

What You Will Learn...

Main Ideas

1. Despite its general religious tolerance, Rome came into conflict with the Jews.
2. A new religion, Christianity, grew out of Judaism.
3. Many considered Jesus of Nazareth to be the Messiah.
4. Christianity grew in popularity and eventually became the official religion of Rome.

The Big Idea

People in the Roman Empire practiced many religions before Christianity, based on the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, spread and became Rome's official religion.

Key Terms and People

Christianity, p. 334

Jesus of Nazareth, p. 334

Messiah, p. 334

crucifixion, p. 336

Resurrection, p. 336

Apostles, p. 337

Paul of Tarsus, p. 337

Constantine, p. 338

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TAKING NOTES

Use the graphic organizer online to take notes on the religious practices in Rome, Jesus's teachings, and the early history of Christianity.

The Roman Empire and Religion

If YOU were there...

You are a Roman soldier stationed in one of the empire's provinces. You are proud that you've helped bring Roman culture to this place far from the city of Rome. But one group of local people refuses to take part in official Roman holidays and rituals, saying it is against their religious beliefs. Other than that, they seem peaceful. Even so, some soldiers think this group is dangerous.

What will you do about this group?

BUILDING BACKGROUND As the Roman Empire expanded, it came to include many people who spoke many different languages and followed many different religions. While Roman officials were generally tolerant of local religions and cultures, they did not allow anything—like the religion noted above—that might threaten their authority.

Religious Tolerance and Conflict

The Romans were a very religious people. They held many festivals in honor of their gods. However, they did not insist on imposing their beliefs on others.

Freedom of Worship

When the Romans conquered people, they generally allowed them to keep their own religious beliefs and customs. Sometimes these beliefs also spread to the Romans who lived nearby. As time passed, the Romans built temples to these adopted gods, and people worshipped them throughout the empire.

For example, many Romans worshipped the Olympian gods of Greece. When the Romans conquered Greece, they learned about Greek mythology. Before long, the Greek gods became

the main gods of Rome as well, although they were known by different names. In the same way, many Romans also adopted gods and beliefs from the Egyptians, Gauls, and Persians.

In their religious lives, the Romans were very practical. They were not sure which gods did or did not exist. To avoid offending any gods, the Romans prayed to a wide variety of gods and goddesses.

The only time the Romans banned a religion was when the rulers of Rome considered it a political problem. In these cases, government officials took steps to prevent problems. Sometimes they placed restrictions on when and where members of a religion could meet. Judaism was one religion that some Roman leaders came to consider a political problem.

Clashes with the Jews

Unlike the Romans, the Jews did not worship many gods. They believed that their God was the only god. Some Romans thought the Jews insulted Rome's gods by not praying to them.

Still, the Romans did not attempt to ban Judaism in the empire. At first, they allowed the Jews to keep their religion and practice it. The Jews, however, created political conflict by rebelling against Roman rule. Judea, the territory in which most Jews lived, had been conquered by Rome in 63 BC. Since then, many Jews had resented Roman rule. They did not want to answer to outsiders. As a result, the Jews rebelled against the Romans in AD 66–70. There were other disturbances as well, but each time the Jews were defeated.

The Romans built many temples to honor their many gods. Temples built to honor all the gods were called pantheons, and the most famous of these is the Pantheon in Rome, first built in the 20s BC. Its huge dome awes visitors even today.





The Roman general Titus captured Jerusalem in AD 70. To celebrate this victory, the Romans built an arch decorated with scenes like this one of Roman soldiers carrying a stolen menorah from Jerusalem's holy Second Temple.

By the early 100s the Romans had become more hostile toward the Jews. Treated harshly and taxed heavily, the Jews grew increasingly bitter. Matters worsened when the emperor Hadrian banned the practice of certain Jewish rituals. He thought this ban would end the Jewish people's desire for independence and cause them to give up Judaism.

Instead Hadrian's actions made the Jews even more upset. Once again they rebelled. This time, Hadrian decided to end the rebellions once and for all.

The Roman army crushed the Jewish revolt and destroyed Jerusalem in 135. Soon after, they forced the remaining Jews to leave the city. Then the Romans built a new city on the ruins of Jerusalem and brought settlers from other parts of the empire to live there. Jews were forbidden to enter this new city more than once a year. Driven out of their ancient city, many Jews moved into other parts of the Roman world.

