

# Lesson 1 The Origins of Christianity

## MAIN IDEAS

**Belief Systems** Christianity built upon the Jewish belief in one God and the concept of a Messiah.

**Belief Systems** The disciples of Jesus came to believe that he was the Messiah.

**Belief Systems** According to the Gospels, Jesus was executed but rose from the dead. Christians believe that this makes freedom from sin and death possible for everyone.

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## Christianity's Jewish Roots

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION** How did Christianity build on Jewish beliefs about the future?

### Looking for a Messiah

- Christianity grew from Judaism and ideas of **Jesus**—a Jewish teacher
- Romans conquered Jewish kingdom of Judah (Judea) in 63 B.C.
  - Jewish kings had to be approved by Rome
- Many Jews sought freedom from foreign rulers
- Sacred writings promised a Messiah who would free them
  - some believed the ruler would be descended from King David

### REVIEW QUESTION

What did some Jews believe the Messiah would do?

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# The Life of Jesus

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION** Who did the disciples of Jesus believe he was?

## Birth and Early Life

- **Gospels**—accounts of Jesus’ life by Matthew, Mark, Luke, John
  - along with other writings, they make up New Testament
- Gospels say Jesus was born in Bethlehem
  - raised in Nazareth by Mary and by Joseph, a carpenter
  - Christians later celebrated his birth on Christmas

## Jesus’ Followers

- As young man, Jesus traveled, taught
  - Gospels say he performed miracles, such as curing people
- Disciples—12 men who were Jesus’ closest followers:
  - Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew
  - Simon, Thaddaeus, Judas Iscariot, James (son of Alphaeus)

## The Teachings of Jesus

- Jesus preached justice, compassion, coming of God’s kingdom
  - delivered teachings in **parables**—stories with morals
- Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount included Beatitudes, blessings
  - asked people to love and pray for enemies; to live simply, humbly
- Some Jewish leaders angered by Jesus’ teachings
  - were upset that some followers claimed Jesus was the Messiah

## REVIEW QUESTION

What form did Jesus’ teachings often take?

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# The Death of Jesus

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION** What belief about Jesus did Christians think made an afterlife possible?

## Arrest and Trial

- The claim that Jesus was the Messiah was a threat to Roman rulers
  - power, authority of Roman rulers was questioned
  - followers called Jesus “king” when he came to Jerusalem
- During Passover, Jesus criticized running of Jerusalem Temple
- Jewish leaders appointed by Rome arrested Jesus
  - turned him over to Romans for punishment

## The Story of the Resurrection

- Jesus was executed by Roman governor Pontius Pilate
  - executed by crucifixion—hanging on cross until suffocated
  - buried in tomb with stone blocking entrance
- Gospels say that the third day after death, followers went to tomb
  - tomb was empty; some followers say Jesus walked, talked with them
- Account of resurrection proved to followers that Jesus was divine
  - **resurrection**—return to life
  - followers believed Jesus gave life to create new world
  - in new world sin and death are defeated
- Christians believe crucifixion was on Good Friday
  - resurrection was on Easter Sunday

## REVIEW QUESTION

What event made Jesus’ followers believe their leader was divine?

## Lesson Summary

- Some Jews believed a Messiah would give them political power and religious freedom.
- Jesus' teachings stressed compassion, justice, and the coming of God's kingdom.
- Accounts of Jesus' resurrection made some people believe Jesus was divine.

## Why It Matters Now . . .

Jesus and his earliest followers were Jewish. Eventually, however, more and more non-Jews converted to Christianity. Today about a third of the people in the world are Christians.