

# The Rise of Christianity

# Introductory Question

- Why has religion had such a large influence on human history?

# Rome at the time of Christ

- Started in Judea, province of Roman Empire



# Troubled times in Judea

- Resentment of Rome
- Belief in Messiah who would liberate the Jews
- Belief that Messiah would fulfill promises made to Abraham
- John the Baptist & Herod



# Jesus as reformer

- Attempted to reform religious practices
  - Single god as father of all
  - Love god above all, including wealth & law
  - Practice charity and the Golden Rule
  - People must be cleansed
  - Meek, oppressed, and forgiving get special rewards in heaven
  - Jesus as path to salvation

# Salvation Doctrine

- Belief system where followers are rewarded with a heavenly life after death
- Examples:
  - Christianity
  - Pure-Land Buddhism
  - Islam

During what type of times would salvation doctrines appeal most to people?

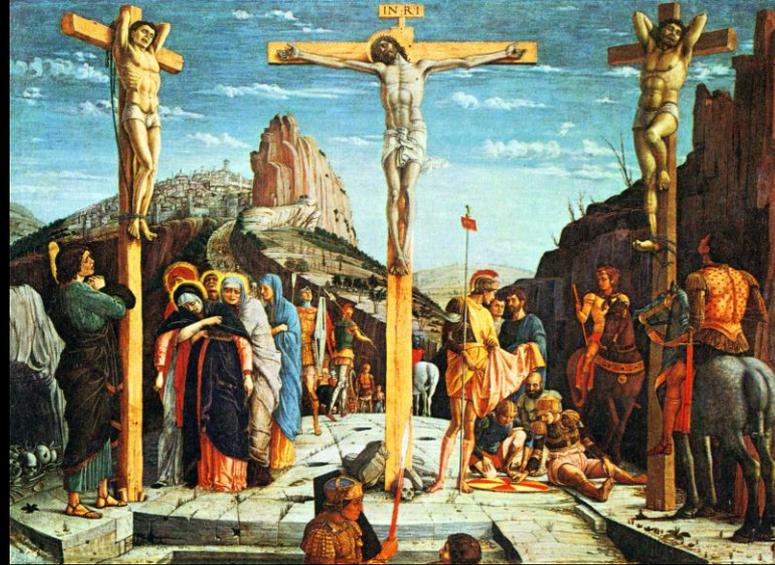


Pure Land Buddhism's "Pure Land"



# After death of Jesus, deification

- Persecuted as cult leader and false prophet
- Crucified & Died
- Rose from dead
- Seen as “son” of god, but also “part” of god
- The Trinity: Father, Son, Holy Ghost
- Each part of the trinity serves a different function



# Christianity's Appeal

- Old religions & philosophies unsatisfying
- Ideals attractive: one god, universal love, salvation, forgiveness
- Poor and oppressed given succor
- Courageous, sincere early leaders
- Early Christians willing to die for religion (martyrs)



St. Stephen martyred



# Disciples and Apostles

- 13 Apostles who followed Jesus during his lifetime, including
    - Matthew
    - Mark
    - Luke
    - John
    - Peter
- Came from different backgrounds but all gave up everything to follow

