

CHAPTER 3

The Rise of the Christian Religion

GETTING STARTED

1 During the time when Emperor Augustus ruled the Roman Empire, important events were happening in Palestine. These events were to have a lasting effect on all of world history. The events concerned the beginning of a new religion.

In Chapter 2, you read about Palestine and the Hebrew, or Jewish, people up to about 586 B.C. In 64 B.C., Palestine became part of the Roman Empire. Shortly after this time, a new religion began that spread to all parts of the Roman Empire by 380 A.D.

2 Before you begin reading the chapter lesson, survey the lesson. Begin your survey by reading the beginning of the lesson. Then look through the lesson and read the headings. Next, study the pictures and read the picture captions. Finally, read the review section called "Summing Up" at the end of the lesson. This survey of the whole lesson will help you to discover the important ideas in this chapter.

Know the Main Idea

As you read the chapter lesson, try to remember the following important MAIN IDEA of the chapter.

The Jewish religion and the teachings of Jesus Christ formed the basis of the Christian religion, which slowly spread throughout the Roman Empire.

All the facts that you will learn in this chapter are related to this MAIN IDEA. The following questions will help you to understand the MAIN IDEA. Look for the answers to these questions as you read the lesson.

1. Describe the beginnings of the Christian religion in Palestine.
2. How did the Christian religion gain many followers?
3. When did the Christian religion become lawful in the Roman Empire?

Know These Important Terms

| | |
|--------------|-------|
| - Messiah | Latin |
| apostles | Pope |
| missionaries | |

Know the Years of This Chapter

Look at the time-line below. It shows the years of this chapter, 64 B.C. to 380 A.D.





Catacombs were built underground by Christians afraid of being killed. They would meet in catacombs to worship. Some Christians who died were buried in catacombs.

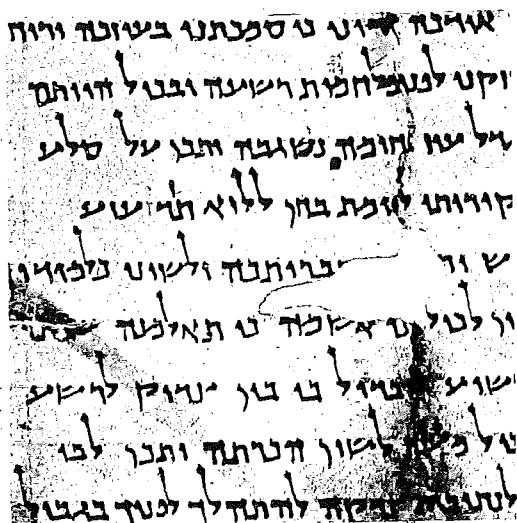
EXPLORING THE TIME

During the early years of the Roman Empire, a very important event took place that helped to shape the history of the world. That event was the rise of the Christian religion. The Christian religion began in Palestine, a faraway part of the Roman Empire. Soon this new religion spread to many parts of the world. In this chapter, you will read of the beginnings of the Christian religion.

The Jewish People Hoped for a Leader to Free Them

To understand how the Christian religion began, you need to know about the history of the Jews in Palestine. After the Jews were conquered by Mesopotamia in 586 B.C., they were forced to live in the city of Babylon. Later, the Persians conquered Babylon and allowed the Jews to return to Palestine again. During these years, the Old Testament became the basic Jewish law. (One of the teachings in the Old Testament

THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS



Part of a Dead Sea Scroll

In 1947, a young Arab boy was looking for some goats near the shores of the Dead Sea. The boy did not find his goats. Instead he made one of the most important discoveries of recent times. He found some early writings which we now call the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The largest of the Dead Sea Scrolls contains the complete Bible book of the prophet Isaiah. Most scholars believe that this scroll is about two thousand years old. Yet in nearly every way it is like the book of Isaiah in the Bible today. This shows how carefully the words of the Bible have been kept.

Other Dead Sea Scrolls tell about the life and beliefs of a group of people who lived long ago near the Dead Sea. Some of their teachings seem to be like the teachings of Jesus. Some scholars believe that this group of people was a link between the Jewish religion and the Christian religion.

Question: What book of the Bible is in one of the Dead Sea Scrolls?

was that someday a **Messiah** (muh-sy-uh); or leader) was to appear to help the Jews build a new nation.)

This belief in a Messiah became important after the Roman Empire took over Palestine in 64 B.C. The Jewish people were very unhappy under Roman rule. Many of them hoped for the Messiah to appear and to free them from Roman rule.

However, not all Jews waited for a Messiah to save them. Instead, many Jews tried to fight for their freedom from the Roman Empire, but the Roman armies defeated them. To punish the Jews, the Romans destroyed Jerusalem.

A New Religious Leader Appeared in Palestine

It was during this bloody period in Palestine's history that Jesus Christ was born near Jerusalem in southern Palestine. We know very little about Jesus' life. However, Jesus' followers wrote that Jesus earned a living as a carpenter and that Jesus studied the teachings of the Old Testament.

