

The Spread of Christianity

*What factors contributed to the rapid growth of Christianity
from 40 - 350 AD?*

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

4 THE ORIGINS AND SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY TO AD 600

- Predominantly Christian by AD 325
- Christian community established by AD 325
- Place of origin of Christian sect
- Predominantly Christian by AD 600
- Church council



something about the cities playing a big role- being the places that heard about it first

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. ² And opening his mouth he taught them, saying:

³ "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴ Blessed are the meek: for they shall possess the land.

⁵ Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

⁶ Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shall have their fill.

⁷ Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

⁸ Blessed are the clean of heart: they shall see God.

⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

¹⁰ Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹ Blessed are you when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for my sake:

¹² Be glad and rejoice for your reward is very great in heaven. For so they persecuted the prophets that were before you."

What factors contributed to the rapid spread of Christianity from 40 - 350 AD?

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

What factors contributed to the rapid spread of Christianity from 40 - 350 AD?

II. Paul of Tarsus (5 - 67 AD)

A. Who was Paul of Tarsus?

1. Born in Tarsus (in Turkey)
2. Converted from Judaism to Christianity as an adult
3. Became one of the first Christian missionaries



What factors contributed to the rapid growth of Christianity from 40 - 350 AD?

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 epistles to new churches with advice about how to be Christian**

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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**

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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**



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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



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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)

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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 Greek-
allowing for effortless communication

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