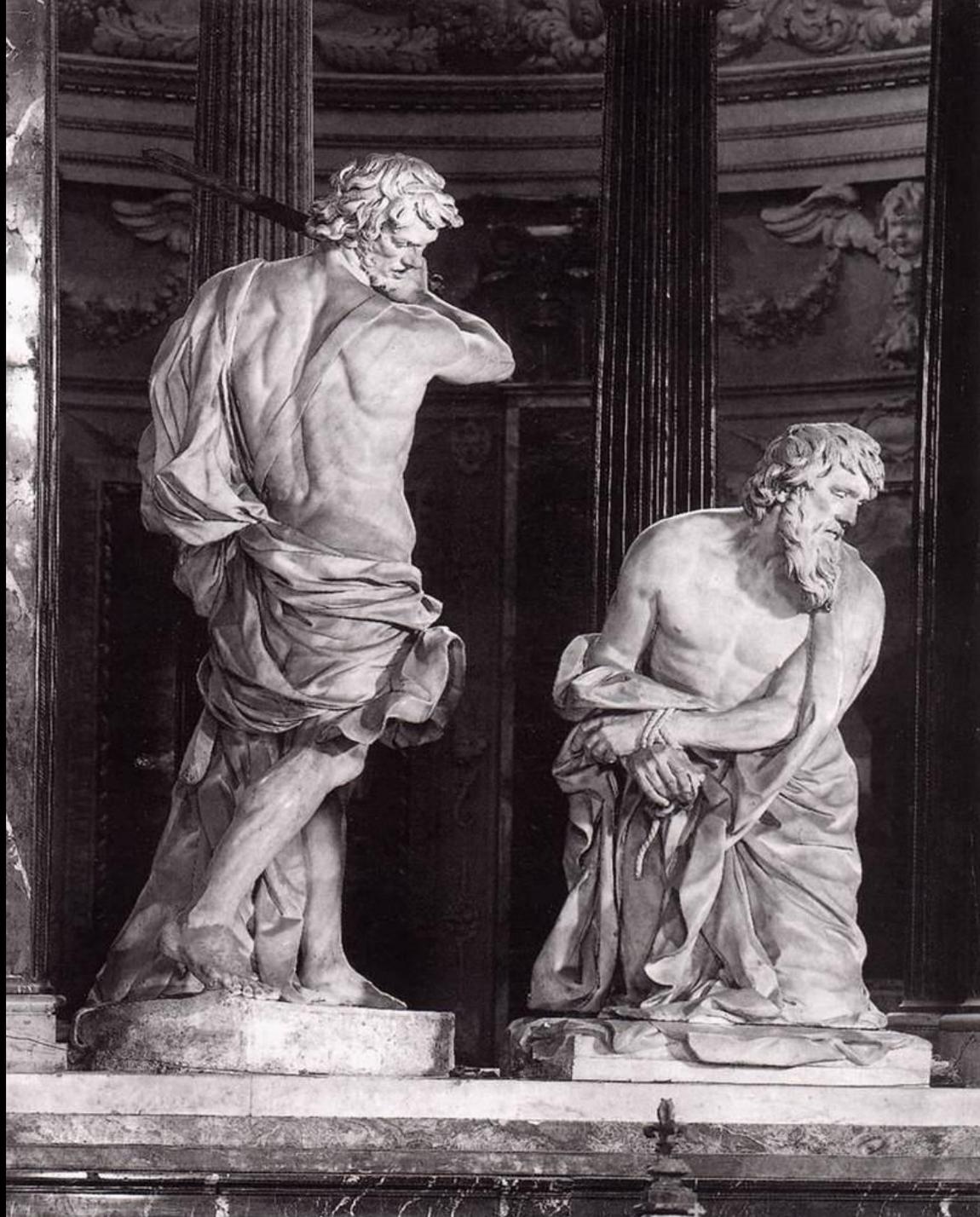
# Many Apostles, e.g. St. Paul

- Paul originally named “Saul”; persecuted Christians
- Had dramatic conversion experience
- Spread Christianity to non-Jews (Gentiles): famous sermon on Mt. Mars next to Parthenon in Athens
- Went to Greece & Rome with Disciple Peter to convert people
- Was martyred in Rome by beheading



