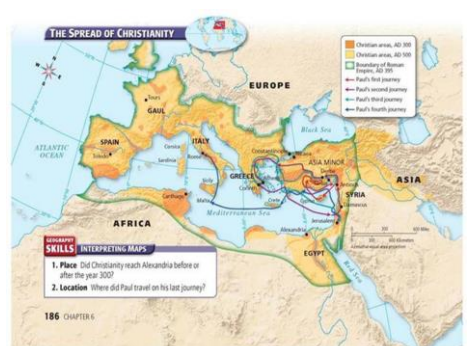
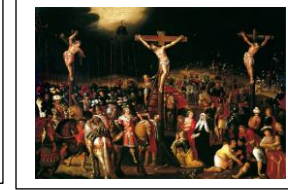
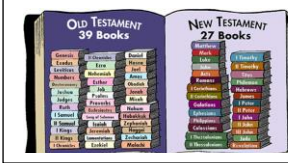


# Aim #21: How did Christianity develop and spread?

## The Rise of Christianity

NYS SS Framework: 9.2a. 2b

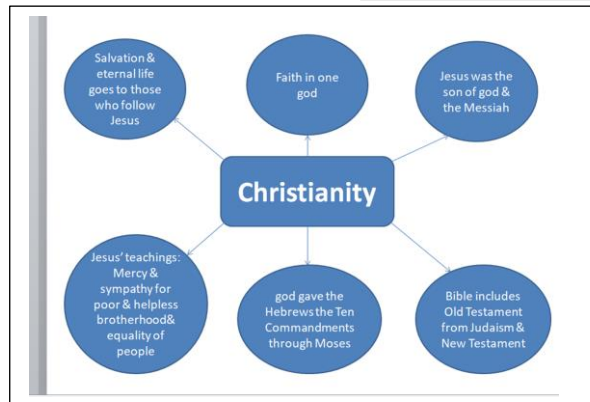
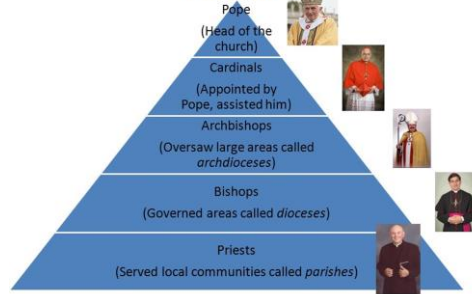


Estimates of population  
(Roman empire = 60 million people)

Year	# of Christians	Percent of population
40	1,000	0.0017%
100	7,500	0.07%
200	218,000	0.36%
300	6,300,000	10.5%
350	34,000,000	56.5%

From Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, p. 7

### What Was the Organization of the Church?



### Mini Lecture

- Within the Roman Empire, there were many religious beliefs. Rome tolerated different religions, as long as citizens worshiped Roman gods, too—including the emperor.
- Because most people believed in more than one god, this did not cause problem for a long time. Later, however, a division arose among the Jews. Many began to follow a Jewish man named Jesus. They believed he was the **messiah**, or anointed king sent by God.
- Jesus chose 12 **apostles**, meaning “persons sent forth,” to help him preach his message. Jesus’ teachings led to a new religion—**Christianity**.
- In his teachings, Jesus taught the need for justice, morality, forgiveness, & service to others.
- **Paul** was a missionary who spread the message of Christianity after Jesus was put to death (**crucified**). Paul said that those who believed in Jesus & complied with his teachings would be saved (**salvation**).
- Because Christians refused to worship Roman gods, many were persecuted. They became known as **martyrs**, or people who suffer or die for their beliefs.
- Many converted because of several reasons: Jesus’s messages of equality & love, Roman peace & roads allowed missionaries to travel, New Testament was written in the common language (Latin & Greek), & the appeal of martyrdom.
- Still, Christianity continued to spread. In A.D. 313, the Roman persecution of Christians stopped when the emperor Constantine issued the **Edict of Milan**. This granted freedom of worship to all Roman citizens. By the end of the century, Christianity was the Roman Empire’s official religion under Emperor Theodosius.
- Under the **Church**, each Christian community & its **clergy**—those who conduct religious services—were grouped together in a **diocese**.
- Every community had its own priest who answered to a **bishop**, a high Church official. Eventually, bishops from five important cities gained more authority. They held the honorary title of **patriarch**.
- However, as the Church developed, differences arose. The bishops of Rome came to be called **popes**, & claimed authority over all other bishops. There was also an emergence of **heresies**, or beliefs contrary to official Church teachings.

