

Chapter 1 : The Fall of the Roman Empire [racedaydvl.com]

The very history of Christianity and Judaism in the empire demonstrates that there were limits to how accommodating Roman religion could be, and these were not the only cults to be singled out for.

After reading this article you will learn about the rise of Christianity with the fall of Roman Empire. The rise of Christianity and its overall importance characterized the Middle Ages. This ascendancy of Christianity was accelerated by Roman philosophy, institutions and, above all, by the Roman emperors, particularly Constantine. The establishment of Christian religion and Christian church in a unified form became so important that it began to control the medieval political thought. Towards the declining periods of Roman Empire, Christian religion spread rapidly and this received a further impetus when the Roman emperor Constantine declared Christianity as the official religion of the state. Declaration of Christianity as state religion brought about several far-reaching consequences. First of all, it cornered the pagan beliefs. Towards the end of the Roman imperialism pagan beliefs were almost in a dying condition. At that opportune moment Christianity attacked paganism and clipped its wings. Christian beliefs made heavy inroads into Teutonic barbarians. The Christian religion spread so rapidly that soon it became the legal or official religion of the Roman Empire. This elevation of Christianity was really surprising. The emperor, in collaboration with the church, exercised supreme authority and this helped the latter to be involved in active politics. This involvement became the characteristic feature of medieval political thought and supplied the fuel of conflict between the church and the state. The declining condition of the Roman Empire also signalled the weakness of the emperor. This happened during the last century of the empire. Erosion of the imperial power encouraged the ecclesiastical authorities to enter into active politics. The weakness of the Roman emperors failed to stop this growth of power. With the fall of the Roman Empire, the political tradition and institutions also faced crisis. This again facilitated the growth of the influence of the church. We have noted how political changes brought the church into limelight. These and other changes hastened a central organization and made it more powerful. Rome was the political capital of the empire and naturally it became the capital of the religious world. As a result of the disintegration of the Roman Empire and gradual decline of the imperial power, authority and power were transferred from palace to the church, and, in course of time, the church became a hot-bed of politics. Pope and clergymen threw their weight in favour of intense political propaganda. The church was the real authority and decisions of all affairs would come from the church. In this way there was added to the large ecclesiastical power of the Roman bishop the practically independent political government of a little state. But circumstances led the Pope and the church fathers to play the role of the potential actor in the political fields. This role reached the zenith towards the beginning of the seventh century. At this time, in fact, there was no political authority in real sense. Every decision on political matters emanated from the church and the emperor had not the courage to alter or defy the decision. The unified church established almost a parallel government or administration to Rome. It created a vast network of religious institutions through which politics was controlled. It has been claimed that the church also controlled the intellectual world of Europe. Rise of church or Christianity eclipsed the importance of state and politics in the Middle Ages.

Chapter 2 : The Spread of the Early Church - AD Church History Timeline

On the contrary, "in the East Roman or Byzantine view, when the Roman Empire became Christian, the perfect world order willed by God had been achieved: one universal empire was sovereign, and coterminous with it was the one universal church"; and the church came, by the time of the demise of the Byzantine Empire in , to merge.

They called upon Rome to help settle the dispute, and Rome took it as an invitation into the pot in charge. The formed an irrevocable alliance and no one could rebel against the mighty Romans. Under Romans, Jews were happy because they were free to practice religion. He spread the message of forgiveness and love through his teachings. He also had 12 disciples that helped him spread the faith of Christianity. He began known as the Savior of Christianity when he was died on the cross. He was crucified by Pontius Pilate because he was a threat to the Roman Empire. The story goes he was traveling when Christ appeared to him a great light, blinding him for 3 days. When his vision returned, he converted to Christianity and began to spread Christianity. It is crazy that a man who is dedicated to persecuting Christians converts over a span of a few days and begin to spread that faith. This inspired more people to start believing and spread the Christian faith. People thought Nero started the fire as a way to bypass the Senate. A Christian area remained unharmed by the fire, so Nero scapegoated the Christians. This began the first official persecution of the Christians and both Peter and Paul were martyred. She a few others were preparing for their baptism when arrested by Roman officials and put in jail. Perpetua had a vision that she was going to die, and decided to do it in the name of her faith. She was put in an arena for a show, and she eventually took her own life after being stabbed by a gladiator. Her death showed the cruelty in the Roman persecution of Christians and people began to reconsider their views. The Emperor Diocletian blamed the Christians for all problems in Roman society like economic, political, etc. He issued the first edict the day after a festival for a god, Terminus, to symbolize the termination of Christianity. Churches, scriptures and assemblies were banned. Later that night Constantine had a dream were Christ told his to use the sign of the cross against his enemies. He had all his soldiers put the sign of the cross on their shields as they prepared for the Battle of Milvian Bridge. After a well fought victory, Constantine attributed the victory to the Christian faith. Constantine was now a firm believer in Christianity and began to spread the faith because of his power and influence. He built the city of Constantinople, which stood as capitol after western Rome had fallen, and filled it with churches and dedicating it to the Christian faith and God Edict of Milan After Constantine became emperor of the West and he won at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge he passed the Edict of Milan. This edict was what ended the persecution of Christians. It gave everyone the freedom of religion, but was mostly focused on protecting the Christians. During his time as emperor, he made Christianity the official state church of the Roman Empire. Other religions were still allowed to practice, but this final event really increased the spread of Christianity. The Romans had conquered almost all of the known world so Christianity had become the most followed religion in the world by this time.

