

Origins of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam





- The three major religions that originated in Southwest Asia are Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.
- All are based on monotheism, a belief in one god.
- Each religion has a sacred text, or book, which is at the core of its faith.
- Each book is a collection of writings compiled over time.
- None was written by the central figure of the faith.

Origins of Judaism



- Judaism is the oldest of the three religions.
- It began as a set of beliefs and laws practiced by ancient Hebrew people in Southwest Asia.
- Its book is the Hebrew Bible.

Origins of Judaism



- Jews believe that one day a human leader will come as a messenger of God and bring about a golden age.
- They call this leader the messiah.
- In Greek versions of the Bible, messiah is written as christos, the anointed one.

Origins of Judaism



- The Bible names Abraham as the father of the Jews.
- There is no other evidence of his life. Scholars place Abraham living sometime between 2000 and 1500 BCE.
- The Bible states that Abraham was born in Ur, in present-day Iraq.
- He later moved to Canaan, in present-day Israel.

Origins of Judaism



- Jews believe Canaan is the Promised Land, which God promised to Abraham and his descendants.
- It is said that Abraham's grandson Jacob had 12 sons.
- The twelve tribes of Israel began with Jacob's sons.
- Jacob was later called Israel, and his descendants are called Israelites.

Origins of Judaism



- According to the Bible, the First Temple for Jewish worship was built around 900–1000 BCE and destroyed by Babylonians in 586 BCE.
- The Jews were then sent out of Canaan, but returned after 50 years in exile.

Origins of Judaism



- A Diaspora occurs when a group of people leave their homeland and move to many different locations separately.
- All of the world's Jewish communities today that do not live in present-day Israel are part of the Jewish Diaspora.

Origins of Judaism



- A new temple was finished 70 years later on the site of the First Temple, but was badly plundered by invading Romans about 54 BCE.
- King Herod, a Jew, ruled Judea for the Romans.
- The second temple was rebuilt in 20 BCE.

Origins of Judaism



- When Romans attacked Jerusalem again in 70 CE, they destroyed Herod's temple.
- Today, the single remaining temple wall, the Western Wall, is a place of prayer for Jewish pilgrims.
- Jews moved away from the land again, until the modern state of Israel was formed in the late 1940s.

Origins of Christianity



- In 30 CE, a Jew named Jesus began preaching new ideas about Judaism in Roman-controlled Judea.
- The later title of Jesus Christ given to Jesus is a reference to the belief by his followers that he is the Jewish messiah.

Origins of Christianity



- According to the Christian New Testament, Jesus preached only to his fellow Jews.
- His idea was that the old laws of Judaism should be replaced by a simpler system based on love of one's fellow human beings.
- He began to grow popular. Jewish leaders did not want Jesus and the disciples Jesus to threaten their power and asked the Romans to arrest him.

Origins of Christianity



- The Romans found him guilty of speaking against Jewish laws and sentenced him to death by crucifixion, or by being hung on a cross.
- He died in 33 CE, after preaching for only three years.

Origins of Christianity



- Jesus had 12 close followers, or disciples. Interestingly, a man who had never met Jesus became the person to spread his message around the world.
- Paul of Tarsus had a vision of Jesus after the crucifixion that told him to teach Jesus' ideas to non-Jews.
- Paul traveled to build churches throughout the ancient world in Ephesus, Corinth, Rome, and other cities.
- The New Testament records Paul's journeys through a series of letters, or epistles, that he wrote.

Origins of Christianity



- The chapters of Romans, Corinthians, Ephesians, Galatians, and Thessalonians, are all letters written by Paul to the people of new, non-Jewish churches established in these locations.
- Paul taught them how to live their lives in these letters.

Origins of Christianity



- By 100 CE, the growth of Christianity was left to a new generation of people who had never known Jesus and who did not know Jewish laws.
- Roman authorities fought the growth of Christianity.
- Christians were often arrested and killed.
- Most Christians practiced their religion in hiding, but their numbers continued to grow and the religion spread.

Origins of Christianity



- By the early 4th century, Christianity may have reached members of the Roman emperor's family.
- The Roman Emperor Constantine was not a Christian, but he had his soldiers fight an important battle in 313 CE with a Christian symbol on their shields.
- His army won the battle.

Origins of Christianity



- In the nearly 300 years since his death, many different ideas had developed about how to follow Jesus.
- In 325 CE, Constantine called a meeting for all the Christian leaders to meet in Nicea.
- About 300 men attended the meeting to discuss how Christianity should be practiced.

Origins of Christianity



- The council produced the Nicene Creed, the first attempt at a uniform statement of Christian doctrine.
- When the Christian leaders left this meeting, a new type of Christian church had been formed.
- This new church was said to be Catholic, which means universal.

Origins of Islam



- The Prophet Muhammad was an Arab born in 570 CE, in Mecca, which is in present-day Saudi Arabia.
- He was a merchant known as “al-Amin,” the trustworthy one.
- According to Islamic tradition, in 610 CE, while he was praying in a cave, he had a vision of the angel Gabriel, a figure in the Hebrew Bible.
- The angel gave him messages from God, called Allah in Arabic.

Origins of Islam



- Muhammad spread the messages he received from Allah.
- He was forced to flee Mecca for Medina in 622 CE.
- This flight is known as the Hijrah.
- The Islamic calendar begins at this date.
- By the time he died in 632 CE, Islamic control of central Arabia was well underway.

Origins of Islam



- Before 700 CE, Muhammad's followers were fighting over his successor.
- The fight split Muslims into the Shi'a and the Sunni.
- The Shi'a comprise 10%—15% of Islamic followers today and the Sunni comprise close to 90%.

Origins of Islam



- The Five Pillars of Islam is the term for the religion's five main beliefs.
- They are accepted by all Sunnis and Shi'as, but the Shi'as have added several other practices to form the Branches of Religion.

The Five Pillars



The Five Pillars are:

1. Believe in only one God and Muhammad is his messenger.
2. Pray in the direction of Mecca five times a day.
3. Donate money to the poor.
4. Fast during the month of Ramadan.
5. Make a journey, or häjj, to Mecca at least once.

Origins of Islam



- Islam has other rules, including what Muslims are allowed to eat and drink.
- Also, the Qur'an, their sacred book, explains a concept called jihad.
- Jihad requires believers to meet the enemies of Islam in combat.
- Enemies can be attacked by the heart, the tongue, the hand, or the sword.

Origins of Islam



- An Islamic Golden Age lasted from 750 to 1400.
- Advances in Islamic learning inspired the European Renaissance.
- The city of Mecca became a major economic center, helping Islam expand.
- Literacy was, for the first time, widespread among the populations of the Middle East.

Origins of Islam



- In 1258, the Islamic city of Baghdad was attacked, conquered, and destroyed by the Mongols, a dynasty from central Asia.
- The Islamic Golden Age began to draw to a close.

Summary



- Write 3 paragraphs describing the beginnings to the spread of each of the three main religions of the Middle East.