READING CHECK Drawing Conclusions

Why did the Romans consider Judaism a threat?

A New Religion

At the beginning of the first century AD, what would become a new religion appeared in Judea. Called **Christianity**, this religion was based on the life and teachings of **Jesus of Nazareth**. Christianity was rooted in the ideas and traditions of Judaism, but it developed as a separate faith.

At the time that Jesus was born, around the end of the first century BC, there were several groups of Jews in Judea. The largest of these groups was stricter than the others in its religious practices. Its members were particularly careful about obeying the laws of Moses, whom you read about in Chapter 7. Jews believe that Moses gave them a set of laws to follow.

In keeping with their observance of the laws, Jews led structured lives. For example, they performed daily rituals and avoided eating certain foods.

Many Jews followed the laws closely because Jewish prophets had said a new leader would appear among them. Many thought this leader was more likely to appear if they were strict in their religious behavior.

According to the prophecy, the Jews' new leader would be a descendant of King David. When he came, he would restore the greatness of King David's ancient kingdom, Israel. The prophets called this leader the **Messiah** (muh-SY-uh), which means "God's anointed one" in Hebrew. In other words, the Jews believed that God would choose the Messiah that would lead them.

When the Romans took over Judea in 63 BC, many Jews believed that the Messiah would soon appear. Jewish prophets wandered through Judea, announcing that the Messiah was coming. Many Jews anxiously awaited his arrival.

READING CHECK Summarizing Why were Jews waiting for the Messiah to arrive?

Jesus of Nazareth

Jesus of Nazareth, the man Christians believe was the Jewish Messiah, lived at the very beginning of the first century AD. Although Jesus was one of the most influential figures in all of world history, we know relatively little about his life. Most of what we know is contained in the Christian Bible, the holy book of the religion of Christianity.

The Christian Bible is made up of two parts. The first part, the Old Testament, is largely the same as the Hebrew Bible. It tells the history and ideas of the Hebrew and Jewish people. The second part, the New Testament, is sacred to Christians. The New Testament contains accounts of the life and teachings of Jesus and the early history of Christianity. The New Testament also contains letters written by some followers of Jesus.

LINKING TO TODAY

Christian Holidays

For centuries, Christians have honored key events in Jesus's life. Some of these events inspired holidays that Christians celebrate today.

The most sacred holiday for Christians is Easter, which is celebrated each spring. Easter is a celebration of the Resurrection, Jesus's rising from the dead. Christians usually celebrate Easter by attending church services. Many people also celebrate by dyeing eggs because eggs are seen as a symbol of new life.

Another major Christian holiday is Christmas. It honors Jesus's birth and is celebrated every December 25. Although no one knows on what date Jesus was actually born, Christians have placed Christmas in December since the 200s. Today, people celebrate with church services and the exchange of gifts. Some, like people in the picture at right, reenact scenes of Jesus's birth.

ANALYSIS SKILL

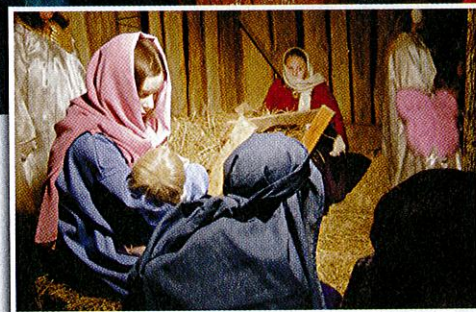
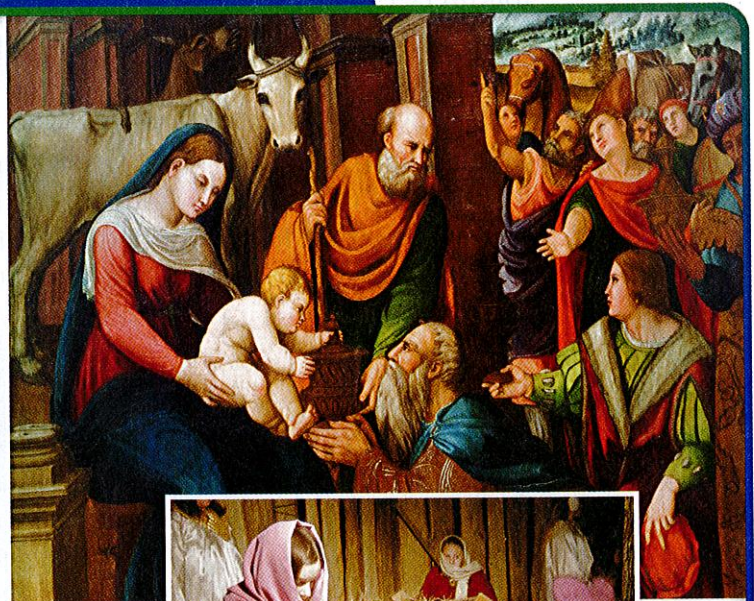
ANALYZING INFORMATION

Why do you think Christians celebrate events in Jesus's life?