Chapter 3 : Christianity - HISTORY

Early Christians The spread of Christianity was made a lot easier by the efficiency of the Roman Empire, but its principles were sometimes misunderstood and membership of the sect could be dangerous.

The notes here overlap with material I talk about in History The November 25 lecture will deal first with the Soldier Emperors, then go back to talk about some of the material here. That which was expected has not been accomplished; for that which was unexpected has god found a way. Such was the end of this story. This change is, in many ways, one of the greatest surprises in all of history. In my Early Church class, I talk in some detail about this change, one of the important changes in human history--a change that, ultimately, affects every aspect of life in the Roman Empire. Because this change is so important, I need in this class to summarize the growth of Christianity before it makes much sense to talk about the events of the reign of Diocletian and what happens afterwards in the 4th, 5th, and 6th centuries. Paganism is the term we use for the old polytheistic Roman religion, the religion associated with the worship of Jupiter, Juno, Mars, etc. Certainly it is in many ways surprising that this religion would disappear. Paganism had many strengths, strengths that make it surprising people would ever abandon it. Strengths of Paganism Paganism is the term we use for the old polytheistic Roman religion, the religion associated with the worship of Jupiter, Juno, Mars, etc. Paganism had many strengths, strengths that make it surprising the Romans would ever abandon it. First of all, Paganism had going for it its antiquity, the fact that it had been around for so long. Antiquity is a good thing in a religion: For the Romans in particular, antiquity was valued. The Romans believe in the *Mores Maiorum*, the ways of the ancestors, and the worship of Jupiter, Juno and the rest was part of that ancestral tradition. It was good enough for their fathers and it should have been good enough for them. A second strength of paganism was its tolerance. Paganism was eclectic and syncretistic. Eclecticism comes from a Greek work which means to choose. An eclectic religion is one where people can pick and choose from a great variety of traditions. Syncretism involves an emphasis on similarities rather than differences. The Romans worshipped Jupiter, Juno, and Mars. Instead, they just argued that these peoples worshipped the same gods, but called them by different names. The result of all this is that, like Hinduism, Roman paganism had a remarkable ability to absorb new religious impulses and add them to the mix. There was something for just about every taste within the Roman tradition. A good example is Pagan attitudes toward sex. Temple prostitution was accepted within the pagan tradition. On the other hand, suppose you are totally turned off by sex. Well, you can join the cult of Attis and Cybele where men go through a ceremony in which they are castrated, giving up sex altogether. Whatever you are looking for, you can find within the pagan tradition. Another strength of paganism was its tie to the political system. When Augustus establishes the emperor cult, the tie between politics and religion is even closer. To question the religious tradition means to question also the emperor and becomes close to treason. Paganism permeated every aspect of Roman society: One out of every three days on the Roman calendar was a religious celebration of one sort or another. And there were all sorts of incentives to participate. At a pagan sacrifice, the wealthier members of society would provide a sacrificial animal. But the meat from that animal might be shared among all those attending the sacrifice. A free steak dinner! Who wants to turn that down? Weaknesses of Pagan Rome Nevertheless, there were some real weaknesses in Roman society, weaknesses great enough that it is perhaps not so surprising that the Romans would consider changing something even as fundamental as religion. Rome faced political problems. For over four centuries, Rome had been a Republic. The Roman people elected their own leaders and made their own laws. By the time of Augustus, the Republic had come to an end, and there was among some Romans a feeling that something had gone drastically wrong with their society when Romans could no longer maintain their Republican form of government. Making matters worse was the periodic instability of the imperial system. Later, things would get even worse. Between and AD there were 26 emperors--only one of whom died a natural death. Civil war, invasion, usurpers--no wonder the Romans were looking for answers. In addition, Rome faced the problem of ethical breakdown. The Romans had once been among the most moral of all people. But, by the time of Augustus, Roman morality was a thing of the past. This is particularly clear when it came to sexual morality.

