

10 JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY

600 B.C.E. – 1100 C.E.

PEOPLES OF THE BIBLE: GOD'S EVOLUTION IN WEST ASIA AND EUROPE

COMMENTARY

Chapter 10 continues the text's examination of world religions, outlining the origins and development of Judaism, from the time of **Abraham** (c. 1750 B.C.E.) to the beginning of the Jewish **diaspora** in the period c. 70-135, C.E. It then traces the growth of Christianity, which began as a small Jewish sect, from the birth and ministry of **Jesus of Nazareth** (c. 4 B.C.E. - 30 C.E.) to its establishment as the dominant religion of Europe and the **Great Schism**, or split, between the **Roman Catholic** and **Orthodox** branches of the Christian Church in 1054 C.E. As the subtitle of the chapter suggests, three of the major themes of the chapter are: (1) the development of Jewish law and moral teachings and their continuity and modification in Christian doctrines; (2) the origins of Jewish **monotheism** and the evolution of the concept of God and continuing debates over God's nature and relationship to the material world in both Judaism and early Christianity; and (3) the importance of the cross-fertilization of different religious traditions in western Asia (the "Middle East" or "Holy Lands") in the first two processes. In addition, Spodek addresses a number of other significant questions. How reliable is the Jewish **TaNaKh** (the Old Testament of the Christian Bible) as an historical account of the Jewish people and the development of their religion? How did Judaism evolve from its origins as an exclusive, ethnically-based religion to one with a universalist message of morality, hope and redemption? How accurate a picture of Jesus' life and teachings is presented in the Christian **Gospels**? How and why did Christianity survive and eventually triumph over other religions and the state in the Roman Empire? And how did Christianity, which began as a "people's religion" which rejected the legalistic and hierarchical aspects of Judaism in favor of a simple message of **salvation by faith** alone, develop into what eventually became a highly centralized church bureaucracy and the single most important unifying element in medieval European society?

The chapter also invites a number of comparisons, some explicitly, some not, between Judaism and Christianity and, by implication, with other world religions as well. Both religions trace their beginnings to a specific founder, whose divinely inspired message was very simple: accept my god as your only God and he will protect you. (With the major difference, of course, that while Abraham was a mortal human who made a **covenant** with **YHWH** to protect and preserve his own family, Jesus came to be viewed in the Christian concept of the **trinity** as human, as the Son of God and **Christ** (or **Messiah**) and as God himself, preaching a message of universal salvation.) Both faiths espoused strong legal and moral codes, especially regarding sexual morality, with the **apostle Paul** forming an important link between the two in this respect. Jews and Christians both maintained and arguably strengthened their faiths through long periods of persecution and both, in turn, have proven themselves to be extremely warlike and intolerant of internal dissent and of other religions. Both religions benefited from being adopted as official "state religions" (of Israel and the Roman Empire, respectively) and both returned the favor, as it were, by serving as the principal conservators of Jewish and Roman culture through centuries of invasion, political disintegration and dispersion. On the other hand, relations between the faithful and the state have always been ambivalent in both religions. Jewish **prophets** railed against the immorality and iniquities of the kings of Israel and Judaea and Jesus questioned the authority of both King Herod and the Romans. And while the Orthodox Church virtually became a branch of the government of the **Byzantine Empire**, Rome's successor in the East, we shall see in later chapters that the Roman **Pope** and the rulers of the emerging states of western and central Europe were to clash repeatedly over issues ranging from appointment of church officials to the church's authority over marriage and divorce.

One further topic that is examined briefly in Chapter 10 and will be revisited in succeeding chapters is the tenuous position of Jews in the diaspora and their comparative status in Christian Europe and the Islamic world. This and other issues common to all three monotheistic religions will be treated in Chapter 11, "Islam."

CHAPTER OUTLINE

A. Judaism

1. The Covenant and the meaning of monotheism
2. Early Judaism: How do we know? -- the TaNaKh or Old Testament
3. Essential beliefs of Judaism in early scriptures
 - a. A single, all-powerful God
 - b. A divinely chosen people and a “promised land” – the Covenant
 - c. A divinely ordained law code -- SOURCE: The Ten Commandments
 - d. The Jewish calendar
4. The Evolution of God – FOCUS: Beliefs of Other Contemporary peoples
5. Later books of Jewish scripture
 - a. The teachings of the Prophets: morality and hope
 - b. Gender relations
6. Defeat, exile and redefinition
 - a. The Assyrian and Babylonian exiles
 - b. The Jewish Revolt and the Roman exile
7. Minority-majority relations in the Diaspora
8. Christianity emerges from Judaism

