

HOW DID CHRISTIANITY SPREAD THROUGHOUT THE WORLD?

The time came to fulfill the prophecy of David the Prophet and the King about the miraculous spread of Christianity through the work of the Apostles supported by the Holy Spirit *“Yet their message goes out to all the world and is heard to the ends of the earth. Psalm 19:4”*. So Eusebius, the Historian, saw the spread of Christianity all over the world fulfilled this prophecy. All the Apostles sacrificed themselves to fulfill the Lord’s request for them to go everywhere in the world preaching and teaching (Mark 16:15). The Holy Spirit was their leader and was working in and through them as mentioned in the Holy Book of Acts 13:1&2 and 16:6-10.

We can divide our Apostles into three groups in addition to St. Paul regarding their field of preaching.

The first group includes St. Peter, St. Andrew, St. Matthew and St. Bartholomew. St.

Peter preached in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia (1 Peter 1:1). St. Andrew preached in Scythia (Russia and so he is the intercessor of the Russian Church), Bosphoran Kingdom and the Barbarian Lands to the east of the Black Sea (Now within Russia), Turkey and Sebastopolis, Colchis, Apsaros, Trebizond, Amasia, Nicea, Nikomidea to the south of the Black Sea and finally he attained the crown of martyrdom in Greece. St. Bartholomew preached in the Bosphoran Kingdom, India, Yemen, and Armenia. St. Matthew preached in Persia and Ethiopia.

The second group includes St. Thomas, St. Thaddeus, and St. Simon the Patriot. St.

Thomas preached in Odessa, and India. St. Thaddeus preached in Bakr Lands (Iraq) and Odessa where he healed her king Abgr. St. Simon preached in Babylonia, and Syria.

The third group includes St. John and St. Philip where they preached in Asia Minor. **St. Paul** preached in Damascus, Syria, Tarsus, Antioch, Cyprus, Asia Minor in Antioch of Pasadena, Derba, Galatia, Ephesus, Greece in Philippi, Thessalonica, Corinth, and Peria, and in Western Europe in Italy and Spain and finally attained his crown of martyrdom in Rome (Romans 15:19-24, 1 Corinthians 15:10 and 2 Corinthians 11:32).

It is certainly true that the main factor in the spreading of Christianity was the work of the Holy Spirit but there were some factors which facilitated the work of the Apostles in their preaching which included the Jews were everywhere with the same Old Testament, the same belief about the true living God, one international language “Greek”, one international state “the Roman Empire” which offered peace and roads for traveling and security in sailing and finally the most common philosophy of that time that all peoples are one united.

The Apostles preached everywhere and all the time taking every opportunity for preaching the Holy Gospel. They preached in synagogues (Acts 9:20, 13:5, 14:1, 17:1, 10, 17, 18:4, 19, 19:8), in every house (Acts 18:7, 20:7, 20:20, 28:17-31), schools (Acts 19:9&10), courts and places of governors (Acts 13:7, 24:24&25, 26:28), in jail (Acts 16), markets and public places (Acts 17:17-19), on rivers banks (Acts 16:13), and on Roman campus (Acts 21:40 and 22:1-21). They preached at every opportunity as St Paul taught his disciple St. Timothy (2 Timothy 4:2).

The main factor in the success of the Apostles’ preaching was the empowerment of the Holy Spirit who led them in every step. He was the One who called for preaching (Acts 13:2), He

taught the servants and spoke using their tongues (Acts 4:7-12), He determined the field and places of preaching for them as He would lead them to certain places and stop before others (Acts 8:26-29, 10:19-20, 11:6-10), He used to move them from one place to another (Acts 8:39&40), performing miracles (Acts 5:9-10, 13: 19-11) and led them in every decision as in Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:28).