By his own day, however, he wrote that people getting married expected to divorce and to remarry, and to divorce, and to remarry and to divorce. Now marriage breakdown is a sign of moral breakdown in general. A fundamental principal of morality is the Golden Rule, do unto others as you would have them do unto you. In addition to all this, Pagan religion itself had some growing weaknesses. By associating their gods with those of the Greeks, the Romans ended up absorbing Greek attitudes toward the gods. While the original Jupiter had been the embodiment of noble principles, the Greek Zeus was quite different—a god who spent his time cuckolding mortal men, and who if the myths could be believed actually raped his mother. Hardly the kind of god worthy of worship! Further, the Romans inherited both Greek skepticism, a tendency to doubt the gods even existed—and Greek fear of the supernatural. But the greatest problem of all for the Roman people was simple that so many of them were unhappy. As many as 1 out of every three Romans was on the equivalent of welfare. Roman leaders adopted an inadequate solution, the policy of bread and circuses. Give the people enough to eat, and lots of entertainment, and hope that that is enough. Entertainments got more and more violent. At first, a pair of gladiators fighting to the death was enough amusement. The high rate of suicide is one clue as to the deep unhappiness of many Romans. Also an indicator, the high rate of infanticide. The most important sacrifice people make to keep their society going is the sacrifice involved in the bearing and raising of children. The fact that many Romans would no longer make this sacrifice shows a society no longer providing emotional fulfillment, no longer convincing people that it is a society worth making sacrifices for. Christianity as a problem So, with all this, was Christianity the obvious solution? At first, it looked like Christianity was just adding to the problems of Rome. Christians were thought to be a political problem. To a people worried about political stability and sometimes invasion from without, Christian failure to support the emperors divinity meant political disunity and potential trouble. Likewise, Christians were believed to be horribly immoral people. Pagans believed Christians practiced incest and cannibalism. They also believed that Christians were atheists and haters of mankind. Would you visit a church where, if rumor was to be believed, people practiced cannibalism and incest? Where atheism and hatred flourished? Persecution of Christians Also making the survival and eventual triumph of Christianity surprising is the intense persecution of Christians. Imperial persecution of Christians began with the emperor Nero. Nero, who had been blamed for starting the fire that destroyed much of Rome, needed a scapegoat. He blamed the Christians for the fire, and began punishing them as if they really were responsible. He killed most of the leaders including Peter and Paul and put the Christian to horribly cruel deaths. Nero, of course, was something of a madman, as were several of the early persecutors. But good emperors and good officials persecuted the Christians too. An example is the emperor Trajan and Pliny, who served under Trajan as governor of Bithynia. Both these men were competent leaders, and both had the interests of the Roman people at heart. But though they know that none of the rumors about Christians were true, they still persecuted them. First of all, people are complaining about the Christians. Those in the religion business found the competition from Christianity hitting them where it hurt—right in the pocketbook—and they ran crying to Pliny to do something about the harm Christianity was doing to business. Further, the Christians were simply stubborn: The situation for Christians worsened in the 3rd century. Political instability, outside invasion, and a devastating plague had the Romans more worried than ever that their society was falling apart. And who was to blame? Many Romans felt that the gods were angry because so many people had quit worshipping them. Bring back that old time religion, and thing would be good again.

Chapter 4 : The Spread of Christianity - Christianity in the Roman Empire

During the reign of the Roman Emperor Constantine the Great (AD 312), Christianity began to transition to the dominant religion of the Roman world. Many historians remain uncertain about Constantine's reasons for favoring Christianity, and theologians and historians have often argued about which form of early Christianity he subscribed to.

The Spread of Christianity After Jesus was executed, his followers claimed that he had risen from the dead three days later. This becomes the fundamental belief of Christianity: The first Christians were Jewish. They lived in small communities and still practiced traditional Jewish holidays and rituals. Gradually, the Jewish nature of these early Christians began to fade as new rituals took hold. Consequently, there were hundreds of gospels written at this time. Christianity might have remained a strictly Jewish sect if it were not for one man: Paul, who was considered the "father of Christianity. However, he would soon convert to Christianity and dedicate his life to spreading the new religion. He traveled all over the Roman world, spreading the message that Jesus was for everybody, not just Jews. He preached that Jesus was the Son of God, the Messiah. Paul would eventually travel to Rome, where he too would be persecuted and crucified. Without Paul, Christianity may not have become the prominent religion in the Roman Empire. Christianity appealed to the common people and the poor. Christianity also gave converts a sense of community. Thousands are killed during gladiator games and fed to wild animals. In order to get out of being killed, all that they had to do was to say that the emperor was a god. They did not do this but chose to be martyrs instead. This strengthened the religion as more people sought to learn about Christianity. As was told, "the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church. It also declared that all church property that had been seized be returned. They declare the belief that Jesus was the Messiah with the " Nicene Creed " which is still used in Christian churches today. Missionaries helped spread the religion as a church simply known as "catholic" began to take shape. Prior to these councils, there were many gospels being used in Christian churches, such as the Gospel of Thomas and the Gospel of Mary. By the end of the fourth century, four Gospels were agreed upon. These Gospels were written at various times for different audiences. However, no one knows who actually wrote these documents: Powered by Create your own unique website with customizable templates.

Chapter 5 : Early Christian Martyrdoms: Persecution in the Roman Empire – Christian Apologist

Emperor Theodosius, who is Christian, under him, it becomes the official religion of the Roman Empire, the same empire that at one point, Christianity was illegal, and it was being persecuted, now it was the official religion of the Roman Empire.