The Birth of Jesus

According to the New Testament, Jesus was born in a town called Bethlehem (BETH-li-hem). In our dating system, the birth of Jesus marks the shift from BC to AD. Jesus's mother, Mary, was married to a carpenter named Joseph. But Christians believe God, not Joseph, was Jesus's father.

As a young man, Jesus lived in the town of Nazareth and probably studied with Joseph to become a carpenter. Like most young Jewish men of the time, he also studied the laws and teachings of Judaism. By the time he was about 30, Jesus had begun to travel and teach about religion. Stories of his teachings and actions make up the beginning of the Bible's New Testament. According to the Bible, Jesus created excitement wherever he went.



Crucifixion and Resurrection

As a teacher, Jesus attracted many followers. As he traveled the Judean countryside, he greatly influenced many who listened to his message. But at the same time, his teachings challenged the authority of political and religious leaders. According to the Bible, Roman leaders arrested Jesus while he was in Jerusalem in or around AD 30.

THE IMPACT TODAY

Because Jesus was crucified, the cross is an important symbol of Christianity today.

Shortly after his arrest, Jesus was executed. He was killed by **crucifixion** (kroo-suh-FIK-shuhn), a type of execution in which a person was nailed to a cross. In fact, the word crucifixion comes from the Latin word for “cross.” After Jesus died, his followers buried him.

According to Christian beliefs, Jesus rose from the dead on the third day after he was crucified. Christians refer to **Jesus’s rise from the dead as the Resurrection** (re-suh-REK-shuhn). After the Resurrection, several groups of Jesus’s disciples (di-SY-puhls), or followers, claimed to see him.

Early Christians believe that the Resurrection was a sign that Jesus was the Messiah and the Son of God. Some people began to call him Jesus Christ, from the Greek word for Messiah, *Christos*. It is from this word that the words *Christian* and *Christianity* later developed.

The Teachings of Jesus

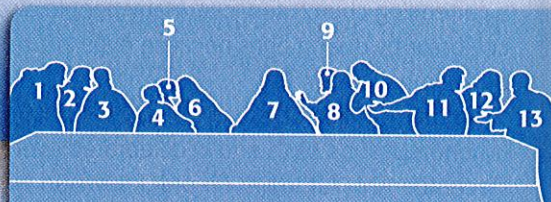
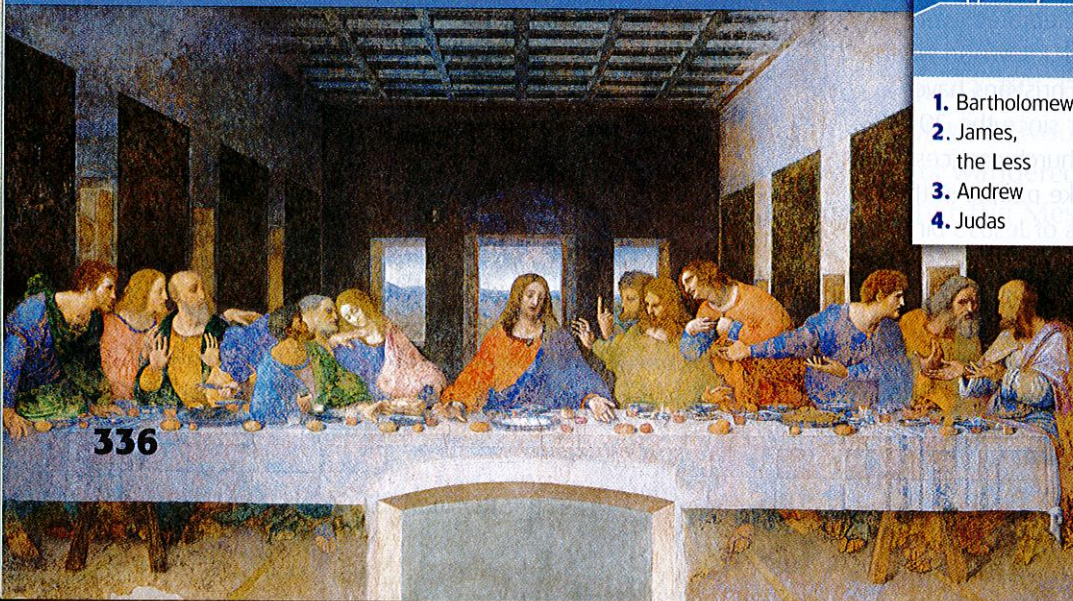
Jesus had traveled from village to village spreading his message to the Jewish people. Much of Jesus’s message was rooted in older Jewish traditions. For example, he emphasized two rules that were also taught in the Torah: love God, and love other people.

