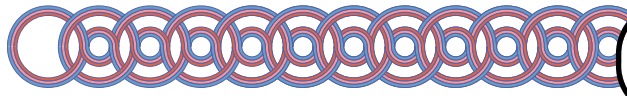




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# Introduction

If your students were asked what they know about Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, Sikhism or Christianity, they might respond with a limited amount of information. Although they are impacted almost daily with information related directly or indirectly to religious issues, they often know little about the religions themselves or the lives of the great spiritual leaders.

As our world becomes more interdependent, there is a need to awaken to one another's spiritual heritage. Throughout history, the world has been shaped by people religious beliefs. To teach history without religion is equivalent to teaching biology without reference to the human body. Schools now recognise this issue and have begun to advocate religious studies within the framework of history.

Religious studies foster tolerance. This is, perhaps, the most valuable lesson. Racism and stereotypes are born largely out of ignorance. How wonderful to give students the opportunity to listen to a Buddhist speaker or to visit a synagogue and ask questions of a rabbi. These kinds of direct contacts are invaluable.

Many people may wonder if students in the middle years are too young to begin studying religion. Absolutely not! In fact, such a unit may provide spiritual nourishment missing in many students' lives or it may strengthen the students' ties to their own faiths. Some may finally have the chance to wonder out loud about the meaning of life. They might return home and ask questions of their parents. Students are usually genuinely inspired by such a topic. Parents are likely to be appreciative because in many cases they will lean along with their children.

Teaching religion presents the educator with a tremendous responsibility. The teacher must always be sensitive to their own religious and social conditioning, as well as that of the students and parents. If this sensitivity exists, today's students will begin to harbour a deeper understanding of and respect for one another's faith.

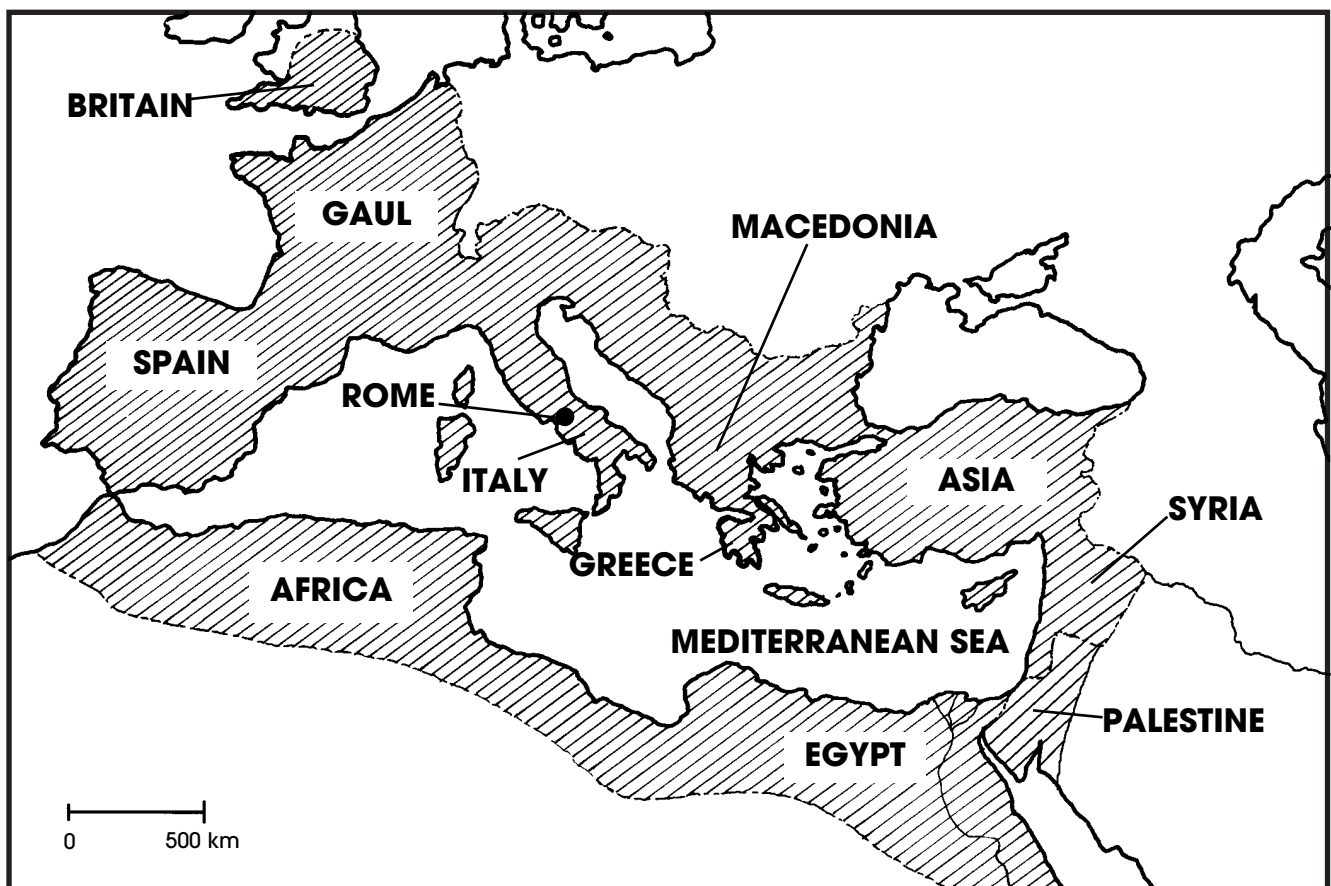
Each title in this series introduces one of the world's 'great' religions but cannot address each religion in great detail. Rather, this series should be thought of as a starting point. While it is written for middle-years students, it can easily be adapted for younger or older students.

