

- Many non-believers joined churches, which caused churches to become lifeless.
- Christian churches adopted Roman cultural forms.
- Non-Roman nations became suspicious of their Christians as traitors.
- Church leaders required non-Romans to adopt Roman culture to be baptized.
- Church leaders argued about theology and political power.

2. Plan with your co-workers activities for the coming week.

Read together the list of activities in the section The First 400 years under Part 1. Choose one or two of those activities, and plan how you and the believers will do similar things in your community.

Meet with novice shepherds whom you train and teach them about ancient church history from this study or about another topic that they need. Use the Paul-Timothy menu.

3. Plan with your co-workers the up-coming worship.

Have believers read the Scriptures mentioned in Part 1 about how the apostles spread the Good News about Jesus, and explain how believers shared the good news in the first 400 years of Christian history.

- Let the believers **testify** about how they learned the Good News.
- Let the children present the drama that they have prepared.
- To celebrate the **Lord's Table**, read Revelation 3:20 and briefly explain the 'door'.
- **Memorize** together Matthew 24:14.
- Let small **groups** of two and three plan, pray and encourage one another.

The Spread of Christianity during its First 400 Years

Those who teach children should read study #66 for children.

1. Prepare yourself with prayer and the Word to teach your flock about the history of Christianity.

Prayer. “Lord Jesus, help us to learn from history what you are doing on earth.”

Note: In the first 400 years after Jesus died and rose to life, Christian faith spread to most of the cities and provinces of the Roman Empire in Asia and Europe. Often, the Roman authorities opposed the Christians and killed many of them. However, the Good News about Jesus kept on spreading, just as Jesus had said that it would.

Find in **Matthew 24:14; 28:18** and **Acts 1:8** what Jesus said about his good news?

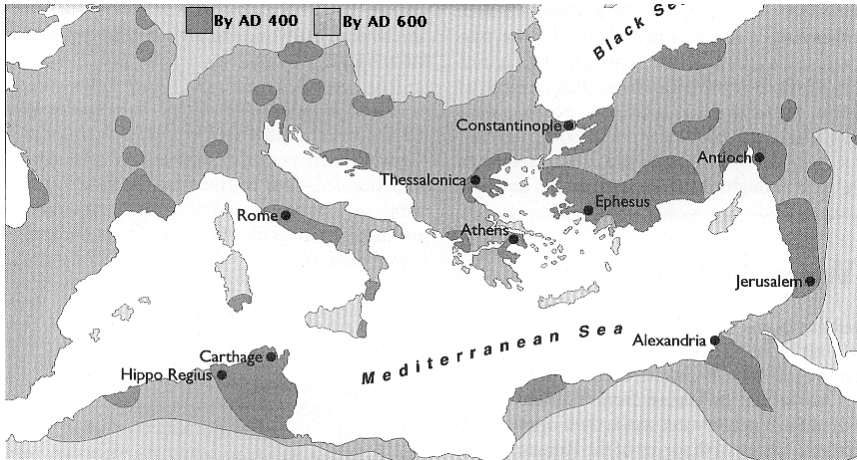
- Which nations and peoples would hear the good news? (Mt 24:14)
- What must happen before the end of the world? (24:14)
- Who has authority to send us believers to other people groups? (28:18)
- Where are we to go and make new followers of Jesus? (28:19)
- How long will the good news keep on spreading? (28:20)
- Where did Jesus say to go as witnesses? (Ac 1:8)
Find in **Acts 7:59 – 8:5** how Christianity spread without missionaries:
- What happened to some Christians, like Stephen? (7:59 & 60)
- What happened to the congregation in Jerusalem? (8:1)
- Where did the Christians go? (1)
- What did Saul do to the house church members? (3)
- What did the Christians do in other cities? (4 & 5)

Note: Saul later became a Christian and a missionary, changing his name to Paul. Persecution has two forms: criminal violence against Christians done by hateful persons and legal prosecution of Christians because they love Jesus.

Find in **Acts 14:21-23** how missionaries spread Christianity:

- To what kinds of places did the missionaries go? (21)

- What did they do in those cities? (22)
- What was the topic of their message? (23)
- What kinds of new communities did they start in every city? (23)
- What kinds of leaders served those new communities? (23)
- Find in Romans 15:18-21 what the Apostle Paul wrote about his missionary work:
- Who became obedient to Christ? (18)
- What was Paul's activity? (19)
- Where did he go from Jerusalem? (19)
- What kinds of places did he seek to go to? (20)
- What is God's promise about neglected people groups? (21)



The good news about Jesus spread to all parts of the Roman Empire. It spread into neighbouring peoples when Christians were taken as captives. Even though Christians were persecuted by unbelieving officials, much of the empire became Christian because:

- Christians opposed abortion, protecting women's health.
- Christians opposed infanticide, so had more children.
- Christians nursed the sick, helping many to survive.
- Christians respected women, granting them dignity and protection.
- Christians welcomed widows and orphans.
- Christians promoted ethnic harmony, uniting urban populations.
- Christians remained faithful in marriage, increasing fertility and life-span.

- Christians showed regard for life, raising human dignity.
- Christians followed the New Testament, living by grace and the Holy Spirit.

Ulfas and the Goths

During the first four centuries, non-Roman peoples began migrating into the Roman Empire. Robbers from the Goths captured a young Roman named Ulfas and carried him to their territory near the Danube River in Romania. There he became a Christian. Later, the Goths allowed him to study, and he was consecrated as a bishop at Constantinople in Turkey. Ulfas returned to the Goths, adopted their life style and spent 40 years evangelizing them, travelling from city to city by wagon. Before he died in AD 382, he gave the Goths an alphabet and translated much of the Bible for them. In AD 410, when the Goths over-ran the Roman Empire, they were mostly Christian. Even the pagans commented that the Goths respected others' property and had high moral standards.

The year AD 313

By the year AD 300, there were so many Christians in the Empire, that the Roman government decided to stop persecuting them. Emperor Constantine issued his Edict of Toleration, making Christianity a legal religion. This had bad effects on Christianity:



Statue of Constantine