

## Explore More—The Spread of Christianity

**Directions:** Listen to your teacher talk about the circumstances that led to the spread of Christianity in Europe and other Roman territories. Refer to the maps in your Explore Geography Picture Dictionary to locate the places your teacher mentions. Circle any words you don't understand. Underline or highlight important ideas in the text. Write notes in the margins to help you understand key points. Then answer the questions in your own words.

### The Spread of Christianity

Christianity began as a small Jewish sect in the Mediterranean region of Judea. Christianity spread to Asia Minor, Greece, Rome, then all over Europe.

*Point to these places on your world map.*

Paul of Tarsus was very important in spreading the ideas of Christianity. He began traveling throughout the Roman world telling people about Christianity. He started Christian communities everywhere he went. He went on three journeys around the Aegean coast and to Cyprus. First, he went to the area that is now southeastern Turkey. Eventually, hundreds of Christian churches were built in this area. During his second and third journeys he spread Christianity to Asia Minor and Greece. Paul's final journey was to Rome.

*Point to these places on your world map.*

### Why Did Christianity Spread?

Many circumstances led to the spread of Christianity throughout Europe and Roman Empire. As the Roman Empire grew, so did the areas in which people in the Roman Empire traveled. Roman roads provided a way for travelers to reach other areas in the empire. Christians were eager to share their beliefs with others. As they traveled throughout the Roman Empire, they shared their religious ideas with all the people they visited. As you learned, Paul of Tarsus traveled all over the Roman Empire telling people about Jesus and his teachings.

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Another important reason for the spread of Christianity was the support of Roman emperors, especially Constantine. Earlier Roman emperors such as Diocletian tried to rid the Roman Empire of Christianity. But Constantine promoted Christianity throughout his reign. In A.D. 313, he issued an order that allowed Romans to follow any religion they wanted. He provided money to repair churches. And, he was baptized as a Christian shortly before his death. When Constantine became emperor only about 10% of the population of the Roman Empire was Christian. By the end of Constantine's reign, Christianity was the main religion in the empire.

The beliefs of Christianity also led to the spread of the religion. Christianity appealed to many people—men and women, rich and poor, free persons and slaves, and Romans and Jews. It offered all people forgiveness for their sins and a life in heaven after death. ❖



**Questions for further discussion:**

- What would you like to know more about in terms of the spread of Christianity during this time? Frame questions that you can answer by historical study and research. Conduct this research and discuss your findings.
- Think about and discuss the causes and effects of the spread of Christianity and the correlation of historical events to the spread of Christianity.