Jesus expected his followers to love all people, not just friends or family. He encouraged his followers to be generous to the poor and the sick. He told people that they should even love their enemies. The way people treated others, Jesus said, showed how much they loved God.

Another important theme in Jesus’s teachings was salvation, or the rescue of people from sin. Jesus taught that people who were saved from sin would enter the kingdom of God when they died. Many of Jesus’s teachings dealt with how people could reach the kingdom. Jesus warned that people who loved money or goods more than they loved God would not be saved.

Over the many centuries since Jesus lived, people have interpreted his teachings in different ways. As a result, many different denominations of Christians have developed. A denomination is a group of people who hold the same religious beliefs. Still, despite their differences, Christians around

The Last Supper



- | | | |
|--------------------|-----------|--------------|
| 1. Bartholomew | 5. Peter | 10. Philip |
| 2. James, the Less | 6. John | 11. Matthew |
| 3. Andrew | 7. Jesus | 12. Thaddeus |
| 4. Judas | 8. Thomas | 13. Simon |
| | 9. James | |

This famous painting by Italian artist Leonardo da Vinci shows the Last Supper—the final meal that Jesus and his Apostles shared before Jesus was arrested.

Primary Source

LETTER

Paul's Letter to the Romans

In the late AD 50s Paul traveled to Corinth, a city in Greece. While there, he wrote a letter to the people of Rome. In this letter he told the Romans that he planned to come to their city to deliver God's message. In the meantime, he told them, they should learn to live together peacefully.



“Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent [strong] in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.”

—Romans 12:9–18 NRSV

ANALYSIS SKILL

ANALYZING PRIMARY SOURCES

How did Paul's letter express Jesus's teachings?

the world share some basic beliefs about Jesus and his importance.

The Spread of Jesus's Teachings

The **Apostles** (uh-PAHS-uhls) were 12 disciples whom Jesus chose to receive special training. After the Resurrection, the Apostles traveled widely telling about Jesus and his teachings. Some of Jesus's disciples wrote accounts of his life and teachings. These accounts are called the Gospels. Four Gospels are found in the New Testament of the Bible. They were written by men known as Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Historians and religious scholars depend on the Gospels for information about Jesus's life.

Probably the most important figure in the spread of Christianity after Jesus's death was named **Paul of Tarsus**. Paul traveled throughout the Roman world spreading Christian teachings. In his letters he wrote about the Resurrection and about salvation. Paul also told Christians that they didn't have to obey all Jewish laws

and rituals. These ideas helped the Christian Church break away from Judaism.