### Review Questions:

1. What was the Edict of Milan?
2. Who is responsible for spreading Christianity?
3. Why did Christianity appeal to many?

### Resources/Documents:

- Videos on the life of Jesus, the beliefs & spread of Christianity
- Maps, images, & charts on the spread of Christianity and treatment of Christians
- Excerpts on the spread & treatment of Christians

**Further Reading:** Chapter5, Section 4



## How did Christianity form? What are the major beliefs of Christianity?

### What is Christianity?

**Directions:** Watch this [Introduction to Christianity from the Oprah Winfrey Network](#), read the text, and examine the images below, then complete the formative assessment.

**Christianity** is a belief system that was founded by the followers of **Jesus of Nazareth** in **Judea**, a Roman province in the Middle East in the 1st century CE.

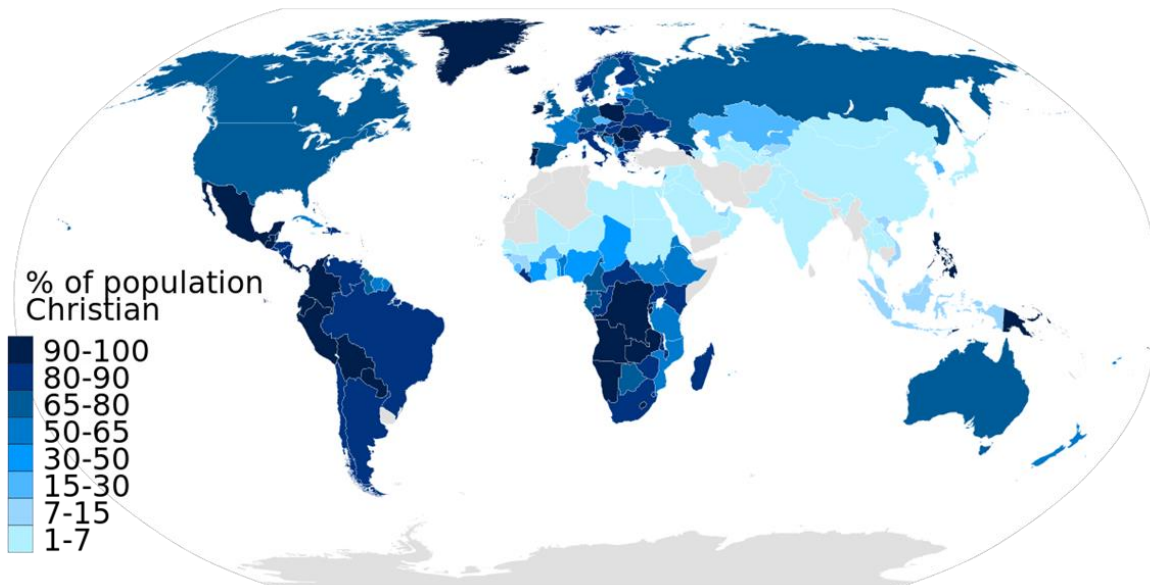
Christianity's sacred text is called the **Holy Bible** and is made up of two parts. The first section is called the **Old Testament**, which is based on Judaism's sacred text, the Torah. The second section is called the **New Testament** which is made up of stories about the life of Jesus as written by his followers, letters between his followers, and other writings by Christians early in the religion.