The rise of the Eastern Empire The fate of Western Rome was partially sealed in the late third century, when the Emperor Diocletian divided the Empire into two halves—the Western Empire seated in the city of Milan, and the Eastern Empire in Byzantium, later known as Constantinople. The division made the empire more easily governable in the short term, but over time the two halves drifted apart. East and West failed to adequately work together to combat outside threats, and the two often squabbled over resources and military aid. As the gulf widened, the largely Greek-speaking Eastern Empire grew in wealth while the Latin-speaking West descended into economic crisis. Most importantly, the strength of the Eastern Empire served to divert Barbarian invasions to the West. Emperors like Constantine ensured that the city of Constantinople was fortified and well guarded, but Italy and the city of Rome—which only had symbolic value for many in the East—were left vulnerable. The Western political structure would finally disintegrate in the fifth century, but the Eastern Empire endured in some form for another thousand years before being overwhelmed by the Ottoman Empire in the s. Overexpansion and military overspending At its height, the Roman Empire stretched from the Atlantic Ocean all the way to the Euphrates River in the Middle East, but its grandeur may have also been its downfall. With such a vast territory to govern, the empire faced an administrative and logistical nightmare. Even with their excellent road systems, the Romans were unable to communicate quickly or effectively enough to manage their holdings. Rome struggled to marshal enough troops and resources to defend its frontiers from local rebellions and outside attacks, and by the second century the Emperor Hadrian was forced to build his famous wall in Britain just to keep the enemy at bay. Being the Roman emperor had always been a particularly dangerous job, but during the tumultuous second and third centuries it nearly became a death sentence. Civil war thrust the empire into chaos, and more than 20 men took the throne in the span of only 75 years, usually after the murder of their predecessor. The political rot also extended to the Roman Senate, which failed to temper the excesses of the emperors due to its own widespread corruption and incompetence. As the situation worsened, civic pride waned and many Roman citizens lost trust in their leadership. When these Eurasian warriors rampaged through northern Europe, they drove many Germanic tribes to the borders of the Roman Empire. The Romans grudgingly allowed members of the Visigoth tribe to cross south of the Danube and into the safety of Roman territory, but they treated them with extreme cruelty. According to the historian Ammianus Marcellinus, Roman officials even forced the starving Goths to trade their children into slavery in exchange for dog meat. In brutalizing the Goths, the Romans created a dangerous enemy within their own borders. When the oppression became too much to bear, the Goths rose up in revolt and eventually routed a Roman army and killed the Eastern Emperor Valens during the Battle of Adrianople in A. The shocked Romans negotiated a flimsy peace with the barbarians, but the truce unraveled in , when the Goth King Alaric moved west and sacked Rome. The Edict of Milan legalized Christianity in , and it later became the state religion in These decrees ended centuries of persecution, but they may have also eroded the traditional Roman values system. Christianity displaced the polytheistic Roman religion, which viewed the emperor as having a divine status, and also shifted focus away from the glory of the state and onto a sole deity. Meanwhile, popes and other church leaders took an increased role in political affairs, further complicating governance. The 18th-century historian Edward Gibbon was the most famous proponent of this theory, but his take has since been widely criticized. While the spread of Christianity may have played a small role in curbing Roman civic virtue, most scholars now argue that its influence paled in comparison to military, economic and administrative factors. But during the decline, the makeup of the once mighty legions began to change. Unable to recruit enough soldiers from the Roman citizenry, emperors like Diocletian and Constantine began hiring foreign mercenaries to prop up their armies. In fact, many of the barbarians who sacked the city of Rome and brought down the Western Empire had earned their military stripes while serving in the Roman legions.

Chapter 6 : The Roman Empire: in the First Century. The Roman Empire. Early Christians | PBS

In CE, the emperor Theodosius issued the Edict of Thessalonica, which made Christianity, specifically Nicene Christianity, the official religion of the Roman Empire. Most other Christian sects were deemed heretical, lost their legal status, and had their properties confiscated by the Roman state.

Christianity in Ancient Rome Christianity in Ancient Rome While the rise of Christianity to dominate western religion may very well have been inevitable, certain key moments along the way helped secure this position. The arrival of the Constantinian Dynasty was one such moment. However, he and his brother-in-law, and co-emperor in the west, Maxentius were bitter rivals. Open hostility and war broke out between the two after several years of political scheming. Before the two met in the fateful battle of the Milvian Bridge in AD, Constantine supposedly had a vision of the sign of Christ in a dream. Eusebius gives an account several years later in which Christ appeared to Constantine and instructed him to place the heavenly sign on the battle standards of his army. The chi-rho symbol, or Labarum, was described by Eusebius as "a long spear, overlaid with gold", which included a bar crossing the spear to form the shape of the Christian cross. In hoc signo vinces in this sign thou shalt conquer , and armed with this holy power, Constantine crushed Maxentius securing his place as sole western Emperor. Constantine, though previously a worshipper of Sol Invictus, the Sun God, took on support of Christianity with some zeal. He declared that his victory was owed to the god of the Christians and set about adopting an imperial policy to advance its cause. Christian Bishops under Constantine functioned in an official capacity as Imperial advisors. Tax exemptions were granted to Christian priests and money was granted from the Imperial treasury to provide for new and rebuilt churches. At a meeting of Bishops in Milan AD an edict of Milan was passed which essentially granted complete tolerance to all religions, but Christianity would benefit the most. Previous victims of various persecutions were also granted compensation directly from the Roman treasury. Still, however, Constantine left a confusing trail for his personal religious thoughts. Association with Sol Invictus is still cited for several more years, at least until the complete unification of the Empire. The emperor in the east, Licinius maintained an adversarial relationship with Constantine for many years, which included two short wars for Imperial dominance. Licinius seems to have maintained more support for traditional pagan customs and Constantine may have resisted complete Christian conversion in order to maintain the approval of the non-Christian majority population. By AD, the conflict and rivalry came to a head. New Churches were built in Rome and around the empire, such as the new basilica church on the Vatican hill, on the place where St. Peter had been martyred. When the Roman capital was moved to the city of Byzantium, Constantine built new churches there as well. In fact, Byzantium, which was essentially a rebuilt city on old Greek ruins, was renamed Constantinople, and unlike Rome, was built with a predominately Christian flavor. His mother, Helena, after Constantine executed his own son Crispus and wife Fausta in a very un-Christian manner, embarked on a pilgrimage to the eastern provinces. Perhaps more importantly, according the Eusebius she was given credit for discovering the True Cross. For this and other deeds in favor of Christianity though records seem to indicate that the True Cross had already been enshrined prior to her trip, she was canonized into Sainthood and remains recognized by both the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches today. Constantine also shifted to a somewhat hostile stance towards Pagans, as opposed to a simple supporter of Christianity. Pagan sacrifice was forbidden, and treasures of many temples were confiscated and given to Christian churches excepting those temples dedicated to the Imperial cult. Among the most notable was the sect of Arianism which was deeply dividing the concept of Christian thought. The core belief system of the Christian faith was developed, adopting the concept of the Holy Trinity as the supreme deity. This in itself may have included compromise between Bishops and Politicians, but it is perhaps more important that the Church was becoming a powerful and far reaching institution. His second son, Constantius, was a brutal supporter of Arianism. Constans, the third son, was also a Christian, but adhered to strict Orthodoxy. A rift between sects of Christianity developed, as well as a struggle for supreme power among the brothers, causing much political instability. Constantine II was killed only a few years after his father, and the remaining brothers settled in to continue the advance of Christianity. During their reigns many

