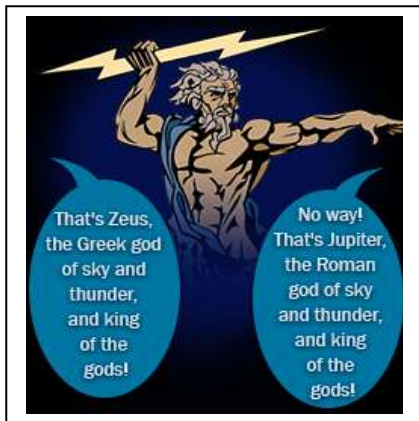


Christianity



Religion in Greece and Rome

Like most cultures found throughout the ancient world, the Greeks and Romans were **polytheistic**, believing in many gods and goddesses that ruled the world they lived in, the heavens, the earth, and the underworld. Although the gods were very powerful, they looked and acted very much like humans. They had human emotions such as love and jealousy, and even played games, had families, and fought wars. This was true for both the Romans and the Greeks. People in Greece and Rome believed the gods and goddesses controlled everything in their lives, from earthquakes to diseases to falling in love.



Roman religious beliefs were adopted from the Greeks, including their **deities** (gods). However, instead of keeping the Greek names for the gods, they gave them Roman ones. Both cultures wanted to please the gods, built temples, offered sacrifices, and prayed for assistance in their lives. While both Greeks and Romans believed in the afterlife, more attention was given to living in this world than preparing for the next.

Question: List four similarities between Greek and Roman religion.

Question: How did Greeks and Romans try to please their gods?

As the Roman Empire grew, the people they conquered were allowed to maintain their religious beliefs, as long as those beliefs did not threaten Roman rule. One religion seen as a threat was Christianity.

Question: Predict why the Roman Empire would see Christianity as a threat.

Christianity Begins

Christianity grew from, and is related to Judaism. Unlike other religions of the region, Judaism and Christianity were **monotheistic**, believing in a single god that both religions called Yahweh (God). Since the time of Abraham, followers of Judaism believed that Yahweh would send a **Messiah**, or **savior**, to restore the nation of Israel. Some people believed Jesus of Nazareth was a very important prophet, but not this promised Messiah. They continued to practice Judaism. People who believed that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Messiah became Christians.

Question: What is the biggest difference in beliefs between Christians and Jews?

Christianity's Founder and The Religion's Beliefs

Christians are followers of Jesus' teachings and believe he was the promised Messiah. A carpenter by trade, Jesus left his home in Nazareth to become a minister. He was accompanied in his journeys by twelve **disciples** (Apostles). During his ministry, he was recognized as a healer and a prophet by some, and hailed as the Son of God, the Messiah, by others. Jesus' message of love and devotion to God and all mankind is central to his teachings, which is the foundation of Christianity. Many people were drawn to his message.



Christianity teaches that Jesus is the **incarnation** of God. This means that he was God in bodily form. It also teaches that he died on the cross, was **resurrected** from the dead in order that mankind could be forgiven of their sins, and remains among mankind as the **Holy Spirit**.

Mankind is separated from a relationship from God because of their sin. God, however, loves mankind and wants a relationship with them, so Jesus died on the cross as a **sacrifice** to provide a way of forgiveness. He was resurrected to provide a way for mankind to enter a relationship with God. **Salvation** is a gift through grace and mankind can do nothing to earn it. A life of good works is a reflection of a relationship with God—it is not a way of earning merit. A person is not going to get into heaven just because he/she is doing good deeds. The **Bible** contains the sacred writings of Christianity.

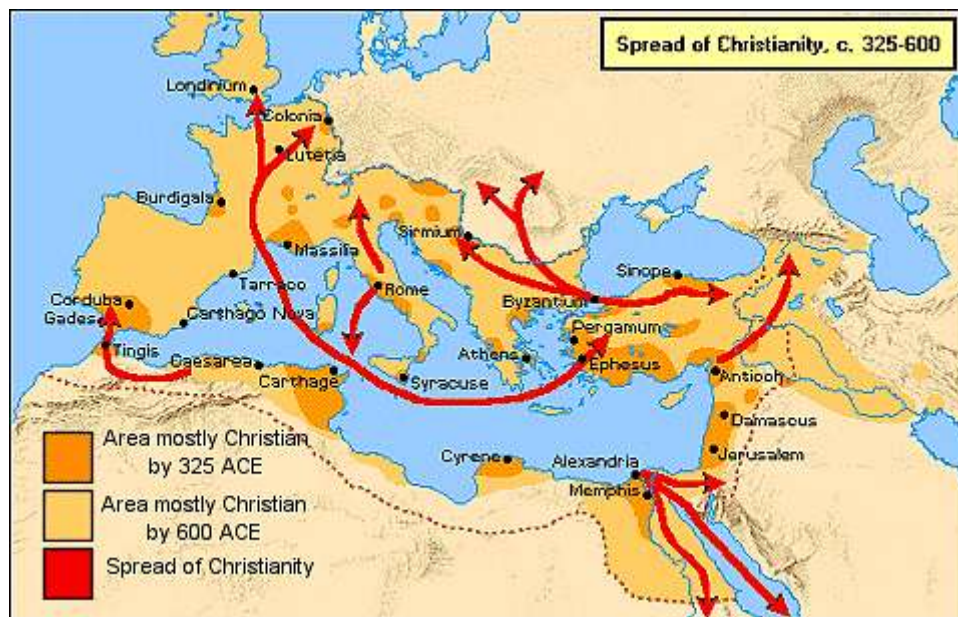
Question: Who was the founder of Christianity? What is the holy book of Christianity?

Question: List five beliefs of Christianity.

Diffusion

Christianity was first spread beyond Jerusalem and Judea as Christians moved to other areas to avoid **persecution** for their beliefs. It was considered illegal to practice Christianity in the Roman Empire for a period of time. Many early Christians practiced in secret. If caught, they faced severe punishment, including death.

Even with the risk, the religion continued and grew throughout the Middle East and Mediterranean. The disciples of Jesus such as **Peter, Paul, and John the Apostle** were key figures in the diffusion of Christianity. Despite early persecution by Roman authorities, Christianity was eventually adopted as the official religion of the Roman Empire and became a part of western civilization.



Question: How was Christianity spread?