The Rise of Christianity

**BEFORE YOU READ**

In the last section, you read about the *Pax Romana*. In this section, you will read about the development of Christianity.

**AS YOU READ**

Use the chart below to take notes on the beginnings and the spread of Christianity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEADER</th>
<th>RELIGIOUS INFLUENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jesus</td>
<td>spread message of love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>believed by some to be Messiah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constantine</td>
<td>Roman emperor who ended persecution of Christians</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Life and Teachings of Jesus

*(pages 168–169)*

**Why did people believe Jesus was the savior?**

One group of people that lost its land to the Romans was the Jews. Many Jews wanted the Romans to leave their land.

Others hoped for the coming of the *Messiah*—the savior. According to Jewish tradition, God promised that the Messiah would restore the kingdom of the Jews.

**Jesus** was born in Judea. At about age 30, Jesus began to preach. His message included many ideas from Jewish traditions, such as the principles of the Ten Commandments and the belief in one God. According to close followers, who were later called *apostles*, Jesus performed many miracles. His fame grew. Some believed him to be the long-awaited Messiah.

Jewish leaders did not believe that his teachings were those of God. Roman leaders feared he would *incite* the people. The Romans arrested Jesus and put him to death.
After his death, Jesus’s followers said that he appeared to them again and then went to heaven. They said this proved he was the Messiah. They called him Christ. This is the Greek word for savior. His followers came to be called Christians. Led by Peter, the first apostle, they spread his teachings throughout Palestine and Syria.

1. Why was Jesus put to death?

2. What did the Romans do to the Jews?

A World Religion (pages 170–172)

Why did Christianity spread?

Christianity spread for several reasons. First, it accepted all believers: rich or poor, male or female. Second, it gave hope to the powerless. Third, it appealed to those who were bothered by the lack of morality in Rome. Fourth, it offered a personal relationship with god. Fifth, it offered the promise of life after death.

As the church grew, it became more organized. Priests were in charge of small churches. Bishops were in charge of all the churches in one area. The pope was in charge of all, The pope was the head of the Christian Church.

In A.D. 313, Christianity entered a new era. The Roman emperor Constantine said that Christians would no longer be persecuted. He gave his official approval to Christianity. A few decades later, Christianity became the empire’s official religion.

While Christianity grew in power, it went through changes. Church leaders sometimes disagreed over basic beliefs and argued about them. Church leaders called any belief that appeared to contradict the basic teachings a heresy. From time to time, councils met to end disagreements and define beliefs.

3. How was the church organized?