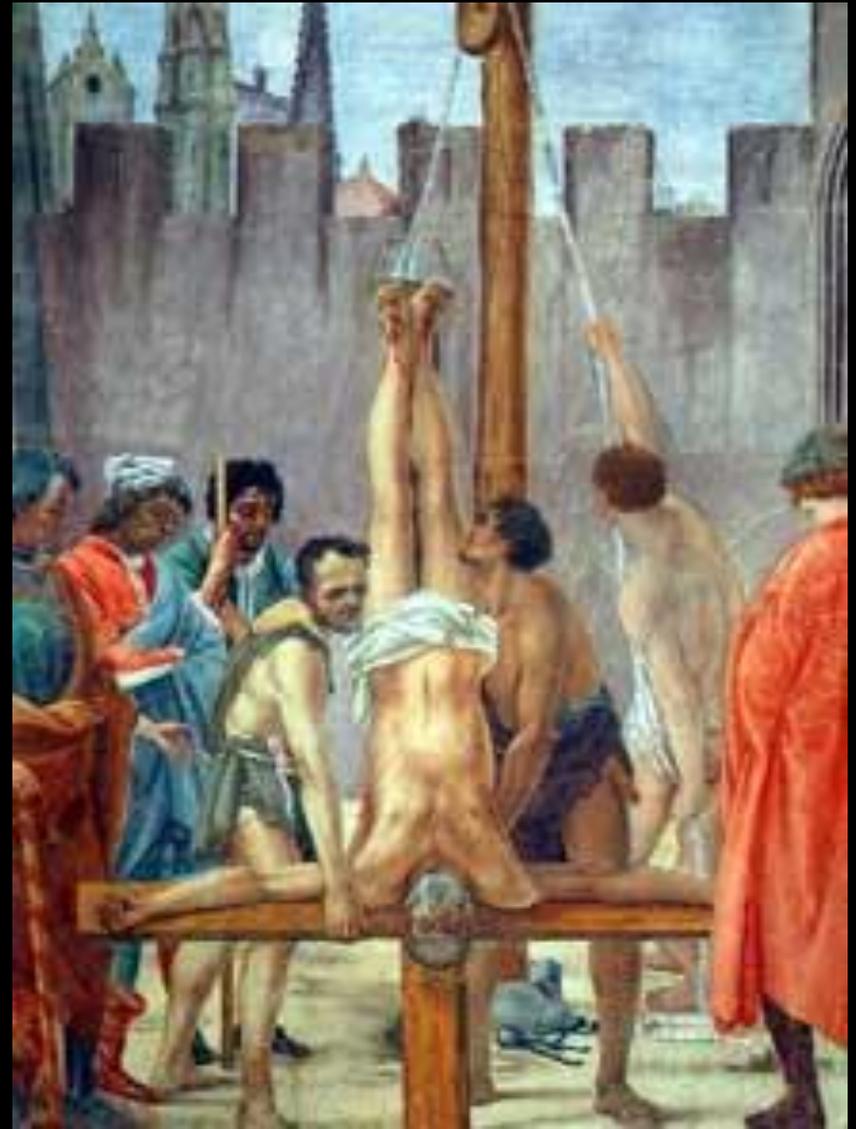
Conversion  
of St. Paul  
(Saul)

