

# How quickly did Christianity grow and how far did it spread in its first 350 years?

Year	Number of Christians
40 AD	less than 1000
350 AD	5 to 8 million



#### **Matthew 5: 3-10**

And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain, and when he was set down, his disciples came unto him. <sup>2</sup> And opening his mouth he taught them, saying:

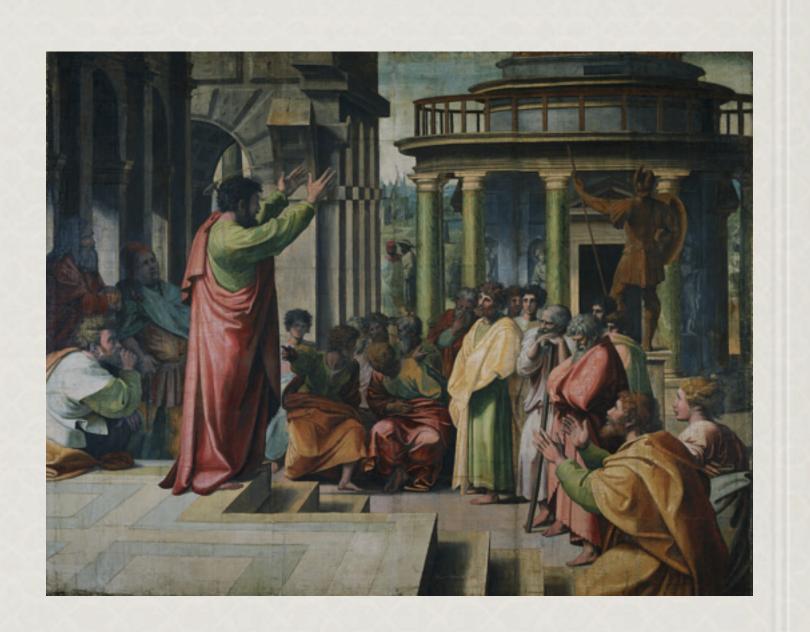
- <sup>3</sup> "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- <sup>4</sup> Blessed are the meek: for they shall possess the land.
- <sup>5</sup> Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.
- <sup>6</sup> Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shall have their fill.
- <sup>7</sup> Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.
- <sup>8</sup> Blessed are the clean of heart: they shall see God.
- <sup>9</sup> Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.
- <sup>10</sup> Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- <sup>11</sup> Blessed are you when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for my sake:
- <sup>12</sup> Be glad and rejoice for your reward is very great in heaven. For so they persecuted the prophets that were before you."

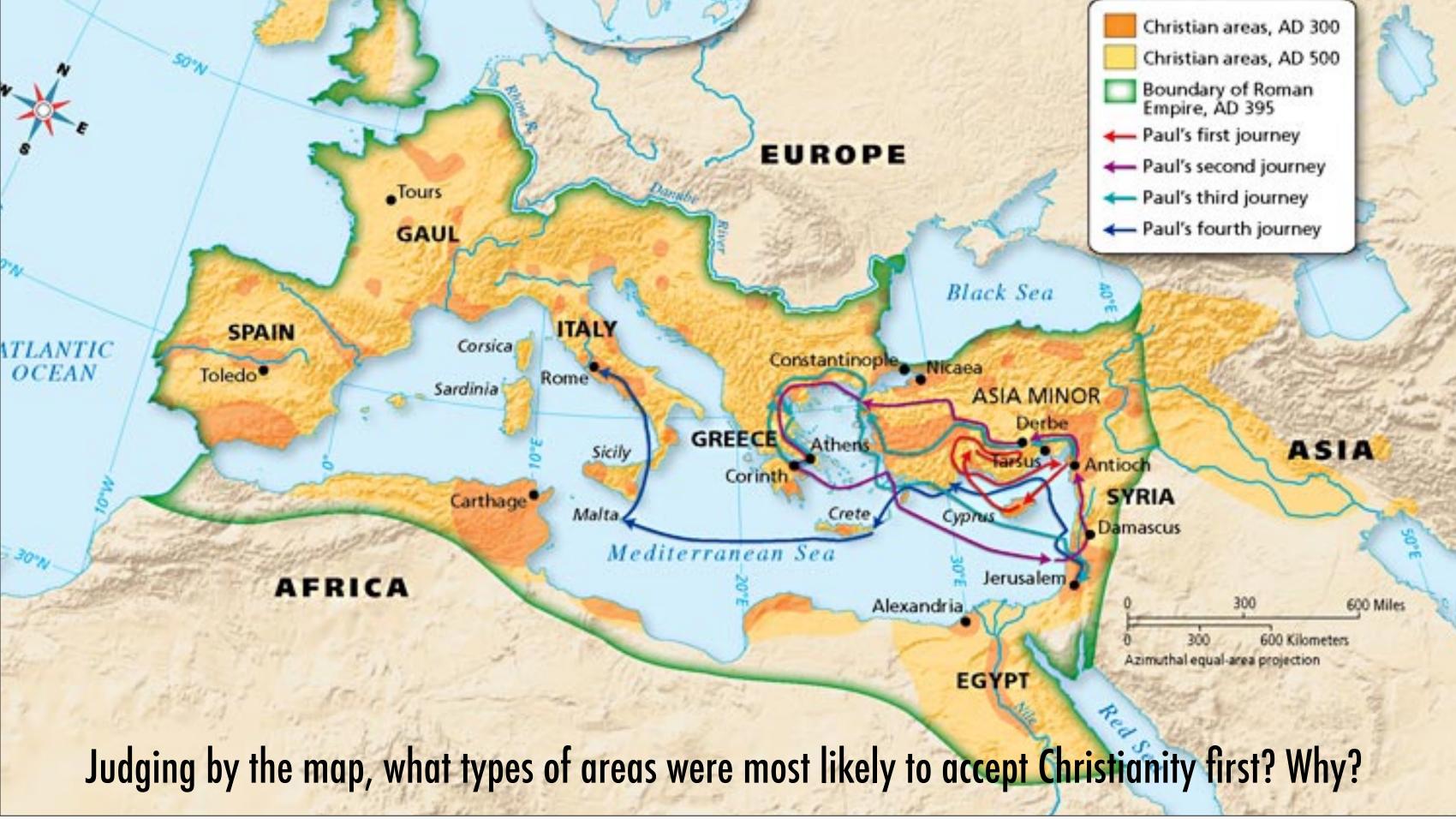
#### I. The Message of Jesus (and Christianity)

