

## *Pack of Tricks*



**Pack of Tricks** is a list of memory tricks, dates that do double duty, and easily associated events or people which, when memorized, provide rich and versatile anchors for understanding western world history and the Bible.

Having these dates or facts in place should help clarify what was happening when and give you a better overall sense of the time flow between the most important people or events.

Do not memorize exact dates unless they are the key dates given. Just stick with the rounded-off version. For example, Rome fell in 476 AD, but the plan is for you to remember the date of 500 AD because that's precisely in the middle of the millennium. Shakespeare died in 1616, but the important thing is to know he died at the close of the Renaissance, c. 1600.

The letter "c." beside any date stands for the Latin *circa* which means *around*. Historians use this abbreviation before a date that is approximate. So "c. 1400" means "around 1400."

And one more thing about learning the rounded-off dates: How many adults can come even close to a date for the fall of Jerusalem in the Old Testament and tell who conquered it? But if you embed these tricks in your thinking, you'll be able to say, "I don't know the exact date, but it was very close to 500 BC and it fell to the Babylonians." Impressive, right?

The tricks are listed in chronological order, but number 1 happens to be the anchor for all the tricks, so number 1 is also the most essential. Numbers 2, 3, 10, & 12 are the next most important.

There are 15 Tricks in all.

*"History is a pack of tricks the living play upon the dead."  
~ Voltaire*

## TRICK #1

**Memorize the Millennium Heads**—6 key figures in history each of whom just happened to live right at the turn of each of 6 millennia. If you memorize these men with their respective date, each one becomes an anchor and reference for that period in history. Only the last man was not a figure in the Bible. The dates for Adam and Noah are close to the Orthodox Jewish dates and are those which Jesus would have learned as a boy from his local rabbi. Memorize them in this order:

**④ Adam → ③ Noah → ② Abraham → ① David → ① Jesus →  
① William the Conqueror**

**Note:** Each number represents the millenium year, e.g. Abraham lived around 2000 BC. For Jesus there is no real 0 year. The calendar counts down to the year 1 BC and then skips to year 1 AD. But his birth is our demarcation line between BC and AD where the counting reverses itself and begins going forward instead of backward. The icons below from the Shorter Word Timeline represent each of the Millennium Heads in order.



## TRICK #2

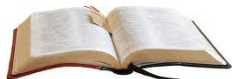
**Mirror dates: 1500 BC and AD—**

**Moses & Martin**

You've got the millennia down, now learn the middle marks beginning with these. Memorize "*Moses and Martin in the middle*" (the middle of their respective millennia) and learn these further parallels—



**1500 BC: Moses**—led Israel in the **exodus from Egypt** and gaining freedom from slavery as he delivered God's Laws to Israel (the Ten Commandments and such).



**1500 AD: Martin Luther**—led the Protestant **exodus out of the Catholic Church**, a movement known as the Protestant Reformation, causing great religious and political upheaval at the time. The Catholic Church followed with its own reformation from within, known as the Counter-Reformation, cleaning up corruption which had seeped into the Church during the Middle Ages.

Jerusalem



## TRICK #3



Rome

**Mirror dates: 500 BC and AD—**

**The fall of the 2 most significant cities in all of history**

**500 BC—the Fall of Jerusalem** (to Babylon) and the destruction of the Temple (the first temple—the one built by Solomon). Then add to that also the *rebuilding* of both city and temple—all of which can be anchored to the 500 BC date. Both the fall and the reconstruction happened within a century of each other with the actual date for the fall being 586 BC, and with both city and temple reconstructed by 500.

**500 AD—the Fall of Rome** (to Germanic tribes) which signified the final collapse of the entire western Roman Empire. This date is KEY! Historians use the Fall of Rome (technically 476 AD) as the marker for the end of ancient history. From that point on, it is the Middle Ages.

NOTE: Both of these cities survived to the present day though neither ever regained its former glory. But one of them eventually will. Do you know which one?



Minotaur

## TRICK #4



Trojan Horse

### 2 Periods of Ancient Greek history Fall On Either Side of Moses

Ancient Greek History can be divided into several major periods. Two of the earliest and longest periods were associated with very famous Greek tales or myths.

1. The first period is associated with Theseus and the Minotaur and is known as the **Minoan Age**.
2. The second period is associated with the Trojan War (Helen of Troy and the infamous Trojan Horse) and is known as the **Mycenaean Age**.

