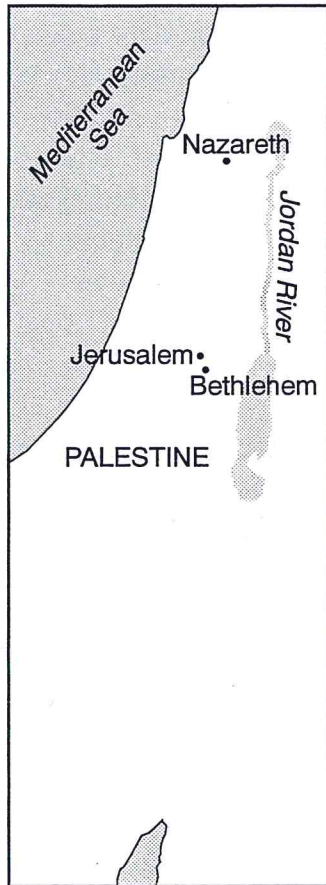




Information About Christianity



Palestine in A.D. 0

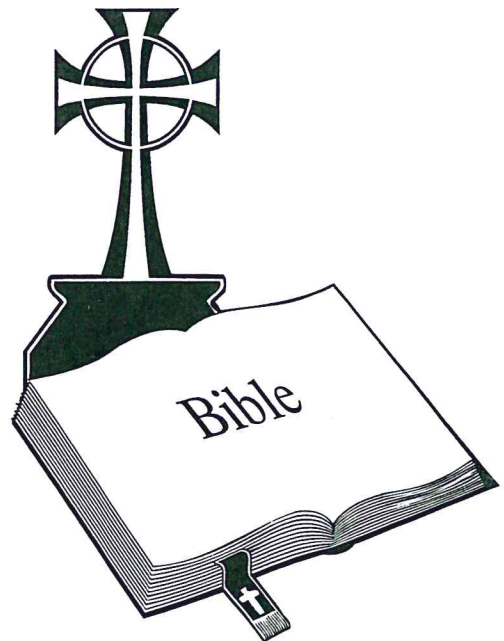
Followers of Christianity, called Christians, believe in one God—the God of Abraham, often called *Yahweh* in English. Abraham lived in the Middle East about 4,000 years ago at a time when most people believed in many gods. Abraham believed that only one all-powerful God had created the world. Christians believe God made a covenant (agreement) with Abraham that Abraham’s descendants would have a special relationship with God. Abraham’s descendants became the Hebrews, who today are called Jews.

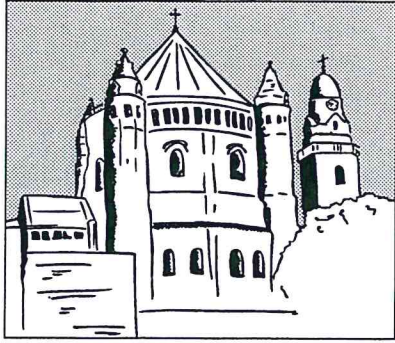
Christians base their religion on the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, known as Jesus Christ, who was a Jew. Jesus was born in Bethlehem, near the city of Jerusalem, around the year A.D. 0. During his life he traveled around northern Palestine teaching about a new covenant between God and the Jews. Those who followed Jesus’s teachings broke away from other Jews and became Christians, worshipping God in a new way that focused on Jesus’s teachings.

The Christian concept of God is called the *Trinity* because Christians believe God has three parts: God the Father, God the Son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit (God’s presence on earth). Therefore, all Christians believe Jesus was a part of God, and most Christians believe Jesus was both human and divine. Christians

believe Jesus died on a cross, was buried, and rose from the dead three days later. Christians also believe Jesus then ascended (went up) to heaven to be with God the Father. The story of His life is recorded in the Christian holy book.

Christians call their holy book the Bible. It is made up of two parts, the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament is the history of the law and prophets (messengers of God’s revelation) of the ancient Hebrews. It also contains psalms—prayers written in song or poem form. The New Testament includes the four Gospels—stories of Jesus’s life—and letters and stories about early Christians. The Bible has no sacred language and has been translated into thousands of languages.





Exterior of a church

The goal of Christianity is to achieve salvation, which is the eternal life of one's soul with God in heaven. The opposite of salvation is damnation, or eternal suffering in hell. Christianity condemns to damnation those who sin (turn away from Jesus's teachings) without repentance (being sorry). Christians believe one attains salvation by following Jesus's teachings about living a moral life and by participating in the sacraments—sacred rituals in which Christians experience the Holy Spirit. Though some Christian sects practice as many as seven sacraments, all sects recognize baptism and communion to be sacraments.

Baptism is the ritual initiation into Christianity and reenacts Jesus's blessing in the River Jordan. Communion, commonly called the Lord's Supper, reenacts Jesus's breaking of bread and sharing of wine at the last dinner before His death.

Christianity requires an ordained ministry—people specially trained to carry out the teachings and rituals of the faith—to preside over the sacraments. Ordained ministers—called priests, pastors, or ministers—lead Christians in worship in holy buildings called churches. The most important service occurs on Sunday. During the worship service, Christians experience the sacraments, recite their creed (basic belief), pray, and read from the Bible. The minister delivers a sermon related to the Bible readings. Christianity has three main sects—Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant—all of which believe that God continues to reveal his teachings to the world. All Christian sects consider Jerusalem the holiest city because that is where they believe Christ died and rose from the dead.