- A. HEAVEN- all people, including poor, weak, sick, and persecuted, are promised a better life in Heaven
- B. LOVE- everyone is loved equally and should love each other
- C. CHURCHES- gave people a sense of belonging

#### II. Paul of Tarsus (5 - 67 AD)

- A. Who was Paul of Tarsus?
  - 1. Born in Tarsus (in Turkey)
  - Converted from Judaism to Christianity as an adult
  - 3. Became one of the first Christian missionaries





- B. Where/why did Paul travel?
  - 1. Traveled 10,000 miles around the Mediterranean area (stopped in cities)
  - 2. Converted gentiles (non-Jews) to Christianity
  - 3. Set up churches
  - 4. Wrote letters, AKA <u>epistles</u> to new churches with advice about how to be Christian

- C. How did Paul shape Christianity?
  - 1. Decided that some Jewish practices were unnecessary for Christians (example: keeping kosher)
  - 2. Defined Christianity as a separate religion from Judaism
  - 3. His letters with his opinions on spiritual matters make up much of the Christian New Testament

#### III. Policies of Roman Emperors

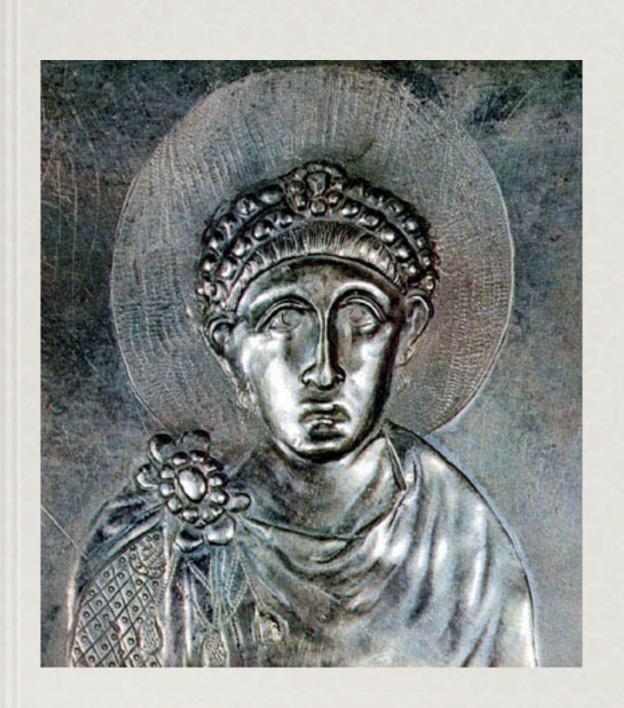
- A. Emperor Decius (r. 249-251 AD)
  - 1. Created a Roman policy of persecution of Christians, because it threatened Roman culture
  - 2. Martyrs (people who died while standing up for their faith) became heroes and attracted people to the faith



Friday, October 10, 14

- B. Emperor Constantine (r. 306-337 AD)
  - 1. Had a vision during battle- decided to support the Christian church and converted
  - 2. Issued the Edict of Milan in 313- made Christianity legal in the Roman Empire
  - 3. Donated lots of money to the church
  - 4. Held the Council of Nicea where church leaders decided that Jesus was himself God





- C. Emperor Theodosius (r. 379-395 AD)
  - 1. In 380, he declared Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire
  - 2. By the early 390s, he made it illegal to practice polytheism (called paganism)

#### IV. Characteristics of the Roman Empire

- A. Roman roads made travel easy and safe
- B. Roman armies traveled all over empire-spreading ideas
- C. Most Romans would have known Latin and Greekallowing for effortless communication

Which factor do you believe contributed the most to the rapid growth of Christianity from 40 - 350 AD?