Jesus accepted many of the teachings of the Old Testament. He began to preach to the Jews and soon gathered a group of followers. Jesus chose twelve **apostles** (uh-poss-ulz), or followers, as special helpers.

No one really knows how long Jesus preached, but it was probably only a few years. Yet in this short period of time, Jesus' teachings formed a new religion that helped to shape the history of the world.

The Romans Feared Jesus and Had Him Killed

Jesus' main teaching was that God loved all people and that all men and women were brothers and sisters. Some people in Palestine believed that Jesus was the long-

awaited Messiah. Other people did not accept Jesus as the Messiah. Meanwhile, the Romans feared that Jesus might become too powerful and cause a revolt against the Roman Empire. Therefore, the Roman governor ordered that Jesus be killed after Jesus was accused of being a traitor by some of the people.

The Christian Religion Gained Many Followers

After Jesus' death, some of the followers declared that Jesus was the Messiah. They began to spread Jesus' teachings to many other peoples. The most famous of these Christian missionaries, or teachers, was a Jew from Asia Minor named Paul.

Most of the early Christians were Jews, and they followed the old Jewish laws as well as the new Christian teachings. But Paul won many new followers for the Christian religion among other peoples in the Near East.

The Christian Religion Spread for Many Reasons

The Christian religion appeared at a time when many people in the Roman Empire were unhappy under the rule of Rome and when they no longer believed in their old gods or the old religions. The Christian religion gained many followers because it preached love and the familyhood of all people. The new religion also gained many followers because it taught a belief in life after death.

The Roman Empire itself made it easy to spread the Christian religion. The excellent Roman roads allowed Christian missionaries to reach all parts of the empire to spread their religion. And the missionaries used **Latin**, the Roman language, to spread

the Christian religion because all peoples of the empire understood Latin.

The Christian Religion Became the Religion of the Roman Empire

The early Roman emperors hated the Christians because Christians refused to worship the Roman gods, refused to support the Roman officials, and refused to serve in the Roman army. The Roman emperors made



Sculpture of St. Peter, an early follower of Jesus Christ and the first pope of the Church of Rome



Wall painting showing Emperor Constantine (with crown) greeting the Pope (on horse)

SUMMING UP

being a Christian a crime, and they punished Christians by putting them to death.

Thousands of Christians were killed, but the Christian religion grew. Slowly, the Christians built up a strong religion. The bishop of Rome became the head of the Christian religion, or the **Pope**. In 313 A.D., the emperor Constantine ruled that the Christian religion was lawful. In 380 A.D., it became the official religion of the Roman Empire.)

The life and the teachings of Jesus Christ became the basis of the Christian religion. Many people in the Roman Empire who were unhappy under Roman rule became followers of the Christian religion. The Christian religion spread rapidly, and by the year 380 A.D. it became the official religion in the Roman Empire. In the next chapter, you will read about the rise of the German kingdoms after the western Roman Empire ended. x

UNDERSTANDING THE LESSON

Do You Know These Important Terms?

For each sentence below, choose the term that best completes the sentence.

1. The leader who the Jewish people hoped might someday build a new nation for them was called the **(Baptist/Messiah)**.
2. The **(apostles/bishops)** were twelve followers chosen by Jesus to help spread the new religious ideas.
3. Teachers who spread the Christian religion among other peoples were called **(bishops/missionaries)**.
4. The bishop of Rome became the head of the Christian religion, and he was called the **(apostle/Pope)**.

Do You Remember These People and Events?

1. Tell something about each of the following subjects.

Jesus Christ
Paul

2. Explain how each of the following events took place.
 - a. The Jewish people hoped for a Messiah to appear.
 - b. Christian ideas spread throughout the Roman Empire.
 - c. At first, the Romans hated the Christians.

Can You Locate These Places?

Use the map on page 8 in Chapter 1 to locate each of the following places. Tell

how each place is related to the events in this chapter.

Palestine **Jerusalem**
Asia Minor **Rome**

Do You Know When It Happened?

Tell why the following year is important:

313 A.D.

Do You Remember the Main Idea?

Which one of the following ideas is the **MAIN IDEA** of this chapter?

1. The Christian religion began in Palestine, but it was not accepted by other people in the Roman Empire.
2. The Christian religion is based on the teachings of Jesus. Paul helped to spread these teachings to all parts of the Roman Empire.
3. The Jewish religion and the teachings of Jesus Christ formed the basis of the Christian religion, which slowly spread throughout the Roman Empire.

What Do You Think?

From what you have read in this chapter, answer the following thought questions.

1. Why do you think that the Christian religion spread to many lands?
2. If you were a Roman, do you think you would have accepted the Christians? Explain your answer.
3. Why do you think that Rome became the center of the Christian religion? Explain your answer.