Martyrdom of Paul

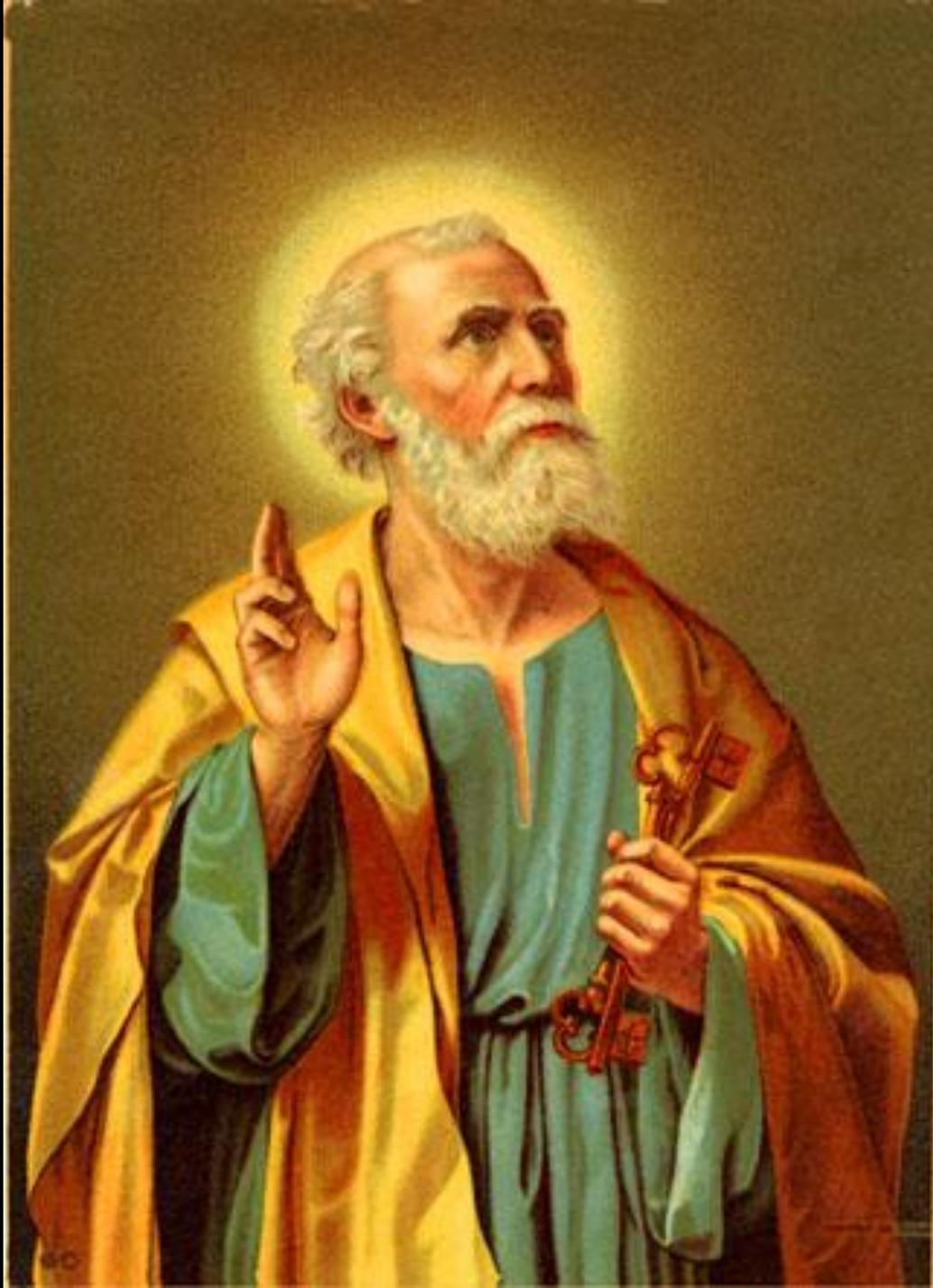


# St. Peter seen as founder of Catholic Church

- With Paul to Rome, imprisoned and martyred
- Asked to be crucified upside down
- Often shown holding key to heaven
- Was the first Pope



St. Peter



# Early Christian Communities

- “End Times” mentality
- Egalitarian & Socialist
- Some led by women
- No organized power structure
- Secret organizations, used symbol to know each other

**IXΘΥΣ** = Greek word for “Fish”

Ἰησοῦς = Jesus    Χριστός = Christ    Θεός = God  
Υἱός = Son    Σωτήρ = Savior

GREEK TO ENGLISH	I	X	Θ	Υ	Σ	TRANSLITERATION
	i	ch	th	u	s	

**“Jesus Christ,  
God’s Son,  
Savior”**

Tom Elseoad  
01-19-2002  
christian\_fish.cdf  
http://www.elseoad.com

# Early Christian Communities Secret

- Persecuted because:
  - Refused to worship Emperor
  - Wouldn't join Roman Army
  - Were willing to die for beliefs
  - Rejected Roman culture & decadence



