

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.

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?

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?

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.