

The Rise of Christianity in Rome

- Roman Emperors tolerated new religions
- they still had to sacrifice to the Emperor, but in private, they could worship whatever they chose
- most people worshipped Roman gods, but some worshipped others

- the Hebrews (Jewish people) were ruled by the Romans and were allowed to worship their religion
- they believed in a *messiah*
 - o a savior chosen by God who would lead them to freedom

- Romans let Hebrews enforce their own laws, but most Hebrews hated being ruled by the Romans
- a group called the *Zealots* rose up:
 - o like modern terrorists
 - o believed in conflict to free the Hebrew people
 - o if caught, faced severe Roman punishments

- in 66 CE, the Hebrew people revolted, and by 70 CE they had been dispersed throughout the Roman Empire
- the Jewish state was abolished

- however, around 70 years before, a man named Jesus started Christianity
- we learn about his teachings through others
 - o disciples wrote about his life
 - he was apparently a healer and priest
 - believed to be the Messiah

- the Greek word for messiah is 'Christos'... so his followers were known as Christians

- large crowds gathered to listen to Jesus speak
 - this worried the Hebrews – they did not believe he was the Messiah
 - this worried the Romans – they had to keep the peace

- denounced by his enemies, he was arrested
- put on trial by Pontius Pilate
 - seen as a dangerous rebel
 - was ordered to death via crucifixion

- people began to follow his teachings of love and toleration

- Romans now had a large group of people who began to cause problems

- they began to execute Christians (like in the Coliseum)
 - for example, both apostles Peter and Paul died in Rome

- many Christians who died became *martyrs* (someone who died for their beliefs)

- Christianity eventually becomes VERY popular

- Christianity would, in 395 CE, become the official religion of the Roman Empire