Caves at Tarsus in Turkey

# Some Emperors strong persecutors

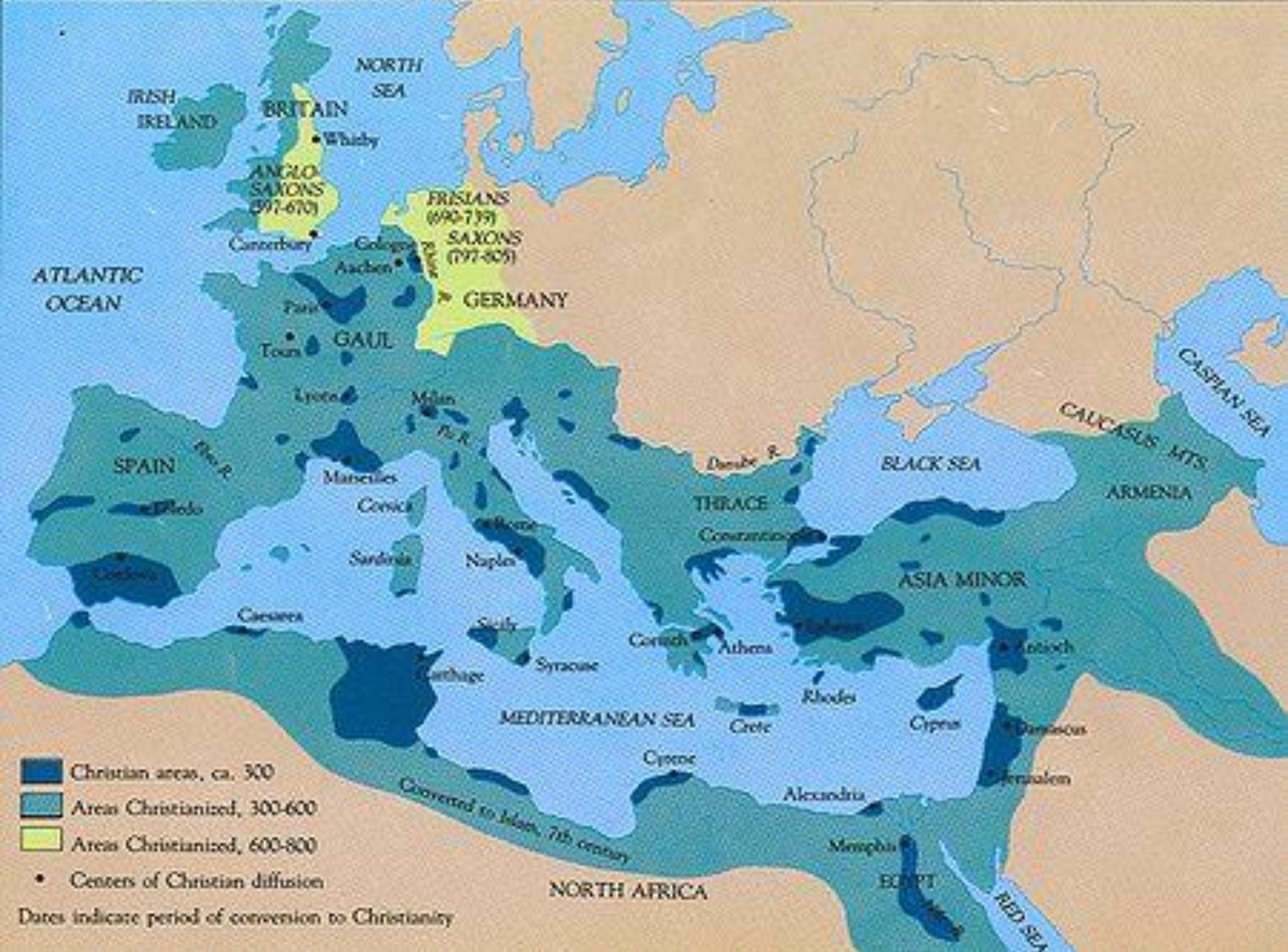
- Lost Roman Citizenship
- Had property confiscated
- Tortured and killed

Nero persecuted Christians



# Growth of Christianity

- Very slow during first 200 years
- As Roman Empire fell apart, Christianity gained traction
- 300 CE – Christians a sizeable minority



- Christian areas, ca. 300
- Areas Christianized, 300-600
- Areas Christianized, 600-800
- Centers of Christian diffusion

Dates indicate period of conversion to Christianity

# Christianity eventually legalized – and became religion of Rome

- 320's CE – Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity
- Council of Nicaea formed to consolidate Christian texts
- As center of empire shifted to Byzantium, Rome became a Christian Empire