anti-Pagan laws were put into place. Constantians dealt with dissent in a particularly brutal fashion. The forcible expansion of Christianity on the populace, which was now quickly becoming a part of the every day social fabric, also brought a great deal of resentment from some. Julian the Apostate so named later for his pro-Pagan stance came to power upon the death of Constantius and attempted, in vain to stem the tide of Christian advancement. Julian attempted to bring back the ancient religion to the people of the Roman world, but Christianity had become too deeply ingrained. He removed various advantages that Christian priests and churches had enjoyed since Constantine and bestowed them upon Pagans instead. Christian teachers were also removed from their occupations in many cases. Though, for the most part he avoided open violence against the Christians, he did encourage the growth of non Catholic or Orthodox sects. The fight, which could be brutal at times, for religious supremacy evolved between these various factions, but Paganism was a dying part of the dominant culture. Even temples re-established by Julian were simply overrun by fanatic Christian mobs. The final death knell of the Pagan faith came only a generation later, under the rule of Theodosius. An ardent Christian, and recognizing the amazing growth of the still relatively young faith, Theodosius and his western counterpart Gratian, recognized Christianity as the official religion of the Empire in AD. Gratian too, likely at the partial behest of Theodosius refused the title of Pontifex Maximus head priest and it was bestowed instead on the Catholic Pope in Rome. In AD, a massacre ordered by the Emperor of 7, people who revolted in Thessalonica resulted in his own 8 month penance. By the beginning of the 5th century, after just years, the Church grew from a fledgling mystery cult into a power on nearly equal terms with the Roman Emperor himself. Though there would still be much work to be done, especially among Germanic tribes and in places such as Britain, Christianity would slowly come to dominate the entire western world.

History of Christianity in Ancient Rome The emergence of Christianity in the Roman Empire was based on many factors, and its spread was an indication of massive social upheaval and changing environments. This article is intended to be a look at the history of the Christian religion, and not an ideological exploration of its mystical foundation. Despite the written evidence for a historical Jesus, the mystical nature of the story of the Christ has led to a timeless debate. Biblical and Theologian Scholars have long debated the ancient texts and Christian theory with Archaeologists or Scholars of alternative thought on this matter. That debate will rage timelessly, but the history of the religion can be examined even without dwelling on its divine beginnings, various historical components or conversely, the roles men may have played in arranging early doctrine. While even a date of birth is subject to great debate, and a rather confusing interpretation of the calendar, Biblical sources place his birth in a 10 year period somewhere between 4 BC and 6 AD. As for the calendar, the birth of Jesus created an interesting alteration of the dating system used in the western world to this day. The change in the Roman or Julian calendar counting forward from the founding of Rome *Ab Urbe Condita* or AUC to a date counting forward from the estimated birth of Christ was established in the 6th century by Dionysius Exiguus. While not necessarily important in the context of Christian history, the complete alteration of the calendar does show the great influence of the Church in the late Roman Empire and beyond. Jesus the man is as shrouded in mystery as his birth, but the general theories and teachings of his adult life are well known. This period in Roman history is important for the foundation this new fledgling cult, because of social conditions where it all originated. Judea and the Palestine were governed by Rome, and the people in their zeal for religious freedom, of their own ideology, were often openly hostile to foreign rule especially Pagan or polytheistic faiths. Indeed many were resistant to their own King Herod, for a multitude of reasons, but in part for what was deemed to be an oppressive government. These ideas led to a small, yet slowly growing following for a new hope and idea, in a time when the appearance of oppression and inequality from Rome, their own governing authorities, and spiritual leaders was front and center in the Jewish public eye. The Jewish Christians spread slowly in the general region, and established themselves in Syria, but real advancement occurred under the work of the early missionaries. James the Just sometimes referred to as the brother of Jesus remained in Palestine and is understood to be the earliest leader of the Jewish Christian sect. Thaddeus went east to Armenia which would eventually 4th century become the first official Christian state. Perhaps the most important of all the early missionaries, though, was Paul of Tarsus. His tireless efforts in Greece, Asia Minor and throughout those provinces which make up modern Turkey, helped establish pockets of Christians all over the east. His writings

