

Rome's Conversion to Christianity

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As different cultures settled in Rome, each brought their gods and various forms of worship. The Roman Empire was primarily a **polytheistic** civilization, meaning people recognized and worshiped multiple deities adapted from Greek culture, Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva, to name a few. Each deity needed an image, usually in the form of a statue made of precious stones and metal, and an altar or temple at which to offer prayers and sacrifices.



Judaism in Rome

The Roman religion was not the only one practiced in the first century AD. Communities of Jews had existed in cities throughout the Roman Empire for centuries. The Jews differed from others in the ancient world because they were **monotheistic** and believed that only one God existed (Deut. 6:4-6). The Jewish Scripture consisted of the **Torah** or Pentateuch, comprising five books (**Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy**) that were believed to have been given to Moses by God. They worshipped **Yahweh** (YHWH) with animal sacrifices offered at a temple, but unlike others, they had only one temple in Jerusalem. Although they were generally treated with respect, trouble did occur. A revolt in Judaea against Roman rule led to the temple's destruction (in **70 CE**) and a change in the practice of the Jewish faith.

The Spread of Christianity in Rome¹

Jesus was born between **6-4 BC** to Mary, his biological mother, and Joseph, his legal father, in Bethlehem. He was miraculously conceived in his mother's womb through the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit. Jesus was his human name, the Greek translation of the Hebrew name Joshua and means Savior or Salvation. He was called **Jesus of Galilee** or **Jesus of Nazareth** (Acts 10:38) to describe where He spent much of His life in the small town of Nazareth in northern Galilee.

He also was called **Jesus Christ**. *Christ* was not originally a name but a title derived from the Greek word "*Christos*", which translates the Hebrew term "*meshiah*" (**Messiah**), meaning "*the anointed one*." This title indicates that Jesus' followers believed him to be the anointed son of King David, whom some Jews expected to restore the fortunes of Israel. He also called the Son of God, Lord, and Immanuel, to describe his deity as God.

¹ The Roman Empire in the First Century: The Early Christians
<https://www.pbs.org/empires/romans/empire/christians.html>

He began his public ministry healing, teaching, and preaching the kingdom of God (Matt. 4:17, Lk. 17:20-21, Rom. 14:17, and 1 Cor. 4:20). The kingdom of God was the powerful presence of God (via the Holy Spirit) operating in the lives of believers according to His will and for His glory.

Jesus was crucified about **30 -33 AD/BCE** under the reign of the second emperor, by the authority of Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judaea province. Although not as popular while Jesus lived, his message continued spreading across the empire. His followers were called **Christians** in Antioch (Acts 11:26). Christianity steadily grew following his crucifixion and resurrection throughout the empire due to the preaching and teaching of His Apostles, who were authorized to spread the Christian message to all nations of Jews and Gentiles in Europe, **North Africa**, and the Middle East. (Matthew 28:19-20).

In Rome, there was poverty and intense levels of inequality due to the strict hierarchical system set by Augustus. Christianity was appealing to many members of the lower classes in the Roman empire not only because of its promised liberation from any afflictions encountered in this world but also because of the established community that was equal, regardless of social class or gender, through baptismal promise, as highlighted in the Epistles of the Apostle Paul.

Christians were massively persecuted based on their beliefs for the first decades and centuries following Jesus' death and resurrection. Since Christianity was a **monotheistic faith** (One God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Trinity), demanding exclusive membership, where worshipping any other false, pagan gods was a sin against the Christian God, many Christians perished for failing to pay tribute and sacrifice to pagan gods on festival days or when tested by Roman officials. Although Christians in Rome suffered appalling persecution at times, their ideas refused to die but flourished throughout Rome.

Over time, the Christian church and faith grew more organized. In 313, Emperor Constantine the Great issued the Edict of Milan, which accepted Christianity: 10 years later, it became the Roman Empire's official religion. The influence of Christianity not only spread in the Roman world but also throughout the rest of world history.

CHRISTIANITY AND JUDAISM VARYING BELIEFS, PRACTICES, AND TEACHINGS

https://www.diffen.com/difference/Christianity_vs_Judaism

	CHRISTIANITY	JUDAISM
Place of worship	Church, chapel, cathedral, basilica, home bible study, personal dwellings.	Synagogues and temples, home, Western Wall of the Temple in Jerusalem
Belief of God	One God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Trinity.	One God (monotheism), YHWH: 'The Lord'. God is the one True Creator. God has always existed, none existed before him and will exist forever. He transcends life and death.
Founder	The Lord Jesus Christ.	Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses
Practices	Prayer, sacraments/ordinances, church worship, Bible reading, acts of charity, communion.	
Life after death	Eternity in Heaven or Hell	World to come, Reincarnation (some groups); unifying with God, there are different opinions and beliefs
Followers	Christians (followers of Christ)	Jews, Jewish people
Scriptures	The Holy Bible	Tanakh (Jewish Bible), which includes the Torah
Means of salvation	Faith in the Christ's Death, Burial & Resurrection	This is not a concept held in Judaism. Jews do not strive to achieve status at the time of death.
Human Nature	Man has inherited "original sin" from Adam. Mankind, then, is inherently evil and is in need of forgiveness of sin. By knowing right and wrong, Christians choose their actions. Humans are a fallen, broken race in need of salvation and repair by God.	You must choose good from bad. You are responsible for your actions, not your thoughts.
Marriage	A Holy Sacrament	Ancient times: unlimited polygamy with concubinage. In modern times, monogamy has been official since 1310 AD.

Confessing sins	Protestants confess straight to God, Catholic confess mortal sins to a Priest, and venial sins straight to God (Orthodox have similar practice) Anglicans confess to Priests but considered it optional. God always forgives sins in Jesus.	Ancient times: there was a sin offering for individuals. Today people individually repair their sins. On Yom Kippur, they confess their sins and ask for forgiveness from God. But also they must ask forgiveness directly from any people they may have wronged.
Original Language(s)	Aramaic, Greek, and Latin.	Hebrew, Aramaic. Over the centuries, Jewish languages have also included Yiddish (among the Ashkenazi Jews of Europe); and Ladino (among the Sephardic Jews of Spain and North Africa).
The second coming of Jesus	Affirmed	Denied. (not part of the liturgy)
Prophets	Prophets in the Bible are venerated.	Moses and the subsequent Prophets of Israel as told in the Jewish Bible (Tanakh).
Holy Days	Christmas (celebration of the birth of Jesus), Good Friday (death of Jesus), Sunday (day of worship), Easter (resurrection of Jesus), Lent (Catholicism), saints' feast days.	Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Simchat Torah, Chanukah, Tu B'Shvat, Passover, Lag B'Omer, Shavuot. Shabbat (Sabbath). Sabbath is the most important—one day a week, no work, just peace, joy, and prayer.
Jesus	Son Of Man. The second person of the Trinity. God the Son. Virgin Birth, through God.	Not mentioned in the Jewish texts. No specific beliefs about this individual.
Day of Worship	Sunday (the 1 st day of the week),	Friday at sunset through Saturday sunset is the Sabbath,
Branches	Roman Catholics, independent Catholics, Protestants (Anglicans, Lutherans, etc.), and Orthodox (Greek Orthodox, Russian Orthodox).	Religious: Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Renewal, Reconstruction. Traditions: Sephard (Spain, Arab countries, Turkey). Ashkenazi: (Europe, Russia). Mizrachi: (Iraq, Persia, India).