A Message Travels

Trace Christianity's beginnings and its spread through the Roman Empire.

SS24.7.16b "Describe the founding and development of Christianity, including the roles of Jesus of Nazareth and Paul of Tarsus, and how its spread was directly and indirectly influenced by the Roman Empire."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the sentence that explains Christianity's beginnings and two details about Paul's work, circle two direct actions by Roman authorities, and number two conditions in the empire that indirectly helped the message spread.

From Judea to Distant Cities

1. In the first century CE, Jesus of Nazareth taught in the Roman province of Judea. He was Jewish and spoke about God's kingdom, care for people in need, and love of neighbors. His teachings drew followers, but Roman authorities executed him by crucifixion around 30 CE. His followers believed he had risen from the dead. They called him the Christ, meaning the anointed one, and began sharing his teachings and their belief in his resurrection. These beliefs became the foundation of Christianity, which first grew among Jewish communities.

2. One person who carried this message far beyond Judea was Paul of Tarsus. At first, Paul opposed Jesus's followers. After an experience he understood as a vision of the risen Jesus, he became a missionary. He traveled through cities in the eastern Roman Empire, teaching that non-Jews could join the movement without first becoming Jewish. Paul helped form communities and wrote letters answering their questions. Those letters, later included in the Christian New Testament, helped connect groups that lived far apart and shaped what many Christians believed.

3. The Roman Empire shaped this spread in two different ways. Indirectly, its roads and sea routes helped travelers like Paul reach distant cities, while the widespread use of Greek helped people communicate. The empire did not build these routes to spread Christianity. Directly, Roman officials sometimes punished Christians for refusing to honor Roman gods or the emperor, though enforcement varied. In 313 CE, Emperor Constantine and his co-emperor Licinius announced a policy allowing Christians to worship openly. This change removed a major legal barrier and helped Christianity grow more visible across the empire.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Jesus's life and his followers' beliefs lead to the beginnings of Christianity?

2. Explain two ways Paul's work helped Christianity develop beyond Judea.

3. How did two conditions in the Roman Empire indirectly help Christianity spread?

4. How did direct actions by Roman authorities affect Christians before and after 313 CE?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a Christian group in a distant Roman city around 320 CE. In five or six sentences, explain how its beliefs could trace back to Jesus and Paul, and how one indirect and one direct Roman influence could have affected the group.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 7 · SS24.7.16b

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the sentence that explains Christianity's beginnings and two details about Paul's work, circle two direct actions by Roman authorities, and number two conditions in the empire that indirectly helped the message spread. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Jesus's life and his followers' beliefs lead to the beginnings of Christianity?	**Jesus taught in Judea and drew followers. After Roman authorities executed him, his followers believed he had risen from the dead and shared his teachings and their belief in his resurrection.**
2	Explain two ways Paul's work helped Christianity develop beyond Judea.	**Paul taught in distant cities that non-Jews could join, helping form new communities. His letters answered questions and connected groups far apart.**
3	How did two conditions in the Roman Empire indirectly help Christianity spread?	**Roads and sea routes helped travelers reach distant cities, and the widespread use of Greek helped them communicate. These conditions were not created to spread Christianity.**
4	How did direct actions by Roman authorities affect Christians before and after 313 CE?	**Before 313 CE, Roman officials sometimes punished Christians. In 313 CE, Constantine and Licinius announced a policy allowing Christians to worship openly.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A Christian group in a distant Roman city in 320 CE could teach that Jesus's followers believed he rose from the dead after his execution. Its members might read Paul's letters to answer questions about their beliefs. Roman roads and sea routes could have helped earlier travelers bring those ideas to the city, an indirect influence because the routes were not built for Christianity. Earlier, Roman officials might have punished members for refusing to honor Roman gods. By 320 CE, the policy announced in 313 allowed them to worship openly, a direct change in Roman policy.

Accept other passage-supported connections between Jesus, Paul, and the group's development. The response should distinguish an indirect condition from a direct action by Roman authorities.