



Religion in the Roman Empire

Chapter 13 Timeline

CHAPTER EVENTS

c. 30
Jesus is crucified.



100s–200s
From time to time, Christians are persecuted in Rome.



309
Emperor Constantine ends the persecution of Christians.

381
Emperor Theodosius bans all non-Christian religions in Rome.

WORLD EVENTS

43 London is built as a Roman city.

c. 65 According to tradition, Buddhism is introduced into China.



c. 250
The Maya Classical Age begins in Mexico.



320
The Gupta dynasty takes charge in India.

BC 1 AD

100

200

300

400

Romans Allow Many Religions

- The Romans were a religious people. They believed in many gods. Because they did not know which gods were real, they prayed to all gods.
- The Romans usually allowed the people they conquered to keep their religious customs. Sometimes the Romans even adopted those customs, too.
- But if the Roman leaders thought a religion might cause a political problem, they would ban that religion. Roman leaders thought that Judaism was a political problem so they tried to stop it.

Pantheon in Roman



The Romans built many temples to honor their many gods. Temples built to honor all the gods were called pantheons, and the most famous of these is the Pantheon in Rome, first built in the 20s BC. Its huge dome awes visitors even today.

Jews and Romans Clash

Judea, the homeland for many Jews, was taken over by the Roman Empire in 63 BC. The Romans did not like Judaism for religious reasons. Jews worshipped only one god. Some Romans thought that this was insulting to all of their gods. Jews were allowed to practice their religion freely until they became a political problem.

Jews and Romans Clash

- The Jews did not want to be ruled by Rome so they started several rebellions.
- Roman emperor Hadrian got tired of putting down the rebellions so he banned some Jewish religious practices. Hadrian hoped that this would cause people to quit their religion, but it made the Jews more rebellious. Uprisings became more frequent.
- Eventually Rome destroyed Jerusalem, the capital city of Judea. The Jews were forced to leave and move to other countries with non-Jews. The Jews of Judea were scattered throughout the Roman Empire.

Titus



The Roman general Titus captured Jerusalem in AD 70. To celebrate this victory, the Romans built this arch that shows Roman soldiers carrying a stolen menorah from Jerusalem's holy Second Temple.

Resistance to Rome



Unhappy with Roman rule, many Jews rebelled in the AD 60s but were defeated. Refusing to accept defeat, about 1,000 Jews locked themselves in a mountain fortress called Masada and held off the Romans for four years. In the end, these rebels killed themselves to avoid surrendering to the Romans.

The Roots of Christianity

During the beginning of the first century AD, a new religion appeared in Judea.

This religion was **Christianity**. Christianity had its roots in Judaism, but was based on the teachings of **Jesus of Nazareth**.

In this photo, members of one Christian church, the Roman Catholic Church, gather in Vatican City in Rome.



Christianity

- When Jesus was born, there were several Jewish groups in Judea. The largest group of Jews followed the laws of Moses very strictly.
- Many of these Jews believed a new leader would appear among them. They believed that if they followed the rules, the leader would appear more quickly. This leader was called the **Messiah** (muh-SY-uh), which means “anointed” in the Hebrew language.

The Messiah

For generations Jewish prophets had said that the Messiah would be a descendent of King David. They said that the Messiah would restore the greatness of David's ancient kingdom in Israel. When the Romans took over Judea, many Jews felt the Messiah would be coming soon.