Roots and Routes

Trace how early Christianity formed and spread

9-12.WC.18 "Analyze the Hebrew and Classical origins and central features of early Christianity, including key people, texts, events, and major teachings."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two details that show Jewish roots, circle two details that show Greek or Roman conditions, and number three details that show Christian teachings or practices. Use your marks to distinguish where beliefs came from and how the movement spread.

From Jerusalem to Corinth

1. In first-century Jerusalem, Jesus taught among Jews living under Roman rule. He drew on the Hebrew Scriptures, which Christians later called the Old Testament, and on Jewish belief in one God. When Jesus taught people to love God and their neighbors, he echoed commandments already central to Jewish life. His followers called him the Messiah, a Jewish title for an expected deliverer. Roman authorities crucified Jesus around 30 CE. His followers proclaimed that God had raised him from the dead. Their claim about his resurrection became a defining Christian belief, not simply another teaching about how to live.

2. Now imagine a house gathering in Corinth, a Greek-speaking city in the Roman Empire. A letter from Paul is read aloud to Jews and non-Jews, also called Gentiles. Paul, a Jew who became a follower of Jesus, argued that Gentiles could join this community without first becoming Jews. His letters, later included in the New Testament, helped distant groups debate faith, worship, and conduct. Greek, widely spoken across the eastern empire, carried his message beyond Judea. Roman roads and sea routes also connected cities. These classical conditions aided Christianity's spread, but Paul's belief in one God came from Jewish tradition.

3. At gatherings like this one, believers shared meals, prayed, and discussed what Jesus' life meant. The Gospels, written decades after Jesus' death, presented accounts of his teachings, death, and resurrection; they too became part of the New Testament. Christians taught that Jesus was the Christ, the Greek word for Messiah, and that through him God offered salvation. They also emphasized care for others and the hope of life after death. Christianity thus took shape through a Jewish religious inheritance and a Greek-speaking, Roman-ruled setting. Those two influences mattered in different ways: one shaped its beliefs, while the other helped its message travel.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does Jesus' teaching about loving God and neighbors show a Jewish root, while his followers' claim about his resurrection shows a defining Christian belief?

2. How did Paul's position on Gentiles and the use of Greek work together to expand the early Christian community?

3. Compare the roles of Paul's letters and the Gospels in early Christianity, based on the passage.

4. Why would it be misleading to say that Roman rule created Christianity's belief in one God? Distinguish the source of that belief from one way the movement spread.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 65 to 85 word museum label for an imagined early Christian gathering in Corinth. Explain one Jewish root of belief, one teaching about Jesus, and one Greek or Roman condition that helped the movement spread; name at least two people or texts and connect these influences in a concluding claim.

Roots and Routes

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two details that show Jewish roots, circle two details that show Greek or Roman conditions, and number three details that show Christian teachings or practices. Use your marks to distinguish where beliefs came from and how the movement spread. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does Jesus' teaching about loving God and neighbors show a Jewish root, while his followers' claim about his resurrection shows a defining Christian belief?	**The teaching echoes commandments central to Jewish life. His followers' claim that God raised him from the dead became a defining Christian belief.**
2	How did Paul's position on Gentiles and the use of Greek work together to expand the early Christian community?	**Paul argued that Gentiles could join without first becoming Jews, and widely spoken Greek helped carry his message beyond Judea.**
3	Compare the roles of Paul's letters and the Gospels in early Christianity, based on the passage.	**Paul's letters helped distant communities discuss faith, worship, and conduct. The Gospels presented accounts of Jesus' teachings, death, and resurrection.**
4	Why would it be misleading to say that Roman rule created Christianity's belief in one God? Distinguish the source of that belief from one way the movement spread.	**Belief in one God came from Jewish tradition. Routes connecting cities in the Roman Empire helped Christian messages travel.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

At a gathering in Corinth, a letter from Paul might be read to Jews and Gentiles. The community's belief in one God grew from Jewish tradition, and Jesus' teaching about loving neighbors echoed Hebrew Scripture. Followers also believed that God raised Jesus from the dead. Greek let Paul's message cross city boundaries, while Roman routes linked communities. Christianity combined a Jewish foundation for belief with an imperial setting that helped new communities stay in touch.

Accept other passage-supported examples that distinguish Jewish sources of belief from Greek or Roman conditions that aided communication. For the museum label, check for all three required influences, two named people or texts, a connecting claim, and 65 to 85 words.