Concerning the relation of the Church of the Apostles and the state can be summarized as follow: Christianity came from Judaism and in the beginning it was considered as one of the Jewish denominations. The Roman Empire considered Judaism as one of the official religions and so Christianity had advantages from this acceptance until Romans realized it was actually a new religion then they began to persecute Christianity. It is not commonly known the exact time that Christianity reached Rome; however, the Holy Book of Acts mentioned attendance of Romans in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost when the Church was established and so it is most probable those were the founder of the Church in Rome. Also, St Paul stated that some of his relatives were converted to Christianity before him (Romans 16). The first non-biblical evidence of Christianity in Rome was mentioned by the pagan historian Suetonius (52 AD) in his discourse concerning the exile of Jews by the Emperor Kilodioc because of the argument with Christians about the nature of the Lord Jesus Christ. At the time of Nero, Christians were well known throughout the Roman Empire. Nero persecuted Christians and accused them of being responsible for burning and setting fire of Rome which began on July 18, 64 AD and continued for 7 days where 10 districts of its 14 districts were completely burned to the ground and destroyed. Following this burning, persecution began where thousands of believers were martyred by fire, and beheaded after severe torture and pain. The most famous of the martyrs in Nero's time were St. Peter and St. Paul. Most historians attribute Nero was responsible for their deaths. Many waves of persecution began and continued throughout all the states of the Roman Empire. Following Nero's example, the emperors Galba, Otho, Vitellius, Vespasian and Titus continued persecution of Christians and thousands of believers were martyred in their times. At the end of the Apostolic Age was a great persecution by Domitian (81-96 AD) who killed thousands of believers, among them his counselor Flavius Clements and exiled others such as Domitilla, Clemens' wife. Domitian was the emperor who persecuted St. John and exiled him to Patmos where he saw his Revelation and wrote the Holy Book of Revelation (1:1). After, Domitian, Nerva came to the authority in Rome (96-98) and he refused considering Christianity as a political crime, and returned exiles but he did not consider Christianity as an official allowable religion for the Romans and the Roman Empire.

<http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/religion/christianity.html>

Introduction to Christianity:

Christianity is the largest world religion at the moment. It has over 2 billion followers, who classify themselves under 34,000 different denominations. Initially, Christianity was derived from Judaism, as Jesus Christ was a Jew, as were his twelve disciples. Christianity is based mainly around the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and is monotheistic. Christians believe in the Bible being the word of God, and although some choose to take it more literally than others, it is generally considered to be inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Beliefs and Principles:

Christians believe that Jesus Christ is the anointed saviour of the world and that his presence on earth was the fulfilment of the prophecies made in the Old Testament about the Messiah who was to come and save humanity from their sins. This was achieved for Christians, by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, whereby he defeated Satan and paid the price for all the sin in the world. The consequence of this is that anyone who accepts this belief is given eternal life and freedom from sin. Christians hold that Jesus will return on Judgment Day to fulfil the rest of the Old Testament prophecies, to judge the living and the dead and establish God's kingdom in the new creation.

According to the Gospels, Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born to the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem. Not much is said about Jesus' childhood, but his last years on earth were heavily documented in the Gospels. Christians consider Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension to be the most important doctrines in their faith. This is because Jesus shows his omnipotence over death and ultimately is the most convincing evidence for Christians that he is fully God.

The Bible itself is not debated within Christianity, only its interpretation. Many believe that it was intended only to be read as a story book, full of myths and moral messages. Others contend that the whole Bible is supposed to be read literally and then there are those who read the different types of books in the Bible differently, for example the Psalms as illustrative poems and the Gospels as facts.

Although Christianity is a monotheistic religion, Christians also believe that Jesus was God's Son and that He, and the Holy Spirit, are both also fully God, as well as being separate entities entirely. This is a concept many find hard to grasp, and some Christians choose not to accept, but the majority of Christians see it as an essential part of their faith. The Bible does not specifically refer to the Trinity, but it is a common doctrine and is included in the Nicene Creed which serves to outline the core beliefs of Christianity.