**These two important historical ages fall on either side of Moses.** So if you have Moses' date down (c.1500 BC), you can know that Theseus & the Minoan Age came before Moses (c. 2000-1500) and that the Trojan War & the Mycenaean Age happened after Moses (c. 1500-1000)

## TRICK #5



### We Three Kings—Saul, David, and Solomon

Just as we sing about 3 kings following the Star of Bethlehem, the “Star of David” (national symbol for Israel today) also had 3 Kings. David, as you already know, lived right at 1000 BC. He had a king on either side of him: Saul who came before him, and Solomon David's son who followed after. There were 3, and only 3, kings of the Kingdom of Israel before it became divided by Civil War and split into two separate smaller kingdoms, Israel and Judah. These 2 smaller, divided kingdoms were pretty much at odds with each other from then on. After these 3 kings, *the kingdom was never again an independent united kingdom*. It is an independent *nation* today but not a *kingdom* under a king. When Christ returns, it will once again have a king.

The 6-pointed “Star of David,” shown above, is the symbol of Jerusalem today and is on the national flag of Israel.

## TRICK #6

**Israel's Civil War** is similar in a few ways to the U.S. Civil war.

Use these comparisons to help you remember:

- The country split north and south just as the U.S. did.
- The South took another name for itself—Judah (Confederacy),
- The North kept the name of the original united country—Israel (United States).

However, *unlike* the U.S., the 2 countries never got back together. Also, the northern kingdom was led by totally rebellious kings. In fact, from the first days of the kingdom the king of Israel set up Golden Calf worship as the state religion to keep the people from traveling down to Judah to visit the Temple and sacrifice in Jerusalem. Israel *never had one single king who turned back to Yahweh*. Judah, on the other hand, had both good and bad kings. Therefore God kept giving Judah more time and their kingdom lasted a bit longer before God finally allowed them to be conquered.



## TRICK #7

### Memorize this: A-B-P-Greece and Rome

Think “a BP station” if that helps you remember. Then of course you have to learn what the first 3 letters stand for: **A= Assyria, B= Babylon, and P= Persia**. This is the line-up of world powers after Israel is divided by the Civil War. Each kingdom more or less gobbled up the territory of the one before it and surpassed it in greatness and power.

So where were Israel and Judah in all this?

- God let Assyria, the first of these empires, take Israel (remember, they had NO good kings so they went first).
- Then Babylon gobbled up Assyria’s territories and took Judah too (the fall of Jerusalem—c. 500).
- Persia gobbled up Babylon’s turf and was the kingdom that allowed the Jews to return home and begin rebuilding the Temple.
- When Rome came to power, it added new territory and fully eclipsed all the former empires in size and power. However, it only gobbled up parts of the first Persian Empire (including Judah) and played tug-of-war with Persia over territories for centuries.

These nations were prophesied by Daniel to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (all but Assyria which had already come and gone by then). These fulfilled prophecies are rich evidence for Jews and Christians that the Bible is supernatural in its inspiration and not just another book.

## TRICK #8

### Mirror dates: 323 BC and AD

(Think of a score— “3 to 3”)

#### 323 BC—Alexander the Great

brought in the huge cultural movement called Hellenization (the spread of Greek culture) including making Greek a kind of universal trade language. The spread of Greek in turn helped the spread of the gospel almost 400 years later.

323 BC is the year Alexander died.



#### 323 AD—Constantine, the first Christian emperor of the Roman Empire.

The spread of Christianity (helped by the Greek language) led to Constantine’s conversion. He stopped the persecution of Christians within the Roman Empire.

323 AD is a year in the middle of Constantine’s reign.

## TRICK #9

### Mirror dates (almost): 44 BC and 43 AD— both having to do with Rome.

- Assassination of Julius Caesar
- Rome invades Britain



**44 BC—Julius Caesar** ended the Roman republic (a representative democracy like the U.S.) by proclaiming himself dictator for life. Then Caesar was assassinated by those who were not too happy with his taking over the government like that. *And now you also know when the last pharaoh of Egypt lived* because she was Julius Caesar’s sweetie. You know her by the name **Cleopatra**.

**43 AD—Rome invades Britain, and London, a Roman fort, is founded.** Within a little over a decade London became a thriving city with people walking around in togas and speaking Latin! Rome remained in control of its territories in Britain until about 50 years before the downfall of the empire and the beginning of the Middle Ages, (c. 500, remember?). And note: Rome invaded *Britain*, not *England*. The English had not arrived on the shores of that island country yet. It was the Celtic *Britons* who were living there then and who gave the island its first and oldest surviving name.

(PS—Julius Caesar had invaded Britain nearly 100 years before, but the Romans did not stay there at that time. So this was technically a re-invasion.)

## TRICK #10

**The dates for the Middle Ages** are easily remembered once you realize that they extend from the *middle* of the first millennium to the *middle* of the next. Get it? It That's why it's the *middle* ages. Middle to middle. **500 to 1500.**

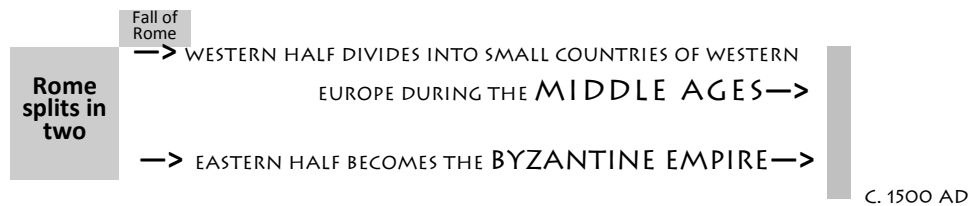
Historians traditionally use the fall of the city of Rome as **the end of ancient history** and the beginning of the Middle Ages. The city fell in 476 AD. And we are using a rounded off date of 500 to make it easy to remember.