are the source for much of the early Church doctrines and they paint a vivid portrait of its early struggles and strategies. The poor, the slaves, women and any who felt disenfranchised with the Roman social system, that offered very limited upward mobility, gravitated eagerly to this new idea of hope after death. The early Christians were more easily converted in places far from the central Roman authority, and the religion took root in the east. Though it would later become a much more urban practice, in which cities were largely Christian and rural Paganism would survive for centuries, Rome was slow to acknowledge its spread. It would not be long, however, before Rome did take notice of this subversive, counter-culture cult, and the early Christians were forced to practice their faith in secrecy. Christian Persecution As Christianity gained a foothold in the consciousness of the ancient world, the Roman authorities initially reacted slowly. As Jewish Christian migrations, and certainly the work of Peter, brought the new cult to Rome, it became largely identified with the Jews. As the Jews, with their one god concept, and refusal to adopt the Roman Caesar worship ideology, were so largely associated with the early Christians, the new cult got off to a very inauspicious start. The Romans had little concern over either Jewish or Christian practices on their own; it was their steadfast dedication to their own gods that would eventually lead to problems. The relationship of early Christianity to the Jewish faith, and the foundation of the cult deeply rooted in a people accustomed to religious intolerance actually helped it take hold initially. The Jews were accustomed to resisting political authority in order to practice their religion, and the transition to Christianity among these people helped foster the sense of Imperial resistance. To the Romans, Christians were a strange and subversive group, meeting in catacombs, sewers and dark alleys, done only for their own safety, but perpetuating the idea that the religion was odd, shameful and secretive. Rumors of sexual depravity, child sacrifice and other disturbing behavior, left a stigma on the early Christians. Perhaps worst of all was the idea of cannibalism. The concept of breaking bread originating with the last supper, partaking of the blood and body of Christ, which later came to be known as Communion, was taken literally. To the Romans, where religious custom dictated following ancient practices in a literal sense, the idea of performing such a ritual as a representation was misunderstood, and the early cult had to deal with many such misperceptions. The first mention of Christians from a perspective of Roman government intervention occurred under Claudius. Many placed blame directly on Nero, accusing him of intentionally lighting the fire, in order to build his palace. To stop the rumor, Nero, made scapegoats--and punished with every refinement the notoriously depraved Christians as they were popularly called. But in spite of this temporary setback, the deadly superstition had broken out again, not just in Judaea where the mischief had started but even in Rome. All degraded and shameful practices collect and flourish in the capital. First, Nero had the self-admitted Christians arrested. Then, on their information, large numbers of others were condemned--not so much for starting fires as because of their hatred for the human race. Their deaths were made amusing. Despite their guilt as Christians, and the ruthless punishment it deserved, the victims were pitied. Instead they provided an easy alternative target to the blame, which was being cast directly on the Emperor. Under Domitian, just a generation later, some sources indicate another persecution directed at Christians. Operating with the knowledge that Christians refused adhering to the Imperial Cult of Caesar worship, Domitian may have launched an investigation, sending a team to Galilee to discover the roots of Jesus. Though evidence is sketchy, it does indicate at least a general knowledge and adversarial relationship between the Emperor and the cult.

Chapter 7 : Roman Empire and Christianity | Stanford History Education Group

Christianity In The Roman Empire Worksheets / Social Studies / Ancient History / Christianity In The Roman Empire As the Roman Empire got bigger and new lands and people were taken into it, the conquered people added their Gods or religion to the Roman Pantheon (the name for the multitude of Roman gods).