History and Origins:

The early church was founded by the Twelve Apostles, but this did not occur straight after Jesus' death and ascension. A great deal of persecution followed Jesus' ascension and many of his followers were killed and imprisoned simply because of what they believed. Christianity only became legal in the fourth century, when Constantine I formed the First Council of Nicea, which wrote the Nicene Creed. This creed is still used throughout the Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church. In 380, Christianity was officially made the religion of the Roman Empire. In the following years, it was declared that Jesus was both fully man and fully God, the books of the Bible were determined, and they also decided that the Nicene Creed was a permanent doctrine of the church at the Council of Rome. After the demise of the Roman Empire, the church expanded its missionary work in the rest of the world and the faith spread widely through the Germanic, Slavic, Celtic, Viking, Finn, and Hungarian people. After about 630, Islam began to increase quickly and soon took over previously Christian countries such as Spain and most of North Africa. Also straight after the collapse of the Romans, monasteries began to form all over Europe, which started off as simple learning centres, but soon gave rise to the first universities, such as the University of Paris, Bologna, and Oxford. Their subjects expanded from just theology to include law, medicine, and philosophy.

The Crusades are an important part of church history because of the rising Islamic population in the Holy Land and surrounding areas. The crusades failed in their main objective and led to extensive suppression of heresy in the following decades, mostly initiated by the Inquisition establishments.

Over about seven centuries the church gradually divided into two sections, the Western - Catholic and Eastern - Orthodox branches. There are several disagreements within the two sides, the most notable being the issue of papal primacy of jurisdiction. This refers to the Pope's authority over the church, and how far it should extend. There have been two attempts at reuniting the churches, but ultimately their differences seem to be irreconcilable.

In the 16th Century, there was a reformation in the Catholic Church, mainly led by Martin Luther, which ended in the Act of Supremacy being passed in England, effectively making the King the head of the Church of England. The Pope was excommunicated, and the Catholic Reformation was initiated. In the following years, the divide between Protestantism and Catholicism became irrevocably interwoven with politics. During all this, due to the discovery of the Americas, and subsequent colonial expansion by European countries, Christianity began to spread across the world, to the Americas, sub-Saharan Africa, and East Asia.

Demography:

Christianity has claimed roughly a third of the world's population for the last 100 years. The fact that Christianity is still growing all over the world is a reminder that the church is still as strong as ever today as it has ever been. While attendance to church has been decreasing in Europe in recent years, the church in other parts of the world has been increasing dramatically. The general demography of the church is such that it may be the first time since the 7th century that there will be more Christians outside Europe than there are within it. It is predicted that in the 21st century, the majority of Christians will live in Latin America and Africa, and that by 2050, only one fifth of Christians will be non-Hispanic white.

<http://www.blurtit.com/q5406230.html>

How Did Christianity Spread All Over The World?

Firstly, by migration of ordinary people. There was a large exodus of Christian Jews from Jerusalem because of persecution from the Jews and also to escape from the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70. The prophecies of Jesus regarding this cataclysmic event were so well known and understood among early believers that very few, if any, were caught up in it.

Secondly, it was spread by the work of missionaries. The disciples were in the vanguard of this. It is known that Peter got as far as Rome, that Thomas went to Parthia and Bartholomew went to India. The Apostle Paul travelled all over the European area of the Mediterranean and may have got as far as Spain. In the post-apostolic age, Clement of Alexandria visited a church which had already been established in India. This church did not last, however.

The methods followed by Paul deserve [examination](#) here. He established churches in major population centres such as Ephesus and Corinth, sometimes staying for up to three years in the one place. He usually took the message to the Jewish synagogue first, and then to the gentiles. Once a church was established he would move on to the next major centre of population, keeping in touch with the congregation by letters and sometimes visits. The intention was that the first church would travel outwards and establish daughter churches in [adjacent](#) areas and so on. This resulted in cities being very well evangelised and very rural areas almost untouched. Eventually, the last strongholds of the old Greek and Roman religion were the very rural areas of the Roman Empire. This is why the word "pagan" which we use to refer to animistic religions, actually means "rustic" or "country dweller" in Latin.

