

# The History of Christianity

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# The Task

- Is huge
- Complicated
- Many people have different & very strongly held opinions about it

# The History of Christianity

- Christianity began as a small sect in a rather remote part of the Roman Empire to become one of the world's major religions
- How did it happen?
- What were the main events in its history?
- My main source has been 'A History of Christianity' by Diarmaid Mac Culloch.

# Jesus the Jew

- Jesus grew up in Galilee, part of the Roman province of Palestine & lived the life of a Jew
- He spoke at the synagogue
- He came to the Temple at Jerusalem for festivals
- 'Jesus the Jew' by Geza Vermes

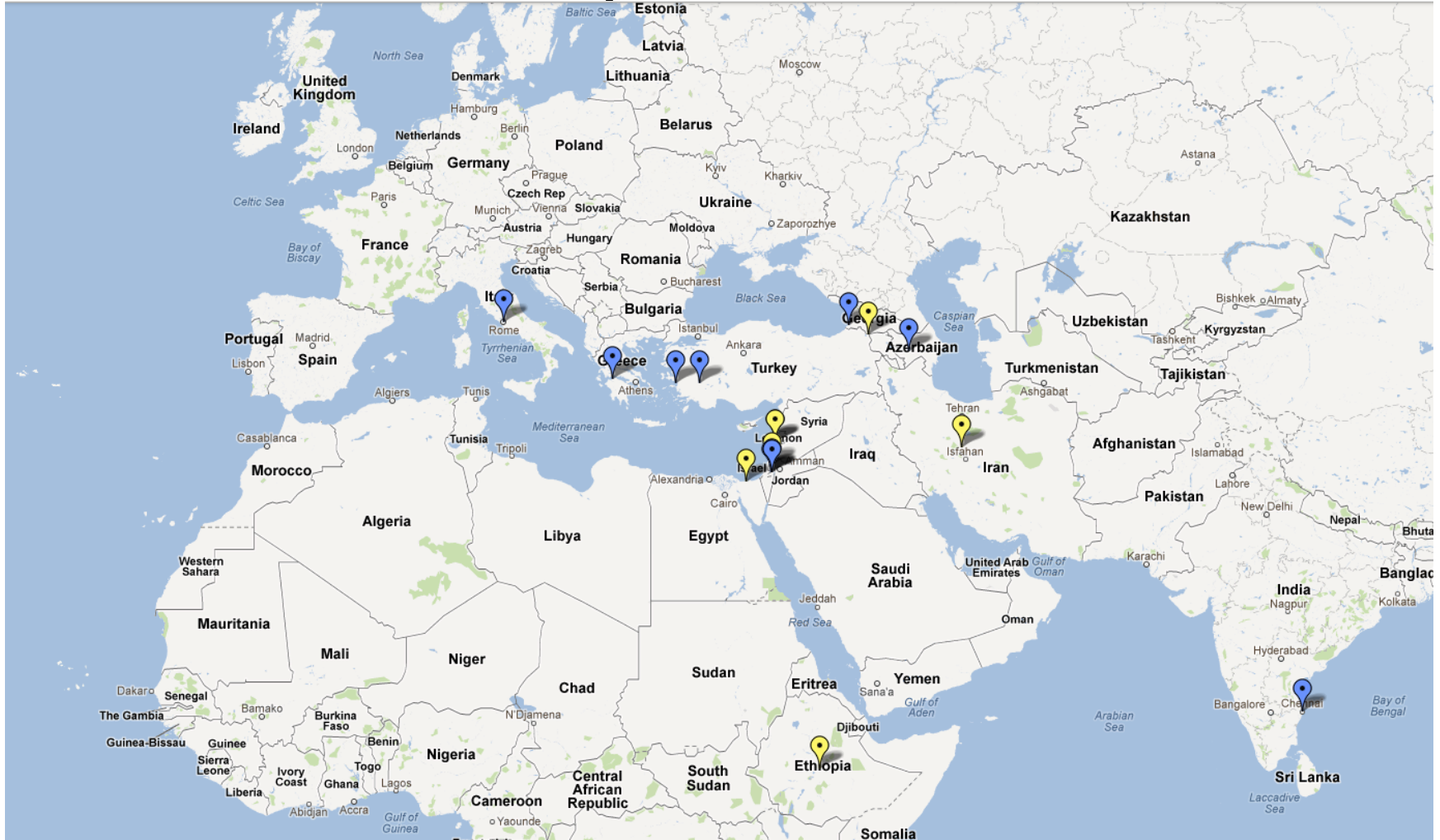
# Beginnings

- Initially Christianity was regarded as a movement among a small group of Jews. After Jesus' death c 30 CE his followers began to spread his ideas.
- From the beginning there was some conflict between those who tried to keep the Mosaic Law & those who believed that to follow it was no longer necessary in the new religion.