# The Roman Empire

By the 1st century CE, the Roman Empire ruled a large part of the known world. In 63 BCE, General Pompey conquered Jerusalem, capital of Judea. The Romans renamed this area Palestine and ruled over it for nearly 700 years. The Empire's sophisticated system of roads helped aid the fast spread of Christianity. The map below shows the Roman Empire in the 1st century CE.

From 37–4 BCE, Herod the Great was made King of the Jews by the Romans. When he died, he divided the territory among his three sons: Archelaus, Antipas and Philip, who also used the title 'Herod'. Archelaus ruled over Judea, but in 6 CE he was deposed and a Roman governor took control. At the time of Jesus' death, Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea.

The map on page 7 shows Palestine in the time of Jesus. Many places may already be familiar to you. You will want to refer to the map as you read about the life of Jesus.



# The Baptism of Jesus

## Jesus and John the Baptist

The New Testament (Luke 1) describes the birth of John the Baptist, son of a priest named Zechariah and his wife, Elizabeth. John's birth was also foretold by an angel.

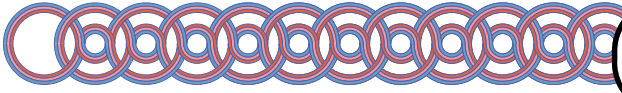
The angel Gabriel told Zechariah that John would be great in God's sight and would turn many others toward God.

When John grew up, he fulfilled the prophecy. He lived simply, dressed in camel skins and ate locusts and wild honey. He preached to the people about the coming of the Saviour and urged them to repent of their sins and live a godly life. He spoke of generosity, honesty and non-violence. To the people he said, 'The man with two tunics should share with him who has none and the one who has food should do the same'. To the tax collectors he said, 'Don't collect any more than you are required to'. To the soldiers, he said, 'Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely – be content with your pay'. (Luke 3:10–14)



He also baptised people by immersing them in the water of the Jordan River. When Jesus came to be baptised, John acknowledged him as the long-awaited Saviour sent by God. After he was baptised, the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus in the form of a dove and a voice from heaven said, 'You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased'. (Luke 3:22)

Because of Jesus' example of being baptised, baptism has become an important religious rite for Christians.



# Jesus Is Tempted

After being baptised by John, Jesus left for the desert where he fasted 40 days and nights. This story, from Matthew 4:1–11, tells of the temptations Jesus faced during his retreat into the wilderness.

<sup>1</sup>Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. <sup>2</sup>After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. <sup>3</sup>The tempter came to him and said, 'If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread'. <sup>4</sup>Jesus answered, 'It is written, 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God'.'

<sup>5</sup>Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. <sup>6</sup>'If you are the Son of God', he said, 'throw yourself down. For it is written:

'He will command his angels concerning you,  
and they will lift you up in their hands, so that  
you will not strike your foot against a stone'.'

<sup>7</sup>Jesus answered him, 'It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test'.'

<sup>8</sup>Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. <sup>9</sup>'All this I will give you', he said, 'if you will bow down and worship me'. <sup>10</sup>Jesus said to him, 'Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only'.'

<sup>11</sup>Then the devil left him and the angels came and attended to him.

## Questions

Answer the questions below. Use a separate sheet of paper, if necessary.

1. What were the three temptations that Satan offered Jesus?

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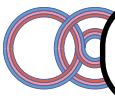
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2. What does 'fasted' mean? Why do you think Jesus fasted?

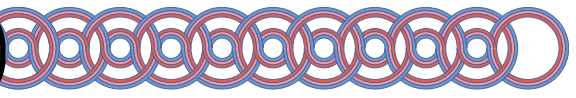
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# Rites of Passage



Define the following words associated with Christian sacraments and their significance:

1. Baptism \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Communion \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Not all rites of passage have religious significance. Below, describe a rite of passage that you or someone you know has experienced. Remember, it does not have to be a religious event. Describe the process in detail. Here are some possibilities:

- a. school graduation
- b. birthday
- c. receiving a new belt in karate
- d. joining a club.

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