Thirdly, it was spread by servants and slaves. These people, particularly when educated Greeks, often carried an influence far greater than one would expect. They were responsible for bringing up children, managing great estates etc etc. Close friendships would grow up between them and their masters and it was not uncommon for a man to adopt a highly regarded slave as a son, or for an educated slave to be virtually in loco parentis to a highborn youth. Christianity was very popular among slaves, which was also probably one of the largest classes of people in the Roman Empire. One example of this found in [the Bible](#) was the Ethiopian Eunuch who was evangelised by Philip (Acts 8 vs 26-39). He was a high ranking official in the court of the Queen of Ethiopia. He founded a church which grew quite separate from the church in the European part of the mediterranean, and still persists today as the Coptic church.

Fourthly, it was spread by soldiers. Christianity was very popular indeed in the Roman army, which was also a very large class of people in the Roman Empire. Soldiers went everywhere and tended to evangelise. England was first evangelised by the Roman army, in particular, according to tradition by St Helena, the mother of Constantine, who later became the Emperor of Rome. It was probably Roman soldiers who initially evangelised Gaul ([France](#)) and Germany.

A very important person in the post apostolic period was St Jerome, whose life work was to translate the New Testament from Greek into Latin, in order that the christians in North Africa, who spoke Latin rather than Greek, could read it in their own language. He met bitter opposition in this but won through, and his translation (the Vulgate) became the basic Biblical text of the Roman Catholic church in Europe as well. For churches to last, it is very important that the people be able to read the bible in their own language. After St Jerome, no-one in the church recognised this need until the [Protestant](#) Reformation in the 15th and 16th centuries.

Fifthly, it was spread through politics. When Constantine the Great became Emperor of Rome, he wanted something to unify the Empire, and he wanted an efficient means of governing it. He very much admired the diocesan [organisation](#) of the church, which is the church in the major centre of population within a district being responsible for looking after the churches in the surrounding area. He decided to adopt this method for his own civil service and also to create christianity the state religion of the Roman Empire. There was no compulsion on individuals to embrace christianity, but most people did, from political rather than spiritual motives. This brought a massive influx of members into the churches all over the then known world, but created difficulties in teaching them effectively and eventually resulted in a decline in true spirituality within the church.

After the middle ages came the age of sailing ships and explorers. Missionaries tended to follow explorers. And it was in this way that South America was evangelised, though unfortunately the explorers & missionaries colluded to use warfare and force as an instrument of conversion. Then, following upon persecution of "dissenters" in England in the seventeenth century, groups of dissenters came over and settled in North America, and it was a combination of settlers and missionaries from England who evangelised the native American peoples. However, north America was largely christianised by overwhelming settlement from Europe.

The church in the west settled down somewhat as far as spreading the gospel to the heathen at this point. It was only in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that an English cobbler by the name of William Carey took up the challenge of evangelising India and, in so doing, picked up the torch first lit by St

Jerome and carried forward by reformers such as Wycliffe and Tyndale. He was the first person after them to realise the importance of giving Christians the Bible in their own language. His labours and successes inspired a whole generation of missionaries who went all over Asia, including China as well as India, and the whole of Africa. The more temperate areas of South and coastal Africa were colonised, and largely Christianised, by the Dutch, the Belgians and, to some extent, the French. But it was Protestant missionaries who opened up the jungle areas, because of their burning desire to spread the Gospel to the native peoples. Their vision and self-sacrifice cannot be underestimated, as they died like flies from jungle diseases. Yet many young couples and young single men went out there, knowing that they could well be dead within a few days or weeks from infections to which they had no resistance. It was during the nineteenth century that [Australia](#) was colonised, mainly by England, and, again, the settlers, initially convicts, brought the Christian religion with them.

Missionary societies still exist and missionaries still leave western countries to go all over the world. The [emphasis](#) now has changed from church planting to training and assisting the native churches to evangelise and care for their own people and, where appropriate, assisting with specialised technical expertise. There are still a few traditional church planter missionaries, but they tend to be language specialists and literacy workers, spending about fifteen years at a time working with tiny language groups to translate the Bible into their languages and then to teach them to read. There are still such groups in the Amazon jungle, parts of Indonesia and India. So the work, ordained by Jesus, to spread the Gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth, still goes on.