

## Monotheistic Religions

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# How does the idea of monotheism change the Roman Empire?

In Unit 2, the key concept is change. Change is related to the transformation between religions in this unit. The Greeks and the Romans believed in many gods and goddess, this is the polytheistic religion. The Jews were known for the monotheistic beliefs, and were the first people to believe in a single god. The Christians also believed in a single god after the Jews did, Because of their different beliefs and views on religion, it makes these people somehow bond and break apart. The Romans and the Greeks were not in favor of monotheism, and both the Jews and the Christians were initially persecuted because of their beliefs.

## Monotheism

The belief of only one god. Monotheism characterizes the traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and elements of the belief are discernible in numerous other religions.

## Polytheism

The belief of more than one god. Sometimes above the many gods a polytheistic religion will have a supreme creator and focus of devotion

# Christianity

Christianity is one of the oldest monotheistic religions in the world. The idea of Christianity came from Jesus, a man who was said to be the Messiah that God had sent on Earth to help the people. Jesus's way of thinking attracted many followers and Christianity began to spread very quickly. The Romans were afraid that disciples of Jesus might start rebellions against them. The Romans executed the Christians in every possible way they could think of, wanting to demolish the religion as a whole. However, this act only attracted more Christians, because it showed them what Jesus is, a true god. By 300 CE, there were millions of Christians that resided in Europe, North Africa, and western Asia. During that time, an emperor who was in favor of Christianity, named Constantine, wanted to legalize Christianity in Rome. In 313 CE, Constantine announced the Edict of Milan, which allowed Christians to practice their religion openly without any restrictions. By 380 CE, Christianity officially became the religion of the Roman Empire.

# Judaism

Judaism was the oldest monotheistic religion. In 63 BCE, Judea fell under the Roman rule. The Romans were building a great empire, and did not want any rebellions started. Thousands of Jewish people were brutally killed by the Romans, however, the Romans did allow the Jews to practice their religion and govern some of their affairs. In 22 BCE, the Romans appointed a man named Herod to rule the Jews, and Herod wanted to expand the Second Temple of Jerusalem, but he was often viewed as just a puppet of the Romans, the Jews did not really trust him. In 66 CE, the Jews rose up against the Romans, and eventually kept the Romans out of Jerusalem for three years. In 70 CE, a Roman military leader, named Titus, led about 60,000 soldiers against the Jews. Although the Jews did fight back ferociously, they were greatly outnumbered and had their temple, which took 46 years to build, destroyed with the only remaining part being the Western Wall, which, to this day, is still honored by many people today.

## Answer:

As the empire expanded, the Romans refrained from imposing their own religious beliefs upon those they conquered, however, this inclusion must not be misinterpreted as tolerance, this can be seen with their early reaction to the Jewish and Christian population. Eventually, all of their gods would be washed away, gradually replaced by Christianity, and in the eyes of some, this change brought about the decline of the western empire.

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