## TRICK #11

**The Byzantine Empire ran parallel to the time of the Middle Ages, rising just before the Middle Ages began and falling just a few years before the Middle Ages closed.**

Around 400 AD the Roman Empire split into two separate governments, east and west. So for about 100 years, there were actually two Roman Empires! However, in order to avoid confusion, historians refer only to the western half as the “Roman Empire” (since the city of Rome was in that half), and they refer to the eastern half as the “Byzantine Empire.” You already know that Rome fell c. 500—that was the western empire— but the Eastern half, the Byzantine, lasted another 1000 years. So its lifespan basically runs parallel to the dates for the Middle Ages: from the middle of the first millennium to the middle of the next, 500-1500.



## TRICK #12



**1500 AD—The key date for both Renaissance and Reformation—**

Both came right **at the end of the Middle Ages** and both movements represent the tumultuous changes in society as the Middle Ages with its feudal system (think castles, knights, the Crusades, and very small countries) transformed into modern times (think scientific discoveries, technological inventions, and the rise of nations).

**NOTE: The Renaissance was both secular and religious in nature. Think of it as the 200 year transition period from Middle Ages to Modern with the Reformation being encapsulated within it.** 1500 is the mid-point for the Renaissance because it picked up momentum a little before 1500 and closed a little bit after, conveniently right at 100 years on either side—**from 1400 to 1600** with 1500 being right at the heart.

**The Reformation was fueled by the Renaissance and had a definite blast-off date:** c. 1500 when Martin Luther (*Martin in the middle*) posted his famous “95 Theses” on the doors of the Church in Wittenberg, Germany (1517, to be exact). His act that day lit the great bonfire of spiritual revival and political revolution known as the Protestant Reformation.

## TRICK #13

The Printing Press was invented as the Renaissance took off and just prior to the Reformation—and it was necessary to the success of both movements.

The Printing Press was an essential fuel to both of the great transitional movements of 1500, the Renaissance and the Reformation. So remember that the printing press was invented just *before* that 1500 mid-marker (about 50 years before) just in time to give these movements the momentum they needed to bring about huge changes in society. You can remember that the printing press came into use in time to *print* copies of Martin Luther's 95 Theses, getting them out to the public thousands of times faster (literally) than hand copies.



The printing press is one of the most significant inventions of all time. It catapulted us into the scientific age, spreading and encouraging new discoveries and inventions in its wake. Electricity, the computer, and antibiotics are its only rivals for #1 most important invention/discovery of all time. We are so immersed in print, we take it for granted and don't often comprehend its cataclysmic impact on society.

## TRICK #14

Chaucer and Shakespeare stand like bookends on either side of the Renaissance (1400—1600).



1400—Chaucer died

1600—Shakespeare is at his peak. (He died shortly after in 1616).

These two literary giants stand appropriately on either side of the Renaissance. Chaucer is the Father of English literature and wrote in Middle English, which is difficult to read without significant translation help. William Shakespeare is considered by all scholars to be the greatest English writer of all time, and he was the first great writer of modern English (yes, *modern*).

## TRICK #15

1492—more than just Columbus

*In fourteen hundred and ninety-two Columbus sailed the ocean blue;  
Spain conquered the Muslim and expelled the Jew as the Inquisition's shadow grew.  
The Renaissance was in full swing, the Reformation on the wing,  
And as for the sailors, a New World waited—which NO one in Europe anticipated!*



1492 was a triumphant year for Spain with the discovery of new land by Columbus who sailed under the Spanish flag of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella. We all know the date for that. But the rest of the poem above illustrates several things going on at this time across Europe: the encroaching of Muslim empires on Europe (Moors in the south (Spain), Turks in the East), the plague of anti-Semitism, and the Spanish Inquisition—an attempt by the Catholic Church to purge the population of all heretics (anyone not Catholic). But lest we get down on Catholics, in a few decades Protestants were persecuting, sometimes executing, those who did not believe as *they* did. **It was the mindset of the time** and a lesson for us all to be tolerant and to treasure our freedom of religion.

In earlier years Jews had been forced out of other western European countries (England, France, Germany) as well. These countries lost some of their foremost leaders in these purges. The Jews fled to eastern Europe where Muslim rulers were more tolerant and then filtered back into the West gradually after a few centuries went by.