**Christianity and Judaism are similar**, but they differ in some important ways.

Christians believe:

- **Jesus Christ was the Son of God.**
- **God sent his Son to earth to save humanity** from the consequences of its sins.
- Jesus gave his life on the Cross (the Crucifixion) and rose from the dead after three days (the Resurrection).
- that there is only one God, so they are **monotheistic**, but they believe that there are three elements to this one God:
  - (1) God the Father
  - (2) God the Son
  - (3) The Holy Spirit
- Christians believe that there is a **life after earthly death.**
- The Christian church believes in one **baptism into the Christian church**, whether this be as an infant or as an adult, as an outward sign of an inward commitment to the teachings of Jesus.

Percentage of Christians Living in Each Country in the World (June 2014)



Belief System	Founder and/or Major Figures	Sacred Texts	Beliefs and Practices	Moral/Ethical Code of Conduct	Impact on Society Whose Inhabitants Practice the Belief System
Christianity					
Place of Origin:					
Date/Time Period Founded:					

## How do we know what we know about Jesus?

### The Quest for the Historical Jesus

 **Directions:** Watch the excerpt of [PBS | Frontline's From Jesus to Christ: The First Christians](#) and respond to the questions. (2:22-6:41)



1. Why do we know so little about Jesus?

2. What three things do historians believe they know for certain about Jesus?

3. The video says, "With so little evidence to go by, archeologist must sift the clues and scholars must decode stories told by his [Jesus'] first followers." What makes understanding the history of Jesus and Christianity difficult?

4. According to the historian, why weren't the details of Jesus' life written down during his time?

5. According to historians and archaeologists, under which empire was he born?

4:49 6. During which period of the Roman empire was Jesus born? What is significant about this time period?

### Looking at the Historical Documents about Jesus

**Directions:** Read the excerpts below and respond to the questions

#### Where do we find most of the information about Jesus?

Much of what we know about Jesus and beginnings of Christianity comes from the **Gospels**, or the first four books of the **New Testament of the Christian Bible**. Early Christians attributed the writings of the Gospels to four followers of Jesus - Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. **Historians** examine the New Testament as a source. They investigate how it was created, who wrote it, when they wrote it, and any bias the writers might have had.

#### What are the Gospels?

The gospels are not biographies in the modern sense of the word. Rather, they are stories told in such a way as to evoke a certain image of Jesus for a particular audience. They're trying to convey a message about Jesus and about his significance to the audience. Thus we have to think of them as a kind of preaching as well as storytelling. That's what the gospel, The Good News, is really all about.

The four gospels that we find in the New Testament, are [...] Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. [...] Of these then, Mark is the earliest, probably written between 70 and 75. Matthew is next - written somewhere between 75 and about 85, maybe even a little later than that. Luke is a little later still, being written between 80 and maybe 90 or 95. And, John's gospel is the latest, usually dated around 95, although it may have been completed slightly later than that, as well.



1. Who wrote the Gospels? What can historians learn from the Gospels?

2. What limits do the Gospels have as a historical source?

3. Even though there are limitations to the Gospels as a historical source, why do you think historians continue to use these Gospels as a source of information about early Christianity?

## What was the context for the founding of Christianity?

### Jesus' Religious Life: Jesus, the Jewish Jesus

 **Directions:** Watch the excerpt of [PBS | Frontline's From Jesus to Christ: The First Christians](#) and respond to the questions. (17:10-20:20)

1. Which religion did Jesus follow? How do historians know this?
2. Why was the temple so important in Jesus' life?

### Jesus Begins Preaching

 **Directions:** Watch the excerpt of [PBS | Frontline's From Jesus to Christ: The First Christians](#) and respond to the questions. (31:00-36:45)

3. According to the gospels, Jesus begins to preach his new ideas about ethics, morals and his Jewish faith after he is baptised by John the Baptist. When Jesus traveled to synagogues in Galilee, what are two things that he did?
4. Why does Jesus avoid the big towns and cities during his preaching?
5. To whom was Jesus preaching instead?
6. According to the Holy Bible, Jesus begins to perform healings. There were many healers during Jesus' time. What made Jesus' healing significant?