B. Christianity

1. Mythistory: How do we know?
 - a. The search for the historical Jesus
 - b. Judaea in Jesus’ time
2. Jesus’ life, teachings, and disciples
 - a. The Gospels – SOURCE: The Sermon on the Mount
 - b. Adapting (Jewish) rituals and philosophies: Jesus’ teachings
 - c. Jesus and the Jewish establishment
 - d. Miracle and mystery: passion and resurrection
3. Christianity organizes
 - a. The early disciples
 - b. Paul organizes the early church
 - i. Paul’s Epistles
 - ii. Paul’s teachings
 - c. The Christian calendar
 - d. Gender relations and slavery
 - e. Struggle for survival in Rome
4. Christianity triumphant
 - a. The conversion of Constantine
 - b. How had Christianity succeeded?
 - i. Edward Gibbon’s explanations (1776)
 - ii. Views of modern scholars
5. Doctrine: definition and dispute
 - a. Augustine and Neoplatonism – PROFILE: St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo
 - b. Original sin, sexuality, and salvation
 - c. Church dogma: discipline and battles
 - i. The Council of Nicaea and the divinity of Jesus
 - ii. Persecution of dissidents
6. Official Christianity in the wake of empire
 - a. Conversion of the barbarians
 - b. Monasteries and missionaries
 - i. Decentralized leadership
 - ii. St. Benedict
 - c. The Church: East and West
 - i. The question of authority: Rome vs. the eastern church
 - ii. SPOTLIGHT: Icons and Iconoclasm

- iii. The Great Schism (1054)
- 7. Christianity in western Europe
 - a. Christian clergy and the papacy
 - b. Charlemagne – SOURCE: Charlemagne and Harun al-Rashid
- 8. Transitions

IDENTIFICATION TERMS

For each term, students should be able to provide an identification or definition, an approximate date, a geographical location (if relevant) and – most important – a concise explanation of its significance in the context of the chapter. Terms that appear in the *Study Guide* are listed in **bold** font in the first column.

<i>The City of God</i>	Abraham	gospels
Mt. Sinai	Torah	Essenes
Esther	monotheism	Sermon on the Mount
monasticism	Moses	sacraments
The Covenant:	YHWH	Last Supper
Saul of Tarsus	Canaan	Nero
Dead Sea Scrolls	Exodus	Constantine
Council of Nicaea	Jewish Prophets	Theodosius
Iconoclast Controversy	Babylonian Talmud	Neoplatonism
<i>Book of Job</i>	The Temple	St. Augustine of Hippo
	Diaspora	Arian Controversy
	rabbinical Judaism	St. Benedict
	Benjamin of Tudela	Eastern Orthodox Church
	“godwrestling”	Charlemagne

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading and studying Chapter 10, students should be able to:

1. Explain the basic concepts of Judaism and the Jewish religion’s later influence on Christianity and Islam.
2. Understand the implications of the concept of monotheism.
3. Trace the historical evolution of Judaism from the religion of the Hebrew people; through the era of the Jewish kingdoms and the Prophets and the Babylonian captivity; to the diaspora.
4. Explain the differences and similarities between Judaism and Christianity.
5. Understand why St. Paul is often referred to a “the second founder of Christianity.”
6. Explain why the Christian religion survived and flourished in the Roman Empire, in spite of persecutions.
7. Discuss how the organizational structure of the Christian Church played a major role in the evolution of European culture.

SUGGESTIONS FOR LECTURE TOPICS

1. Use Spodek’s analytical model of religion to compare and contrast the basic concepts of Judaism and Christianity.
2. Explain how Judaism evolved from the tribal religion of the Hebrews into the monotheist, universalist faith of the Prophets; and from a religion of priests into the rabbinical Judaism of the diaspora. Discuss how the history of the Jewish people contributed to these developments.
3. Discuss the religious, political and social conditions of Roman Judaea at the time of Jesus Christ and how they contributed to the acceptance of his teachings.
4. Explain the attractions of Christianity to different groups within the Roman Empire and the different methods by which early Christians propagated their faith.
5. Discuss the background of the schism between Roman and Eastern Orthodox Christianity.

TOPICS FOR ESSAYS OR CLASS DISCUSSIONS

1. Explain the attraction of Christianity to many in the Roman Empire, even during times of official persecution. Among which groups was it apparently most popular? Why is this thought to be the case?
2. According to the text, “The Jewish belief in one god, monotheism, was not simply a reduction in the number of gods from many to one.” What does Spodek mean by that statement? What, in addition to having only one god, does “monotheism” imply?
3. Debate: Discuss the following statement: “Christianity followed Jewish doctrines closely in many respects, but in no other area as closely as its view and treatment of women.” Is this a valid statement? Cite specific evidence to support your argument, one way or the other.
4. Group work: Examine and compare the contributions to Christian theology and the growth of Christianity made by Paul of Tarsus (St. Paul) and Augustine of Hippo (St. Augustine). How, in particular, did each facilitate the expansion of Christianity in the Roman Empire? How was each, in different respects, an example of the “Hellenistic Ecumene”?
5. Discuss the roles of monasticism, missionaries, and rulers in the expansion of Christianity, citing specific examples in your explanation. How do their respective roles compare with their counterparts in Asia, regarding the spread of Hinduism and Buddhism?
6. Summarize the core beliefs of Judaism, as related in the text’s excerpts from the *Torah*. Which of these were retained by Christianity? Support your answer with specific evidence.
7. Debate: The text states that Jesus “sounded like a latter-day Jewish prophet calling his people to reform,” in his “Sermon on the Mount.” What does the author mean by this statement? How do Jesus’ words -- and perhaps the general tone of his preaching, resemble those of the earlier prophets and place him within the Jewish tradition? Was he a “Jewish Prophet”?
8. Current events & issues: In 2000, Israeli and Palestinian leaders failed to come to agreement over a working relationship concerning the status of Jerusalem, there is increasing friction between Christian, Jewish and Muslim religious leaders regarding sacred sites in the city. How can an historical perspective illuminate these problems?

