NAME	DATE	CLASS

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The Rise of Christianity

Lesson 2 The Early Church

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How do religions develop?

GUIDING QUESTIONS

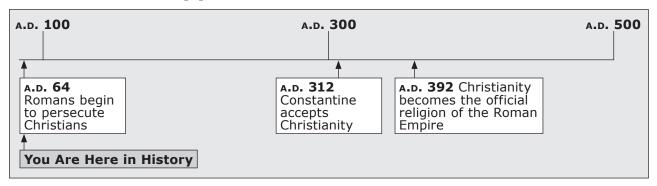
- 1. How did Christianity change over time?
- 2. How did early Christians organize and explain their beliefs?

Terms to Know

martyr someone who is willing to die
rather than give up his or her beliefs
hierarchy an organization with different
levels of authority
clergy church officials
laity regular church members
doctrine official church teaching
gospel an account of the life and teaching
of Jesus, written by the apostles
pope the title for the bishop of Rome, who

is the head of the Roman Catholic Church

When did it happen?



What do you know?

In the first column, answer the questions based on what you know before you study. After this lesson, complete the last column.

Now		Later
	Why did the Romans punish people who became Christians?	
	How did Christians pass on the teachings of Jesus after his death?	
	How is the Christian Church organized?	



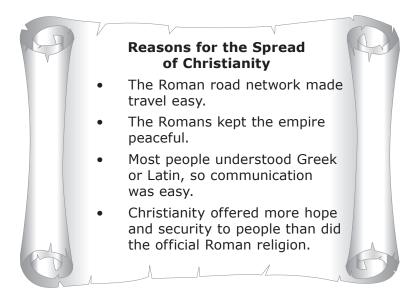
The Rise of Christianity

Lesson 2 The Early Church, *Continued*

Christianity and the Empire

The first followers of Jesus taught his messages to Jews and non-Jews in the Mediterranean region. From there Christianity spread throughout the Roman Empire. This happened for many reasons. A network of roads made long-distance travel fairly safe and easy. The people who lived under Roman rule spoke Latin or Greek. This made it easier for Christians to share their ideas.

Another reason for the spread of Christianity was that it appealed to people. Christianity promised a better life after death. It gave people hope, something the Roman religion could never do. Christian communities also took care of the needs of their members.



The Romans tried to stop Christianity from spreading. Rome saw the new religion as a dangerous threat to its empire. Christians refused to worship the emperor as a god. Christians also refused to serve in the Roman army and were against war as a way to solve problems. For these and other reasons, Christians were arrested, beaten, and sometimes killed. Some Christians became martyrs, people who were willing to die rather than give up their beliefs.

In the early A.D. 300s, the emperor Diocletian made one last attempt to destroy Christianity. He failed because Christianity had grown very strong.

In A.D. 312 the new religion took a major turn. The night before an important battle, the Emperor Constantine had a dream. In the dream he saw a flaming cross in the sky.



Explaining

1. Why did Christianity appeal to many people more than the old Roman religion?



2. Underline the word martyrs and its definition.

Summarizing

3. Why did the Romans mistreat Christians?

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The Rise of Christianity

Lesson 2 The Early Church, Continued

Reading Check
4. How did Constantine
support Christianity?
M Defining
M Defining
5. How is a <i>hierarchy</i>
organized?
organized?
organized?
organized?
organized?
organized?
organized?
organized?
Explaining
Explaining 6. How was Church
Explaining 6. How was Church

The next day he had his soldiers paint the cross on their shields. After his army won the battle, Constantine believed the Christian God had helped him.

Constantine became a strong supporter of Christianity. He built churches in Jerusalem and Rome. He also let Christians serve in the military and work in the government. Constantine allowed Christians to stop paying taxes. In A.D. 313, he issued the Edict of Milan. This important order gave religious freedom to all religions in the empire, including Christianity.

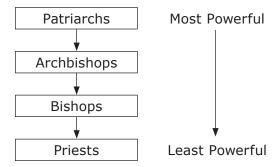
After Constantine's rule, the emperor Theodosius outlawed Greek and Roman religions. In A.D. 392, he made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire.

Organizing the Church

The early Christian church had to become better organized in order to unite its many followers. It also had to make sure that Christian communities shared similar beliefs and practices. Early church leaders used the Roman Empire as a model. Like the empire, the church was ruled by a **hierarchy** of officials. A hierarchy is an organization with different levels of authority.

Leaders of the church were known as the **clergy.** In the early church, only men were allowed to be members of the clergy. Regular church members were called the **laity**. In this hierarchy, archbishops had the most authority. Priests had the least. The five most powerful archbishops were each in charge of an entire city. These leaders were called patriarchs.

Hierarchy of the Early Christian Church



The bishops decided the true teachings of the Church. Accepted teachings became **doctrine**. Teachings that the bishops rejected were heresies. They went against the Christian faith.

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The Rise of Christianity

Lesson 2 The Early Church, Continued

Church leaders also preserved stories about Jesus and the writings of the apostles. By A.D. 300 there were four accepted accounts of the life and teachings of Jesus. Christians believed four apostles of Jesus wrote these accounts, or **gospels.** The word gospel means "good news." The New Testament includes all four gospels and the writings of early Christians. The Old Testament is the Greek version of the Jewish sacred writings. The Christian Bible consists of the Old Testament and the New Testament.

OLD TESTAMENT Greek version of sacred Jewish Writings OLD TESTAMENT Writings of Early Christians CHRISTIAN BIBLE CHRISTIAN BIBLE

Two of the most influential early Christian writers were Paul and Augustine. Paul's writings are part of the New Testament. Augustine is one of the Church Fathers. These writers and thinkers played an important role in explaining and defending the teachings of Christianity.

As the Church grew, the bishop of Rome came to believe he had authority over all the other bishops. By A.D. 600, the bishop of Rome had the title of **pope.** Pope is from a Latin word that means "father." Christians in the western part of the Roman Empire accepted the pope as the head of all the churches. These Christians spoke Latin. Their churches formed the Roman Catholic Church.

Christians in the eastern part of the empire spoke Greek. They did not believe the pope had authority over them. Their churches became the Eastern Orthodox Church.

Check for Understanding List two major events that changed Christianity.
1
2
List two ways early Christians explained their beliefs and teachings.
3

Drawing Conclusions

7. The four gospels were written many years after the death of Jesus. How were people able to remember what Jesus did and said before the gospels were written?

Reading Check

8. What writings are included in the New Testament?

FOLDABLES

9. Place a two-tab
Foldable to cover
the Check for
Understanding.
Label the top tab
The Government
and Christianity and
the bottom tab
Explaining
Christianity.

Use both sides of the tabs to record words or phrases about each.