Timeline of Ancient Slavery

Mesopotamia (circa 6000 BCE)
As the Mesopotamian civilization expanded and wars were fought to gain new territories, the conquered were forced into slavery, helping to continue to empire’s growth.

Egypt (circa 3500 BCE)
Slaves in Egypt were either members of conquered nations or were victims of the slave trade using the Nile River. Many slaves were set free after their term of service was completed.

Greece (circa 600 BCE)
Slaves in Athens are well-documented in historical documents. It is estimated that each Athenian citizen owned at least one slave. Tens of thousands of slaves were used in the silver mines.

Rome (circa 200 BCE)
Slaves were an integral part of the building of the Roman Empire. Many slaves were acquired through warfare and a booming slave trade was fed by the peoples of conquered nations.

British Isles (circa 500 CE)
The Anglo-Saxons and Normans routinely used Native Britons as slaves.

Europe (circa 1380 CE)
Due to the Black Plague there was a great labor shortage in Europe and so the slave trade was revived. The slaves came from various places including Europe itself, Africa and the Middle East. The Atlantic Slave Trade began in 1444 when the first boat of West African slaves was brought to Europe.

United States (1526)
Spanish explorers were the first to bring African slaves to what would eventually become the United States. That very same year, slaves in the Americas undertook the first slave revolt in the New World.