# Early Church

- Peter and the Gentiles – Acts 10
- The Apostles
  - Church Planting
  - Martyrdom

# The Locations of the Deaths of the Apostles



# Roman Empire

- By 2C Christians can be found throughout Roman Empire & beyond. In Rome they are a substantial group but still seen as a small, minority immigrant group. They spoke Greek not Latin. Gradually a move from meeting in houses to dedicated buildings took place & Rome became a pilgrimage site. Wandering preachers were banned & the role of women slowly diminished.
- Various groups began to express ideas that proved controversial (Montanism, Gnosticism) & the relationship of religion to philosophy provided some tension.



# Roman Empire

- A number of Christians addressed these questions of theology (Justin, Irenaeus & Tertullian). The tension was between truth revealed by God & truth revealed by reason. There were debates about the Trinity & Creation. In North Africa there were more influential Christian writers Clement & Origen (who is probably the first Christian Biblical scholar). Evangelism became part of the religion.

# Roman Empire

- Between 211-284 the Roman Empire become unstable & hardly a single emperor died a natural death. The 3rdC could be described as an age of anxiety. The growth of Christianity could no longer be ignored. Monasticism begins to be a part of Christianity.
- Emperor Constantine's Edict of Milan in 313 CE provided relief to Christians. They were persecuted almost from the beginning of the movement. Constantine's public conversion and official protection of Christianity, particularly the church in Rome, paved the way for the rise of the Roman Catholic Church.

# UK Christianity

- St Ninian 430
- St Patrick 432
- St Columba 565
- Augustine the Less 597 – First Archbishop of Canterbury
- St Mellitus 604 – First Bishop of London
- The Synod of Whitby 664

# Orthodoxy

- There was a gradual process of division between Constantinople & Rome which conventionally resulted in a split in 1054
- Again this is an area of differing opinions but one of the main doctrinal differences concerned the authority & infallibility of the Pope

# Reformation

- John Wycliffe's translation of the Bible into English was the first such translation in nearly 1,000 years. It was illegal, done in France and smuggled into England.
- In 1456 the Bible achieved another milestone: it became the first book printed with movable type. Johann Gutenberg's printing press made mass production of books possible. Consequently, books became less expensive and more accessible.
- Despite the technological advance of the printing press, it wasn't until 1517 that the idea of reform in the Catholic Church became a widespread movement. That was the year an ordained priest, Martin Luther, nailed his famous 95 Theses to the door of Whittenburg Cathedral.

# Reformation

- Luther meant only to be a catalyst for change within the Catholic Church. He had no desire to form another church. However, his action spurred further protest from others, starting the Protestant Reformation.
- The Reformation marked the beginning of two centuries of new Christian sects. By the end of the 16th Century, the Anabaptists, Calvinists, Presbyterians and Mennonites offered alternate views of the Gospel. However, Roman Catholicism remained the state religion of many countries.

# The Church Of England

- Henry VIII
  - 1533 Married Anne Boleyn
  - 1534 Declared himself Supreme Head of the Church in England
- 1538 Church of England separated from the Roman Catholic Church
- 1555 Reunited under Queen Mary
- 1570 Separated under Queen Elizabeth I

# Reformation

- The Protestant movement continued through the 1600s, which saw the rise of the Baptists and the Quakers.
- The 1700s saw the birth of the Methodist faith, along with the Great Awakening. Between 1730 and 1745 the people living in the colonies in North America experienced a renewed interest in religion and Christianity.



# Christianity Today

- Early 20<sup>th</sup> C the development of the Pentecostal movement
- 1948 World Council of Churches
- Catholic Church began a modernization process that spanned the early to mid 60s.
- The advent and popularization of television brought Christianity into a new technological medium

# Christianity Today

- Since the Internet's introduction into the mainstream, Christianity has reached a wider audience. Nearly every Christian denomination has a website.
- Additionally, in countries like China, where Christianity has had a turbulent history, millions of people have become Christians by learning about the Gospel (in its various forms) online.

# Today

Today, Christianity is one of the largest belief systems in the world, with adherents on every continent. While there are many denominations, and many believers who worship without the aid of organized religion, all have one thing in common: they believe that 2,000 years ago a Jewish carpenter was crucified and His sacrifice, saved their souls and restored their relationship with God