian truths found in classics written during the century: Philip Doddridge's Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul; William Paley's Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy; and William Wilberforce's Practical View of the Religious System. Cruden's Concordance published early in the century.
- Religious freedom gains grounds. In the United States, religious tests for government positions are abolished, and in Russia Tsarina Catherine the Great grants freedom of religion.
- Christian Daniel Defoe begins writing novels reflecting man's spiritual struggles.
- The era of modern missions advances with the establishment of London's Baptist Missionary Society and the sending of William Carey to India.
- 1736 beginnings of the Methodist Church

- 1787 oldest record for the First Baptist Church of Woodruff
- 1790 There are 979 Baptist churches in America with 67,490 members

19th Century

- Protestants established missions throughout the world. Organizations such as the British and Foreign Bible Society, the American Bible Society, the Sunday School Union, and the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions lead in the spread of the Gospel message. Reform societies form to deal with abolition, temperance, prisons, and education.
- In America, many sects including Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Christian Science are established.
- New philosophies such as Darwin's evolution, Marx's communism, and Freud's psychology, attack the traditional Christian view of life and history. German "higher critics" attack the historical validity of the Scriptures.
- Revival leader Charles Finney establishes "new measures" in his revival meetings, believing conversions can be achieved if the right approaches and techniques are used.
- Dwight L. Moody and Ira Sankey hold large revival meetings on both sides of the Atlantic, while thousands hear Charles Spurgeon preach in London's Tabernacle.
- Fanny Crosby, Ira Sankey, Francis Havergal, and others poured out hymns of faith and devotion.
- David Livingstone and others open the African continent to missions, while workers with Hudson Taylor's China Inland Mission spread throughout China.
- 1818 Antioch Baptist Church formed in Woodruff
- Pope Pius IX condemns liberalism, socialism, and rationalism; also proclaims the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary. The First Vatican Council declares the Pope infallible in the year 1870.
- 1845 Southern Baptist Convention formed in Augusta, GA
- 1874 Poplar Springs Church formed.
- 1877 Presbyterian Church formed in Woodruff
- 1877 New Bethel Church formed in Woodruff
- 1883 Emma Gray Methodist Church formed in Woodruff
- 1888 First Baptist Church, Switzer formed
- 1888 First Baptist Church, Enoree formed
- 1891 Bellview Baptist Church formed in Woodruff
- 1895 Selma Baptist Church formed in Woodruff

20th Century

- 1904 Northside Baptist Church formed in Woodruff
- 1907 Church of God, Cleveland, TN
- 1913 Cornerstone Baptist Church formed in Woodruff (Mills Mill)
- 1933 Woodruff Church of God began.
- World Wars pit nominally Christian nations of Europe against each other.
- Emergence of charismatic Christian sects.
- Rise of the ecumenical movement.
- Revision of the Roman Catholic liturgy.
- Missions reach virtually every region of the world.
- New translation methods put the Bible into the languages of 95% of mankind, but about 1,500 small tongues, representing 5% of mankind, lack scriptures.
- 1979 Jesus, Our Risen Savior on Reidville Road

- More Christians are said to have been martyred in the 20th century than in all earlier centuries combined.
- Decline of church attendance becomes marked in much of the Western world.
- Explosive growth of Chinese Christianity.
- Emergence and collapse of powerful atheistic states.
- Crises in Darwinism revive Christian attacks on evolutionary theory and development of scientific models from a Christian perspective.
- Rise of internet and mass media lead to wide dissemination of the gospel by new means.
- An overwhelming information explosion tends to bury truth.

21st Century

- 2000 New Spring Church formed in Anderson
- 2010 Element Church formed in Woodruff