### What kinds of ideas did Jesus preach?

**Directions:** Read the excerpt below and respond to the questions.

*The Sermon on the Mount* was delivered in the early stage of Jesus' ministry. He delivers *The Sermon on the Mount* after he was baptised by John the Baptist in chapter 3 of Matthew and has gathered his first disciples or followers. Before he delivers *The Sermon on the Mount*, Jesus had been traveling and preaching. According to Matthew 4:23, "Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him." According to Matthew 5:1-2, "Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them. He said: ... "

Think not that I am come to destroy the law [The Ten Commandments], or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil...  
Ye have heard that it was said of them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:  
But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment[....]  
Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:  
But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite [strike] thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.  
Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you [....]  
Be ye therefore perfect. even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

1. In what ways was Jesus in support of the Ten Commandments?
2. In what ways did Jesus extend the Ten Commandments?
3. How did Jesus encourage his followers to treat their neighbors?

### Jesus is Crucified

 **Directions:** Watch the excerpt of [PBS | Frontline's From Jesus to Christ: The First Christians](#) & respond to the questions. (50:42-54:22)

Jesus' crucifixion is described in the four gospels as well as the epistles. It has also been established as a historical event confirmed by non-Christian sources. However, there has yet to be a consensus on the details of the crucifixion.

Jesus stood accused of **sedition** [conduct or speech inciting people to rebel against the authority of a state or monarch], not blasphemy—a civil crime, not a religious one. Rome's punishment was a painful, and visible, death by crucifixion. In the age of Roman domination, only Rome crucified. And they did it often. The two men who were killed along with Jesus are identified in some translations as "thieves," but the word can also mean "insurgents," supporting the idea that crucifixion was a political weapon used to send a message to those still living: Do not stir **dissent** [disagreement] or this will be the result.

It was a popular method of dispatching threats to the empire. "Romans practiced both random and intentional violence against populations they had conquered, killing tens of thousands by crucifixion," says New Testament scholar Hal Taussig, who is with the Union Theological Seminary in New York [...]

Jesus would then have been part of this show of power by the Roman Empire. [...] Clear evidence of the political nature of Jesus's execution—that Pilate and the high priest were ridding themselves of a "messiah" who might disrupt society—is the sign Pilate demanded be affixed to Jesus's cross: a scornful signal to the crowds that this death awaits any man the pilgrims might proclaim "the king of the Jews."

1. According to the excerpt above, why was Jesus crucified?
2. Why was death by crucifixion an awful experience?
3. Where do historians find most information about the crucifixion of Jesus?
4. Why was the crucifixion public?
5. What piece of material evidence exists to demonstrate that Jesus was crucified for political reasons?

## How did Christianity spread during the classical era?

**Directions:** Read the excerpt below. Then, respond to the questions.



Jesus recruited twelve of his **disciples** to help him on a mission to spread his message to the Jews throughout Jerusalem. After Jesus' death, the **apostles** and other disciples spread his message. In the beginning, they mainly **preached** to the Jewish people of Judea. Some Jewish people accepted Jesus as the **messiah** or anointed one. The disciples began to preach to Jewish communities outside of Judea. One apostle named Peter established Christianity in the city of Rome. The work of **missionaries** like Paul who traveled to preach Jesus' message helped Christianity grow from a small **sect** within Judaism to a major world religion. Paul played one of the most influential roles in spreading Christianity.

How was Christianity spread during Jesus' life?	How was Christianity spread after Jesus' death?

### How do we know what we know about Paul and his spread of Christianity?

What historians know about Paul comes from two sources. The first is the Acts of the Apostles, written after Paul's death. The author of Acts of Apostles claims that he knew Paul and accompanied him on many of his journeys. The second source is Paul's own letters that represent Paul's version of events.