READING CHECK

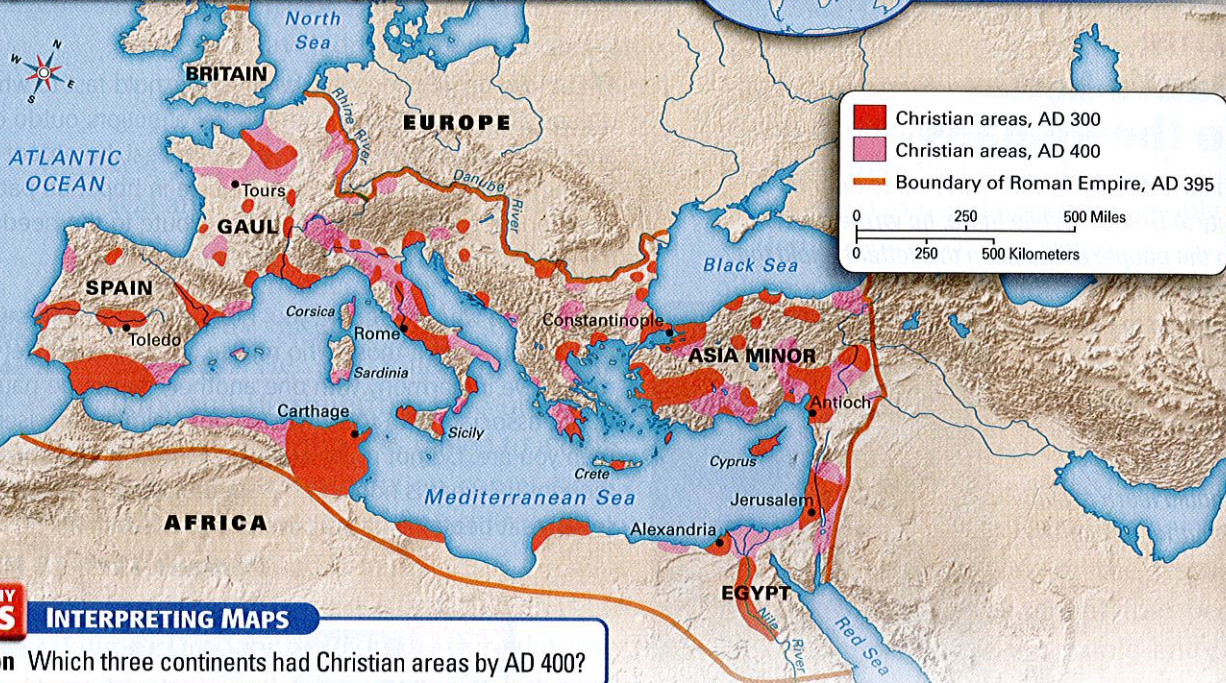
Summarizing What do Christians believe happened after Jesus died?

The Growth of Christianity

The first Christians spread Jesus's teachings only among Jews. But Paul and other Christians introduced Christianity to non-Jews as well. As a result, Christianity began to spread rapidly. Within a hundred years after Jesus's death, thousands of Christians lived in the Roman Empire.

However, Christians trying to spread their beliefs faced challenges from local officials. Some officials even arrested and killed Christians who refused to worship Rome's gods. A few Roman emperors feared that Christians would cause unrest, so they banned Christianity. This began a period of persecution (puhr-si-KYOO-shuhn) against Christians. Persecution is the punishment of a group because of its beliefs.

The Spread of Christianity, AD 300–AD 400



GEOGRAPHY SKILLS

INTERPRETING MAPS

Location Which three continents had Christian areas by AD 400?

Christians began to meet in secret but continued to spread their faith. In the early 300s, the emperor **Constantine** (KAHN-stuhn-teen) became a Christian. He removed the bans on the religion. A later emperor made Christianity Rome's official religion.

READING CHECK Identifying Cause and Effect

How did Paul's ideas help to spread Christianity?

SUMMARY AND PREVIEW Although usually tolerant, Roman authorities persecuted Jews and Christians in the empire. However, both Judaism and Christianity survived. In fact, Christianity eventually became the empire's official religion. Next, you will read about the fall of Rome.

Section 2 Assessment

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ONLINE QUIZ

Reviewing Ideas, Terms, and People

- a. Recall** Why did Roman leaders ban some religions?

b. Explain What was one religion that Roman leaders considered a problem? Why?
- a. Describe** What traditions were practiced by the Jews of Judea?

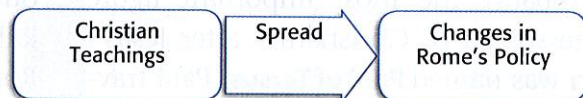
b. Explain Describe Jewish beliefs about the **Messiah**.
- a. Identify** From where does most of the information about **Jesus of Nazareth** come?

b. Analyze How did the teachings of **Paul of Tarsus** change Christianity's relationship to Judaism?
- a. Summarize** What challenges did early Christians face in practicing and spreading their religion?

b. Elaborate How did **Constantine** affect Christianity?

Critical Thinking

- Summarizing** Using your notes and a chart like the one below, identify the main teachings of Christianity. Then describe its spread and how Rome's policy toward it changed over time.



FOCUS ON WRITING

- Adding Details** Write down some notes and add details to your columns about what life might have been like for Jews and Christians in this period.