The church and its history The essence and identity of Christianity At its most basic, Christianity is the faith tradition that focuses on the figure of Jesus Christ. As a tradition , Christianity is more than a system of religious belief. It also has generated a culture , a set of ideas and ways of life, practices, and artifacts that have been handed down from generation to generation since Jesus first became the object of faith. Christianity is thus both a living tradition of faith and the culture that the faith leaves behind. The agent of Christianity is the church, the community of people who make up the body of believers. Few Christians, however, would be content to keep this reference merely historical. Although their faith tradition is historical. While there is something simple about this focus on Jesus as the central figure, there is also something very complicated. That complexity is revealed by the thousands of separate churches, sects, and denominations that make up the modern Christian tradition. To project these separate bodies against the background of their development in the nations of the world is to suggest the bewildering variety. To picture people expressing their adherence to that tradition in their prayer life and church-building, in their quiet worship or their strenuous efforts to change the world, is to suggest even more of the variety. Given such complexity, it is natural that throughout Christian history both those in the tradition and those surrounding it have made attempts at simplification. Modern scholars have located the focus of this faith tradition in the context of monotheistic religions. Christianity addresses the historical figure of Jesus Christ against the background of, and while seeking to remain faithful to, the experience of one God. It has consistently rejected polytheism and atheism. A second element of the faith tradition of Christianity, with rare exceptions, is a plan of salvation or redemption. That is to say, the believers in the church picture themselves as in a plight from which they need rescue. For whatever reason , they have been distanced from God and need to be saved. The agent of that redemption is Jesus Christ. It is possible that through the centuries the vast majority of believers have not used the term essence to describe the central focus of their faith. The term is itself of Greek origin and thus represents only one part of the tradition, one element in the terms that have gone into making up Christianity. Essence refers to those qualities that give something its identity and are at the centre of what makes that thing different from everything else. To Greek philosophers it meant something intrinsic to and inherent in a thing or category of things, which gave it its character and thus separated it from everything of different character. Thus, Jesus Christ belongs to the essential character of Christianity and gives it a unique identity. If most people are not concerned with defining the essence of Christianity, in practice they must come to terms with what the word essence implies. Whether they are engaged in being saved or redeemed on the one hand, or thinking and speaking about that redemption, its agent, and its meaning on the other, they are concentrating on the essence of their experience. Those who have concentrated from within the faith tradition have also helped to give it its identity. It is not possible to speak of the essence of a historical tradition without referring to how its ideal qualities have been discussed through the ages. Yet one can take up the separate subjects of essence and identity in sequence, being always aware of how they interrelate. Page 1 of

Chapter 8 : Christianity in the Roman Empire

The rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire was a very big step in the Roman Empire. It was also very successful in spreading throughout the Roman Empire. It was hard to spread the religion throughout the empire but eventually it was never again "discriminated".

Visit Website When he was around 30 years old, Jesus started his public ministry after being baptized in the Jordan River by the prophet known as John the Baptist. For about three years, Jesus traveled with 12 appointed disciples, teaching large groups of people and performing what witnesses described as miracles. Some of the most well-known miraculous events included raising a dead man named Lazarus from the grave, walking on water and curing the blind. Some of the main themes that Jesus taught, which Christians later embraced, include: Love your neighbor as yourself. Forgive others who have wronged you. Ask God for forgiveness of your sins. Jesus is the Messiah and was given the authority to forgive others. Repentance of sins is essential. The Kingdom of God is near. According to the Bible, Jesus was arrested, tried and condemned to death. Roman governor Pontius Pilate issued the order to kill Jesus after being pressured by Jewish leaders who alleged that Jesus was guilty of a variety of crimes, including blasphemy. Jesus was crucified by Roman soldiers in Jerusalem, and his body was laid in a tomb. Authors in the Bible say the resurrected Jesus ascended into Heaven. The Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament, which is also recognized by followers of Judaism, describes the history of the Jewish people, outlines specific laws to follow, details the lives of many prophets, and predicts the coming of the Messiah. These letters offer instructions for how the church should operate. The final book in the New Testament, Revelation, describes a vision and prophecies that will occur at the end of the world, as well as metaphors to describe the state of the world. Most of the first Christians were Jewish converts, and the church was centered in Jerusalem. Shortly after the creation of the church, many Gentiles non-Jews embraced Christianity. Early Christians considered it their calling to spread and teach the gospel. One of the most important missionaries was the apostle Paul, a former persecutor of Christians. Paul preached the gospel and established churches throughout the Roman Empire, Europe and Africa. In addition to preaching, Paul is thought to have written 13 of the 27 books in the New Testament. Persecution of Christians Early Christians were persecuted for their faith by both Jewish and Roman leaders. Many were brutally tortured and killed during this time. Under Emperor Domitian, Christianity was illegal. If a person confessed to being a Christian, he or she was executed. Starting in A. This became known as the Great Persecution. During this time, there were several groups of Christians with different ideas about how to interpret scripture and the role of the church. He later tried to unify Christianity and resolve issues that divided the church by establishing the Nicene Creed. The Catholic Church In A. Catholics expressed a deep devotion for the Virgin Mary, recognized the seven sacraments, and honored relics and sacred sites. When the Roman Empire collapsed in A. The Crusades Between about A. In these battles, Christians fought against Muslims to reclaim holy land in the city of Jerusalem. The Christians were successful in occupying Jerusalem during some of the Crusades, but they were ultimately defeated. The Reformation In, a German monk named Martin Luther published 95 Theses—a text that criticized certain acts of the Pope and protested some of the practices and priorities of the Catholic church. As a result, Protestantism was created, and different denominations of Christianity eventually began to form. Christian Denominations Christianity is broadly split into three branches: Catholic, Protestant, and Eastern Orthodox. The Catholic branch is governed by the Pope and Catholic Bishops around the world. The Orthodox or Eastern Orthodox is split into independent units each governed by a Holy Synod; there is no central governing structure akin to the Pope. There are numerous denominations within Protestant Christianity, many of which differ in their interpretation of the Bible and understanding of the church. Some of the many denominations that fall under the category of Protestant Christianity include:

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Christianity was spread through the Roman Empire by the early followers of Jesus. Although saints Peter and Paul are said to have established the church in Rome, most of the early Christian communities were in the east: Alexandria in Egypt, as well as Antioch and.