- **What are the two sources of information about Paul?**
- **All primary sources have their limitations and historians need to corroborate this piece of evidence with other pieces of evidence to have a clearer understanding of time period. What is a corroborating piece of evidence that would help a historian to better understand Paul's life? Why?**

### Who is Paul and what role did he play in the spread of Christianity?



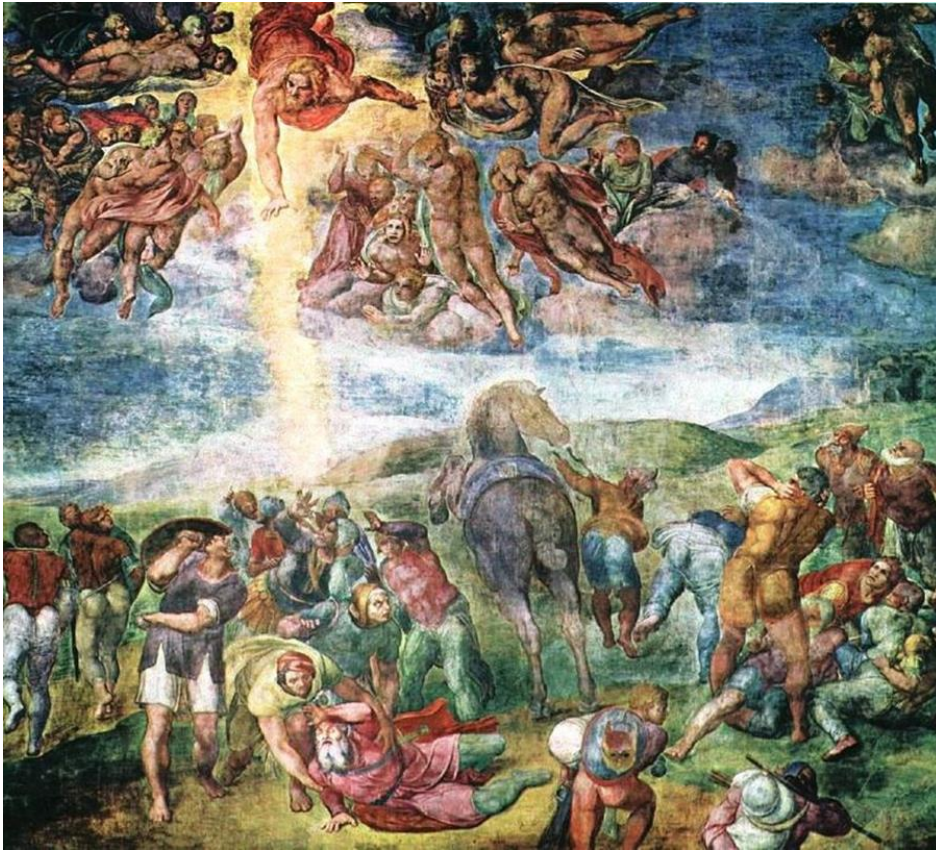
Saint Paul delivering a sermon in Athens, by Raphael, 1515

#### His Early Life

**Paul** was a **zealous** Jewish man born around 4 BCE in Tarsus, an occupied Asian territory in the Roman empire. He had a Jewish education and obeyed the Law of Moses. He also had a great understanding of Greek culture, was fluent in Greek and had some understanding of the Greek or Roman cultural traditions. According to writings in the New Testament, when Jesus began preaching and converting Jews to his message, Paul traveled around Judea looking for the followers of Jesus so that he could **persecute** them. Paul was dedicated to wiping them out. Paul believed that Jesus' followers did not obey Jewish law. Paul's persecutions probably involved traveling to synagogues and disobedient members were punished by **ostracism** or by **light flogging**, or beating.

