

Religions of the Ancient Middle East—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam

Section 2



MAIN IDEAS

1. The life and death of Jesus of Nazareth inspired a new religion called Christianity.
2. Christians believe that Jesus's acts and teachings focused on love and salvation.
3. Jesus's followers taught others about Jesus's life and teachings.
4. Christianity spread throughout the Roman Empire by 400.

Key Terms and Places

Messiah a great leader the ancient Jews predicted would come to restore the greatness of Israel

Christianity a religion based on Jesus's life and teachings

Bible the holy book of Christianity

Bethlehem a small town where Jesus was born

Resurrection Jesus's rise from the dead

disciples followers

saint a person known and admired for his or her holiness

Section Summary

JESUS OF NAZARETH

Many people thought Jesus was the **Messiah**, a leader who would bring back Israel's greatness. The life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth are the basis of a religion called **Christianity**. Stories about Jesus's life are in the **Bible**, the holy book of Christianity.

Jesus was born in the town of **Bethlehem** and spent much of his life in Nazareth. Jesus had many followers. But his teachings challenged the authority of Roman leaders. According to the Bible, they tried and executed Jesus around AD 30. Christians believe that Jesus rose from the dead. They refer to this as the **Resurrection**. They believe that Jesus next appeared to his **disciples**, or followers. He gave them instructions about how to pass on his teachings. Then he rose up to heaven.

Why was Jesus tried and executed?

What do Christians believe happened after Jesus died?

Section 2, continued

JESUS’S ACTS AND TEACHINGS

According to the Bible, Jesus performed miracles. He told many parables, stories that taught lessons about how people should live. Jesus taught people to love God and love other people. Jesus also taught about salvation, or the rescue of people from sin.

Since Jesus’s death, people have interpreted his teachings in different ways. As a result, different denominations, or groups, of Christianity have developed.

Underline two of Jesus’s major teachings.

JESUS’S FOLLOWERS

After Jesus’s death, his followers continued to spread his teachings. The disciples Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John wrote the Gospels, which are found in the New Testament of the Bible. Paul spread Jesus’s teachings throughout the Mediterranean. After his death, Paul was named a **saint**. A saint is a person known and admired for his or her holiness.

Why do you think Paul was named a saint?

THE SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY

Christianity spread quickly. Roman leaders arrested and killed some Christians who refused to worship the gods of Rome. Some emperors banned Christianity. Christians often had to worship in secret. Local leaders called bishops led each community. The bishop of Rome, or the pope, came to be viewed as the head of the Christian Church.

Christianity continued to spread throughout Rome. Then the Roman emperor Constantine converted to Christianity. He lifted the bans against the practice of the religion. Christianity eventually spread from Rome all around the world.

Circle the name of the emperor who converted to Christianity.

CHALLENGE ACTIVITY

Critical Thinking: Understanding Cause and Effect Write a letter to Paul explaining the long-term effects of his ministry.