

# The Rise and Spread of Christianity in Rome



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Western Civilizations I

# Origins of Christianity

- Jesus was a Jewish teacher
  - Said to have performed many miracles
  - Had a large following but threatened the religious and political establishment of that time
  - Arrested and condemned to death by crucifixion ~33 AD
- Christianity began as a sect, or branch, within Judaism in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD

# The nature of Jesus is the key difference between Judaism and Christianity

- Judaism: Jesus was a teacher but a false messiah
- Christianity: Jesus was the son of God, resurrected after his crucifixion

# Christianity Begins to Grow

- Over the course of the first and second centuries AD, Christianity grew and separated from Judaism to become its own faith
- The split occurs because of the differences that emerge in the beliefs and practices

# Christian Persecution

- Christians often refused to participate in the Roman religion and worship of the emperor
- Began under Nero, blamed for fire of Rome in 64 AD
- Continued until 311 AD with Edict of Sophia – a proclamation of tolerance of Christianity, now legal in Eastern Rome

# The Religion of Rome

- Emperor Constantine, after a military victory he attributed to Christianity, became the first Christian Emperor
- 313 AD – Edict of Milan:
  - Legalized the practice of Christianity throughout all of the Empire

# Council of Nicaea

- 325 AD gathering of Christian leaders throughout Rome to create Christian doctrine
  - Organized basic teachings
  - Put the New Testament together
  - Established the concept of the Trinity

## **God the Father**

God is not created or born  
but everlasting and eternal.  
All things come from God.

# The Trinity

## **Christ the Son**

Jesus came from God the  
Father. Through his life,  
death, and resurrection, he  
became united in God. By  
following Jesus' example,  
Catholics can discover their  
spiritual identity.

## **The Holy Spirit**

The Holy Spirit (or Holy  
Ghost) is the divine love that  
unites and proceeds from the  
Father and Son.

# Causes for the Spread of Christianity

1. Ease of travel allowed missionaries to carry Christianity's message to many places
2. The widespread use of Greek as a language common to all in the Eastern Roman Empire
3. The growth of cities, where missionaries could attract large crowds
4. The well developed structure or hierarchy of the Church
5. People lost interest in the old religions and were open to something more meaningful

# Causes for the Spread of Christianity

6. People from all levels of society were able to understand and relate to the Christian teachings
7. Christian teachings stressed the unimportance of wealth
8. People who witnessed Christian persecution grew to respect martyrs and the faith that allowed them to withstand their persecution
9. The work of Paul to convert large numbers of Gentiles (non-Jews) outside of Palestine
10. The idea of an eternal life was comforting to many