- **How did Paul feel about the followers of Jesus? How did he treat them? Why?**

## The Road to Damascus



As described in the narrative of the book of Acts of Apostles, in the mid 30s CE while Paul was traveling on the road from Jerusalem to Damascus, the resurrected Jesus appeared to him in a great light and Paul heard the voice of Jesus telling him to stop persecuting his followers and join them. He was struck blind. When his sight was restored, Paul began spreading their message. This was a mission that would take up the rest of his life.

- **What happened on Paul on the road to Damascus? How did this change his relationship to the followers of Jesus?**

## Traveling the Mediterranean World



Over the next 30 years, biblical accounts say that Paul traveled some 10,000 miles across the Roman Empire, preaching in cities with the poorest people who were open to hearing a message of hope and everlasting life. While Jesus had only preached to Jews, Paul felt strongly that the message should be spread more widely, to Jews and non-Jews alike.

- **How was Paul's preaching different from Jesus' preaching?**
- **How did this help spread Christianity further?**

## **Fervent fury**

Abandoning the laws of his Jewish ancestors horrified many Jewish followers of Jesus, but Paul was determined. For example, he did not believe Christians needed to be circumcised to be a follower of Jesus.

Paul returned to Rome. He was dedicated to preaching to non-Jews. He was imprisoned for causing a riot that broke out after he invited uncircumcised men into the temple. In jail, Paul revealed his Roman citizenship and was sent to Rome. Along the way, he was whipped and stoned.

Paul wanted to keep pressing west and therefore only occasionally had the opportunity to revisit his churches. He tried to keep up his converts' spirits, answer their questions, and resolve their problems by letter. Fortunately, after his death one of his followers collected some of the letters, edited them and published them. His letters are some of the earliest Christian documents that we have. His letters became part of the New Testament of the Bible.

- **What struggles did Paul experience as he was trying to spread Jesus' message?**
- **How did Paul stay in contact with the Christian churches he founded?**

## **Achievements and Impact**

Paul died around 62 CE in Rome. Although other early Christian missionaries converted non-Jewish people, Paul is considered to be the second founder of the Christian movement. His mission to convert non-Jewish people helped to create the Christian movement as its own religion rather than a sect of Judaism. Paul's greatest impact on Christian history comes from his letters, which are the most influential books of the New Testament after the Gospels of Matthew and John. His letters have been important in helping future Christian communities understand Christianity and the nature of God.

- **How did Paul impact the spread of Christianity?**



## How did Christianity impact the lives of Christians living in the Roman Empire?

**Directions:** Examine the image below and complete the See-Think-Wonder activity below.

The image below is a section of a painting that was painted by an artist named Henry Siemiradzki in 1876. It depicts his interpretation of how the Roman Emperor Nero treated Christians.



### See

List three things you *see* in the image.

### Think

Based on your observations, what do you think the painter's claim is?

### Wonder

Write two questions you have about the painting

## Timeline of Christianity in the Roman Empire

**Directions:** Examine the timeline below and answer the questions accompanying it.

After completing the entire Timeline, answer these overarching questions:

- According to the timeline, how did the treatment of Christians change over time?
- According to the timeline, how did Christianity divide the Roman Empire?
- According to the timeline, how did Christianity unify the Roman Empire?

**30 CE**

### Crucifixion of Jesus

A generation after the death of Christ, Christianity had reached Rome in the form of a sect of Judaism popular among the city's poor and destitute. Members of this religious sect spoke of the coming of a new kingdom and a new king. These views provoked suspicion among the Jewish authorities who rejected the group and fear among the Roman authorities who perceived these sentiments as a threat to the Empire.

**1. After the death of Jesus, how did the Jewish authority perceive the followers of Jesus? Why?**

**2. After the death of Jesus, how did the Roman empire perceive the followers of Jesus? Why?**

**64 CE**



**Rome Fire:** In the summer of 64 CE, Rome suffered a terrible fire that burned for six days and seven nights consuming almost three quarters of the city. Nero, the emperor of Rome at the time, **scapegoated** Christians for the fire. The emperor ordered the arrest of members of the sect. As many of the religious sect that could be found were rounded up and put to death and tortured for the amusement of the citizens of Rome. Some were torn apart by dogs, others burnt alive as human torches.

