

Jesus in the Japanese Experience

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~70. According to Christian tradition, Thomas, one of Jesus' original 12 disciples, arrives in Nara, then the capital of Japan.

200 – 400. The Hata Clan migrates to Nara, Japan. Apparently they are a large Jewish family, since research suggests links between Hebrew and Japanese language, customs, etc. It is possible that they are Jewish Christians.¹ They are very influential in the development of Japanese culture.

Comparison Table Of Japanese "Katakana" and ancient Hebrew symbols.

	כ	ק	ג	ח	נ	פ	ו	ו	ה	ש	י
Hebrew	コ	ケ	カ	ト	ノ	フ	レ	ワ	ハ	サ	シ
Japanese	コ	ク	カ	ト	ノ	フ	レ	ワ	ハ	サ	シ
	ko	ku	ka	to	no	fu	re	wa	ha	sa	si

	י	ס	ש	מ	ג	ל	ר	י	ל
Hebrew	ヒ	ス	シ	ミ	ク	イ	ル	リ	レ
Japanese	ヒ	ス	シ	ミ	ク	イ	ル	リ	レ
	hi	su	shi	mi	ku	i	ru	ri	re

603. A Christian building is erected in Kyoto, near Nara. It was destroyed by fire in 670. The oldest Buddhist Temple in Kyoto, the Koryuji Buddhist Temple, was erected in its place in 818 AD. Later found inside the Temple were a copy of the *Gospel of Matthew*, written in Chinese script and dated back to the 9th century, and a beam that has two crosses on it now preserved in the Tokyo National Museum.

1549. Francis Xavier, a Jesuit missionary, arrives at Kagoshime in August 1549. Jesuit missionary work concentrates on Kyushu (the southernmost island of Japan) and by 1579 about 100,000 people and 6 regional military lords were Christians.

1597. As the Christian influence began to spread in Kyushu, Hideyoshi attempted to put a stop to it by having 26 Christians crucified at Nagasaki, among them two children ages 12 and 13.

1614. Tokugasa Ieyasu's government forbids Christianity and forces the missionaries out of the country. There were about 300,000 Japanese Christians, about 3,000 Christians were executed; others recant. Many Christians remained strong in their beliefs and worshipped in private.

1859. Foreign Catholic and Protestant missionaries returned to Japan after the government lifted its ban. About 30,000 Christians who had worshipped in secret came out during this time after over 200 years of persecution. Christians began to influence education and the trade union movement.

1900. Japan goes through great upheavals due to its transition to capitalism. Toyohiko Kagawa came to Jesus and moved into a slum in order to witness to the people. 'I am a socialist because I am a Christian,' he said. He slept in cell-sized hovels sometimes holding the hand of a murderer, sharing himself with all in need in Japan's worst slums. He organized Japan's first labor and peasant unions. Kagawa was as world-renowned as a moral/social reformer as Gandhi and Schweitzer. The Emperor posthumously awarded him Japan's highest honor, the Order of the Sacred Treasure, and two volumes about him were issued: *The Biography of Kagawa by 103 People*. Doctors, professors, patients, workers, writers, teachers and acquaintances contributed essays.

1920's. Uchimura Kanzo, starts a layperson's Bible movement that attracts leading intellectuals. Christians, though small in numbers, are strongly represented among the best educated in Japan, leading elements so have a disproportionate influence.

1949. Former Lieutenant Commander Mitsuo Fuchida, the lead bomber of Pearl Harbor and a national hero since 1941, gave his life to Jesus. He read the account of Jesus' death and his prayer to God on behalf of those who were murdering him, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' Fuchida's conversion to Jesus aroused contempt, but he began to travel throughout Japan sharing his newfound faith. In 1952 he turned down the position of chief of staff in the new Japanese air force and in 1957 declined the honored position of Minister of Defense. For twenty-five years Fuchida crisscrossed Japan as well as the United States claiming Jesus as the one hope for our fear-filled, violence-prone world. In 1971, he wrote, 'I would give anything to retract my actions of twenty-nine years ago at Pearl Harbor, but it is impossible. Instead, I now work at striking the death-blow to the basic hatred which infests the human heart and causes such tragedies. And that hatred cannot be uprooted without assistance from Jesus Christ.'

¹ Ikeda, Kyoto professor of history, 1960's