TEXT RESOURCES (Spodek, 2nd ed.)

Timetables, charts and graphs:	Judaism and Christianity	(p. 294-295)
	Jewish Festival and Fast Days	(p. 303)
	Major Christian Festivals	(p. 315)
	The Carolingian Dynasty	(p. 328)
Large photographs or illustrations:	Dead Sea Scrolls (Isaiah scroll)	(p. 297)
	Moses (mosaic from San Vitale, Italy)	(p. 299)
	Crossing the Red Sea (fresco from Dura Europos)	(p. 302)
	The second (Herod’s) Temple	(p. 305)
	Menorah Procession (Arch of Titus, Rome)	(p. 306)
	Silver crucifix from Birka, Sweden	(p. 311)
	The four evangelists (<i>Gospel Book of Charlemagne</i>)	(p. 312)
	Marble head of Constantine (Rome)	(p. 317)
	Monastery of St. Catherine, Mt. Sinai	(p. 323)
	Christ triumphing over evil (Merovingian)	(p. 327)
Bronze statue of Charlemagne	(p. 328)	
Maps:	The Kingdom of Israel	(p. 296)

	The Jewish Diaspora	(p. 307)
	Palestine at the time of Jesus	(p. 308)
	Paul's missionary journeys	(p. 314)
	The spread of Christianity	(p. 326)
SPOTLIGHT:	Icons and Iconoclasm	(p. 324-325)
PROFILE:	St. Augustine of Hippo	(p. 319)
FOCUS:	Beliefs of other Contemporary Peoples	(p. 301)
SOURCES:	The Ten Commandments	(p. 298)
	The Sermon on the Mount: the "Beatitudes"	(p. 310)
	Charlemagne and Harun-al-Rashid	(p. 329)

ADDITIONAL PRIMARY SOURCES (*Documents Set & www.prenhall.com/Spodek*)

10-1	Messianic Scriptures: Israel's expectations of a Redeemer
10-2	The "Midrash": a legal commentary on the Torah with the "common touch"
10-3	Maimonides: the culmination of medieval Hebraic thought
10-4	Luke and Acts: foundations for a new faith
10-5	Eusebius of Caesarea: witness to persecution and deliverance
10-6	Bishop Synesius of Cyrene: a lukewarm churchman
10-7	Leo I: the man who laid the foundations for the medieval papacy
www	Hope and defiance: the defense of Masada [from Josephus, <i>The Jewish War</i>]

AUDIOVISUAL RESOURCES (videos, DVD's, CD-ROM, and web-sites)

***Dead Sea Scrolls – Unraveling the Mystery: Discovery Channel.* [video; 52 minutes, color]**

Follows the efforts of scholars using the latest technologies to attempt to decipher hidden meanings in the scrolls in order to illuminate a critical period in the history of both Judaism and Christianity.

***Early Christianity and the Rise of the Church, 1989.* [2 videos; 60 minutes, color]**

Part of *The Western Tradition* series: studies the growth and development of early Christianity and its break from Judaism.

***From Jesus to Christ: Frontline.* [4 videos; 240 minutes, color]**

Narrates the early development of Christianity, the divergence between Judaism and the new religion, and the evolution of Christ's divinity.

***Great Religions of the World: Catholicism.* [video; 70 minutes, color]**

Ben Kingsley traces the early history of Christianity and the development of the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches.

***Great Religions of the World: Judaism.* [video; 70 minutes, color]**

The companion video to the above.

***The Historical Jesus: <http://www.willamette.edu/~tbrouwer>* [web-site]**

Contains a number of links to sites relating to scholarship on Jesus' life.

***Judaism and Jewish Resources: <http://shamash.nysernet.org/trb/judaism.html>* [web-site]**

An important source for links to other Jewish resources.

Scrolls from the Dead Sea: <http://sunsite.unc.edu/expo/deadsea.scrolls.exhibit/intro.html> [web-site]

This site includes images of scroll fragments (with English translations), Qumran artifacts, and commentaries.