Image Source: <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2014/09/emperor-nero/draper-text>

**3. How did Nero treat the Christians after the fire of 64 CE? Why was this done publicly?**

**4. What does this treatment reveal about the Roman Empire's feelings towards followers of Jesus?**

**60s-  
300s  
CE**

A Christian martyr is a person who was killed for following Christianity, through stoning, crucifixion, burning at the stake or other forms of torture and capital punishment. The word "martyr" comes from the Greek word *mártys*, which means "witness." This meant that a Christian martyr was a witness for their religious belief or testified that they were Christian. They endured suffering and/or death for their beliefs. Early Christians martyrs were venerated, or regarded with great respect, and seen as both powerful leaders and examples. Martyrs are often viewed as heroes for their willingness to die for their beliefs.

**5. What is a martyr?**

**6. How were martyrs viewed by other Christians? Why?**

**Directions:** Examine the image below, then fill out the chart with what you see, think and wonder about the treatment of Christians.



Christian Dirce (Henryk Siemiradzki) shows the punishment of a Roman woman who had converted to Christianity(1897)

<b>See</b> List three things you see in the image above.	<b>Think</b> Based on your observations, how do you <i>think</i> Christians were treated?	<b>Wonder</b> Write two questions you have about the image above.

**Directions:** Examine the image below, then fill out the chart with what you see, think and wonder about the treatment of Christians.



Stephen was an early Christian martyr who is remembered on December 26.

**See**  
List three things you see in the image above.

**Think**  
Based on your observations, how do you think Christians were treated?

**Wonder**  
Write two questions you have about the image above.

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## How did martyrdom impact the growth of the Christian Church?

Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus (Father Tertullian) (155-240 CE) was a prolific early Christian author from Carthage in the Roman province of Africa. Apologeticus, published around 197 CE, is Tertullian's most famous work where he demanded legal toleration and that Christians be treated as all other sects of the Roman Empire. Below is an excerpt from Chapter 50 of Apologeticus.

**Direction:** Read the excerpt below and respond to the questions.

Nor does your [Roman] cruelty, however exquisite, [help] you; it is rather a temptation to us. The oftener we are mown [cut] down by you, the more in number we grow; the blood of Christians is [the] seed [of the Church]. [...] On this account it is that we return thanks on the very spot for your sentences. As the divine and human are ever opposed to each other, when we are condemned by you, we are acquitted by the Highest.

7. What does the sentence, “the blood of Christians is [the] seed [of the Church]” mean?

8. According to this excerpt from Tertullianus, how does the killing of Christians impact the growth of the Church?

### 249-251 CE



Some accounts of Christian persecutions say that believers were thrown to wild animals in Roman amphitheaters—as depicted in this 19th century painting.

Starting in 60 CE, there was a long period in which the **persecution** of Christianity was inconsistent and local. In the middle of the 3rd century, Emperor Decius decided that Christians were a real enemy of the Roman order and stability. As such, Emperor Decius required all Christians to not only to offer sacrifice to Roman gods, but also to obtain official certificates from witnesses to their offering.

9. How did Emperor Decius requirement affect Christians?

10. Why did he try to enforce this requirement?

### 313 CE

**Edict of Milan:** The emperor Constantine I converted to Christianity in 312. In 313, Emperor Constantine outlawed religious persecution in the Roman empire. The edict granted all persons freedom to worship whatever deity they pleased. It also promised Christians legal rights and the right to organize churches.

**How did the Edict of Milan affect Christians?**

### 380 CE

**Edict of Thessalonica:** Emperor Theodosius I made Christianity the state church of the Roman Empire and made it the Empire's sole authorized religion.

**How did the Edict of Thessalonica affect Christians?**

