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# CHURCH HISTORY MONTHLY

Jan 2022, Vol. 2, no. 1, Page 1/2

## Timeline of Topics

- Quote:
- John Wesley, 1700s
- Early Church
- Christianity in Ethiopia
- Middle Ages
- How did we get AD & BC?

Free online  
classes  
for 2022

### Church History (all 2000 years in 5 weeks)

Start: Jan 17 => How long: 5 weeks

Click here to join or for more info.

*For other classes, see bottom of next page.*



Hand-carved stone church in Ethiopia that dates from the 1200s. Source:

<https://www.cnn.com/travel/article/rock-churches-lalibela-ethiopia/index.html>

Christianity has been here constantly since the mid-300's (Hint: it is not in Europe, the Middle East, North Africa, or India)

The Ethiopian eunuch described in Acts 8:27-39 is one connection to the spread of Christianity in northeastern Africa, although evidence is lacking as to the extent of his influence. The Ezana Stone, a stele or stone monument, describes the conversion of King Ezana to Christianity in the mid-fourth century. A young Syrian Christian named Frumentius was shipwrecked and carried to Ethiopia at an early age (the kingdom of Axum or Aksum). Once an adult, he was allowed to return home. But the queen asked him to defer his departure and remain to assist in her son's education, a young prince named Ezana. Frumentius remained to do so while spreading his faith as best he could in a region not yet widely accepting of Christianity. On a trip to Egypt to confer with Christian leaders, he met Athanasius. Frumentius asked Athanasius to send a bishop to Ethiopia, and, after consulting with a council, Athanasius chose Frumentius. Frumentius returned as bishop, where he eventually converted and baptized Ezana and spread Christianity throughout the land. Within ten years, Christianity had swept the kingdom and became the only accepted faith. Christianity has remained the cornerstone of Ethiopian faith to the present.

The Ethiopian Church did make contact with the Portuguese as ships sailed to and from India in the fifteenth century and later. Portuguese Catholic priests and monks attempted to bring the Ethiopian Church in line with Roman Catholicism but with no success. Ethiopia holds the distinction of being the one region in Africa that has never been colonized. The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church dates its origins to King Ezana in the fourth century.

This story is found in Mark's church history book, "A Survey of the History of Global Christianity," pp. 254-255.

**John Wesley founded Methodism in the 1700s. He said this on his deathbed shortly before dying: “The best of all is, God is with us.”**

What is A.D. to Me?  
(Why scholars say that Jesus was born in 4-7 B.C.)

[Read to the bottom to discover the real leap year rule, which you only think you know]

You may have never thought about it, but the Bible does not contain any year designations, like the year 2022. The system of counting years that we use did not develop until the 500s and then it didn't really catch on until a couple of hundred years after that. Dionysius Exiguus (470-544) developed the A.D. system, but more about him and his development of the A.D. system later.

I said that the Bible does not contain any year designations, but it does use an old way of keeping track of the years. This method is known as the “regnal system” and is based on indicating an event within the reign of a ruler. For instance, “such-and-such occurred in the fifth year of King Whoever.” A great example of this is Luke 3:1-2. In those passages, Luke attempts to tell when “the word of God came to John [the Baptist] son of Zechariah in the desert.” Luke describing this event within the rule of a number of people: “In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Tracoonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene—during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the desert.” Luke is very specific here because he dates the call of John within the reigns of seven different people! This system worked well as long as you knew when the rulers ruled, but as time passed and people begin to forget these rulers, they also forgot the dates when they ruled.

Now to Dionysius. Dionysius was a monk who helped keep track of the day when Easter was celebrated. (Which was a difficult thing when you don't have a regular calendar.) He eventually developed a system of counting years based on the birth of Jesus. Thus, Dionysius began his calendar with Anno Domini (“In the year of the Lord”) 1. He first began using this system in the year AD 525. (Which means that you will never find any dates using the AD system before the year 525. In other words, the people living in the year 524 didn't realize it.)

Dionysius' system was mainly theoretical at that time and did not have a wide appeal. But in the early 700s a man named Venerable Bede wrote a popular history book that used Dionysius' system, and soon afterwards this dating system was widely accepted.

Now about Jesus. Dionysius decided to start the calendar by calling the birth of Jesus year 1. (Which was not a good start, since anyone who is born is 0 years old; that is why there is no year 0.) But as archaeology developed in the 1800s and 1900s, scholars began date people and events in the distant past with more accuracy. And they concluded that King Herod the Great died in the year 4 BC. Well, since Herod was live when Jesus was born, this pushed the date of Jesus back to 4 BC (or maybe even a couple of years earlier). So, the reason scholars say that Jesus was born in the year 4 BC (and some say 5, 6, or even 7 BC) is that Dionysius got it wrong 4, 5, 6, or 7 years. Which isn't too bad considering he came up with the system in the Dark Ages.

Read on to learn more about the leap year (you only think you know the leap year rule). The way to keep track of years was established, but some tweaking with the length of the year became necessary. The calendar used by Dionysius is known as the Julian calendar and has three years of 365 days, then one year of 366 days, which we know as the leap year. Problem: the Julian calendar assumes that each year is 365.25 days long, but it is actually 365.2425, just a bit shorter. So if you add a day every four years, you will slowly add too much. By the 1500s, it was apparent that too many days had been added. Therefore, Pope Gregory XIII decided that the day after October 4, 1582, would be October 15, 1582. And, to make sure this mistake didn't happen again, they adjusted the leap year rule. No longer would an extra day automatically be added to every fourth year. From then on, an extra day would be added to every fourth year unless the year ended in “00”, then an extra day would not be added, unless the year could be evenly divided by 400, when an extra day would be added. So, 1900 was not a leap year but 2000 was.

Questions, comments, or want to join a free class contact Mark at [marknickens@gmail.com](mailto:marknickens@gmail.com)

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**Other classes throughout the year: See complete list here.**

==How we got the New Testament

==The false books not in the New Testament (Apocrypha)

==How we got the Old Testament plus the false books not in the OT

==Developing a deeper Christian maturity (as taught by Spiritual Christian Classics over the last 1900 years)

==Overview of the Old Testament

==Overview of the New Testament