Routes and Roles

Trace how Christianity spread and how early churches stayed connected

SS24.8.1a "Trace the spread of Christianity in Europe and the wider Mediterranean region and outline the organizational structure of the early Catholic Church, including the roles of the Bishop of Rome and Councils of Carthage."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline place names along the spread of Christianity, circle the two years when imperial policy changed, and number the local bishop, the bishop of Rome, and the Councils of Carthage in the order they appear. Use your marks to trace the spread and explain how churches stayed connected.

Across the Mediterranean

1. Picture a letter carried across the Mediterranean in the first century CE. Christianity began in Roman-ruled Judea, where followers of Jesus shared his teachings. Travelers brought the message north to cities such as Antioch, then west through Asia Minor and Greece. Roman roads and sea routes helped merchants and missionaries carry ideas to Rome and ports in North Africa. From Rome and other centers, Christian communities grew in parts of Gaul, Hispania, and Britain. This was not one journey: different people traveled along many routes over several centuries.

2. At first, Roman officials sometimes persecuted Christians, though policies varied by time and place. In 313 CE, Emperor Constantine and Licinius agreed to allow Christians to worship openly. Churches could then gather and build more freely. In 380 CE, Emperor Theodosius I and two co-emperors made Nicene Christianity the empire's official religion. These changes helped Christian communities expand across the Mediterranean and western Europe. After imperial rule in the western empire collapsed in the fifth century, networks of churches remained and continued to link people in distant towns.

3. As communities spread, church leaders developed ways to keep them connected. In many cities, a bishop guided the local church and oversaw priests and deacons. The bishop of Rome, later called the pope, claimed a special leadership role linked to the apostle Peter, and his influence grew in the West. Bishops also met in councils to decide shared questions. At Councils of Carthage in North Africa, bishops discussed church rules and lists of books accepted as Scripture. Their decisions helped nearby churches follow common practices, even when they were far from Rome.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Starting in Judea, trace one route by which Christianity could reach Gaul. Include at least three other places named in the passage.

2. How did the imperial decisions in 313 CE and 380 CE help Christianity spread?

3. How did local bishops and the bishop of Rome have different roles in connecting western churches?

4. How could decisions made at the Councils of Carthage affect churches outside Carthage?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you are a traveler writing a report in 400 CE. In four or five sentences, trace a plausible route from Judea to Gaul through at least two Mediterranean stops, then explain how a local bishop, the bishop of Rome, and the Councils of Carthage could shape church life.

ANSWER KEY

Routes and Roles

GRADE 8 · SS24.8.1a

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline place names along the spread of Christianity, circle the two years when imperial policy changed, and number the local bishop, the bishop of Rome, and the Councils of Carthage in the order they appear. Use your marks to trace the spread and explain how churches stayed connected. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Starting in Judea, trace one route by which Christianity could reach Gaul. Include at least three other places named in the passage.	**One route runs from Judea to Antioch, through Asia Minor and Greece to Rome, and then to Gaul.**
2	How did the imperial decisions in 313 CE and 380 CE help Christianity spread?	**The 313 decision allowed open worship, making it easier for churches to gather and build. The 380 decision made Nicene Christianity the empire's official religion.**
3	How did local bishops and the bishop of Rome have different roles in connecting western churches?	**Local bishops guided their churches and oversaw priests and deacons. The bishop of Rome claimed a special leadership role linked to Peter, and his influence grew across the West.**
4	How could decisions made at the Councils of Carthage affect churches outside Carthage?	**Bishops discussed church rules and lists of books accepted as Scripture, helping nearby churches follow common practices.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In 400 CE, I heard how Jesus's followers carried their message from Judea to Antioch. Travelers then took it through Asia Minor to Rome, and from Rome it reached towns in Gaul. In one Gallic town, a bishop guides the church and oversees its priests and deacons. The bishop of Rome claims a special leadership role linked to Peter, so western churches may look to him. Bishops meeting at Carthage have discussed church rules and books accepted as Scripture, helping churches share practices.

Accept other plausible routes through places named in the passage. For the report, check for at least two Mediterranean stops and historically accurate, distinct roles for the local bishop, the bishop of Rome, and the Councils of Carthage.