Although in the first few centuries AD Christians were prosecuted and punished, often with death, there were also periods when they were more secure. Secondly, the rise of Christianity to imperial-sponsored dominance in the fourth and fifth centuries, although surprising, was not without precedent, and its spread hardly as inexorable as contemporary Christians portrayed it. Christians were first - and horribly - persecuted by the emperor Nero. Christians were first, and horribly, targeted for persecution as a group by the emperor Nero in 64 AD. A colossal fire broke out at Rome, and destroyed much of the city. Rumours abounded that Nero himself was responsible. He certainly took advantage of the resulting devastation of the city, building a lavish private palace on part of the site of the fire. Perhaps to divert attention from the rumours, Nero ordered that Christians should be rounded up and killed. Some were torn apart by dogs, others burnt alive as human torches. Over the next hundred years or so, Christians were sporadically persecuted. It was not until the mid-third century that emperors initiated intensive persecutions. Top Reasons for persecution Why were Christians persecuted? Much seems to have depended on local governors and how zealously or not they pursued and prosecuted Christians. The reasons why individual Christians were persecuted in this period were varied. In some cases they were perhaps scapegoats, their faith attacked where more personal or local hostilities were at issue. Contemporary pagan and Christian sources preserve other accusations levelled against the Christians. Pagans were suspicious of the Christian refusal to sacrifice to the Roman gods. Pagans were probably most suspicious of the Christian refusal to sacrifice to the Roman gods. This was an insult to the gods and potentially endangered the empire which they deigned to protect. Furthermore, the Christian refusal to offer sacrifices to the emperor, a semi-divine monarch, had the whiff of both sacrilege and treason about it. He refused, and although he was apparently eager to meet his death, beast-fighting had been declared closed for the day and so he was burnt alive instead. General persecutions tended to be sparked by particular events such as the fire at Rome under Nero, or during periods of particular crisis, such as the third century. During the third century the turn-over of emperors was rapid - many died violent deaths. As well as this lack of stability at the head of the empire, social relations were in turmoil, and barbarian incursions were on a threatening scale. The economy was suffering and inflation was rampant. Pagans and Christians alike observed this unrest and looked for someone or something, preferably subversive, to blame. It was hardly surprising that a series of emperors ordered savage empire-wide persecutions of the Christians. How can we explain this? Well, the Roman empire was in the first few centuries AD expansionist and in its conquests accommodated new cults and philosophies from different cultures, such as the Persian cult of Mithraism, the Egyptian cult of Isis and Neoplatonism, a Greek philosophical religion. Paganism was never, then, a unified, single religion, but a fluid and amorphous collection. But it would also be a mistake to describe Roman religion as an easy, tolerant co-existence of cults. The cults of Bacchus and of Magna Mater had also been suppressed. The very history of Christianity and Judaism in the empire demonstrates that there were limits to how accommodating Roman religion could be, and these were not the only cults to be singled out for persecution. Bacchic revels encouraged ecstatic drunkenness and violence, and the cult of Magna Mater involved outlandish dancing and music, and was served by self-castrating priests. Under particular emperors, Christians were less liable to be punished for the mere fact of being Christians " or indeed, for ever having been Christian. Thus under Trajan, it was agreed that although admitting to Christian faith was an offence, ex-Christians should not be prosecuted. Historians have marvelled at this idea. Emperors had historically been hostile or indifferent to Christianity. How could an emperor subscribe to a faith which involved the worship of Jesus Christ - an executed Jewish criminal? This faith was also popular among slaves and soldiers, hardly the respectable orders in society. The conversion was the result of either a vision or a dream in which Christ directed him to fight under Christian standards, and his victory apparently assured Constantine in his faith in a new god. The

conversion was the result of either a vision or a dream in which Christ directed him to fight under Christian standards. Although he immediately declared that Christians and pagans should be allowed to worship freely, and restored property confiscated during persecutions and other lost privileges to the Christians, these measures did not mark a complete shift to a Christian style of rule. Many of his actions seemed resolutely pagan. Constantine founded a new city named after himself: But they had to find ways to explain the embarrassing fact that in this new, supposedly Christian city, Constantine had erected pagan temples and statues. The differing but related accounts of his miraculous conversion suggest some basic spiritual experience which he interpreted as related to Christianity. His understanding of Christianity was, at the stage of his conversion, unsophisticated. He may not have understood the implications of converting to a religion which expected its members to devote themselves exclusively to it. However, what was certainly established by the early fourth century was the phenomenon of an emperor adopting and favouring a particular cult. Progress was bitty, hesitant, geographically patchy. The progress of Christianity was bitty, hesitant, geographically patchy. Christianity offered spiritual comfort and the prospect of salvation on the one hand, and attractive new career paths and even riches as a worldly bishop on the other. But plenty of pagans, both aristocrats based in the large cities of the empire and rural folk, remained staunch in their adherence to an old faith. But this did not mean that paganism had disappeared. Paganism may have been effectively eclipsed as an imperial religion, but it continued to pose a powerful political and religious challenge to the Christian church. Her research interests include the history of early Christianity, political thought, and the history of ideas.