



BIBLE

STUDENT BOOK

▶ **8th Grade | Unit 5**

BIBLE 805

Early Church History

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Early Church History

Introduction

Christianity was born in a world already old and troubled. Great empires had risen and fallen; many of these empires had conquered one another. The glories of Egypt, Sumer, Babylon, Assyria, Persia, and Greece lay centuries in the past, only to be remembered by the treasures that they left behind. Rome, the greatest of the ancient empires, became the conquering empire. Rome governed all the civilized world. Christianity lived the first five centuries of its life almost exclusively in the Roman Empire. In the Roman Empire the faith would begin, suffer persecution, and prosper to a great height until AD 325.

In this LIFEPAAC® you will study the world of the early church. You will see the effect that the Roman Empire, the Jewish background, and the Greek thought and religion within the empire had upon the early church. You will examine early Christianity, beginning with the ministry of Jesus, continuing on to Pentecost, and including the period of Christianity in the Land of Israel.

Objectives

Read these objectives. The objectives tell you what you will be able to do when you have successfully completed this LIFEPAAC. When you have finished this LIFEPAAC, you should be able to:

1. Trace the growth of the Roman Empire.
2. Outline the government of the empire.
3. Explain the *Pax Romana*.
4. Trace Jewish history from David to Alexander the Great.
5. Identify the Maccabees.
6. Compare and contrast the synagogue and the Sanhedrin.
7. Explain the difference between the Pharisees and the Sadducees.
8. Outline the Dispersion.
9. Outline the ministry of Jesus.
10. Identify the events of Pentecost.
11. Outline the early church ministry in the Land of Israel.

1. THE WORLD OF THE EARLY CHURCH

Christianity was born in a world that was complex in many ways. The Roman government ruled all the known world at the time of the early church. If you combine the influence of the **empire**, the background and history of the

Jews, the influence of Greek thought, and the various kinds of religion that Christianity found in its environment, you can see the obstacles that the faith had to overcome in order to be victorious.

SECTION OBJECTIVES

Review these objectives. When you have completed this section, you should be able to:

1. Trace the growth of the Roman Empire.
2. Outline the government of the empire.
3. Explain the *Pax Romana*.
4. Trace Jewish history from David to Alexander the Great.
5. Identify the Maccabees.
6. Compare and contrast the synagogue and the Sanhedrin.
7. Explain the difference between the Pharisees and the Sadducees.
8. Outline the Dispersion.

VOCABULARY

Study these words to enhance your learning success in this section.

absolute monarchy (ab' su lüt mon' ur kē). A government where the ruler has complete control of all legislative, executive, and judicial powers.

alae (ā' lē). Cavalry units attached to auxiliary units of the Roman legion.

aqueduct (ak' wu dukt). An artificial channel or large pipe for bringing water from a distance.

ardent (är' dunt). Glowing with passion; passionate; impassioned.

century (sen' chur ē). A body of soldiers in the ancient Roman army. It probably consisted of 100 soldiers.

circumcision (sér' kum sizh' un). A Jewish ritual in which a boy is circumcised when he is eight days old as a symbol of the Covenant which, according to the Bible, God made with Abraham.

cohort (kō' hōrt). Part of an ancient Roman legion; three to six hundred soldiers were in each cohort, and ten cohorts in each legion.

consul (kon' sul). Official appointed by a government to live in a foreign city, to look after the business interests of his own country, and to protect citizens of his country who are traveling or living there.

empire (em' pīr). A group of countries or states under one ruler or government.

maniple (man' u pul). Subdivision of the ancient Roman legion, containing 60 or 120 men.

patrician (pu trish' un). Member of the nobility of ancient Rome.

province (prov' uns). One of the main divisions of a country.

republic (ri pub' lik). Nation or state in which the citizens elect representatives to manage the government, which is usually headed by a president.

Note: All vocabulary words in this LIFEPAK appear in boldface print the first time they are used. If you are unsure of the meaning when you are reading, study the definitions given.

Pronunciation Key: hat, āge, cāre, fār; let, ēqual, tērm; it, īce; hot, ōpen, ōrder; oil; out; cup, pūt, rüle; child; long; thin; /TH/ for then; /zh/ for measure; /u/ represents /a/ in about, /e/ in taken, /i/ in pencil, /o/ in lemon, and /u/ in circus.

THE ROMAN EMPIRE

Christianity was born in the Roman **Empire**. This great and powerful empire stretched from England to Persia and from the Sahara Desert to northwestern Germany. The Mediterranean Sea was not a sea touching the shores of many nations. Rather the Mediterranean was a great inland waterway that united the many

provinces of the empire that surrounded the sea on all sides. Hundreds of tribes lived within Rome's vast borders, and nations with histories far longer than that of Rome were under Roman control. The center of this vast empire was the city of Rome, and in Rome all the



| The Growth of the Roman Empire

power of the Roman government eventually came to rest in the hands of the emperor.

Growth. Seven centuries before the birth of Christ, Rome was a village in western Italy hardly different from many others found there. No one knows who founded Rome, although several unusual stories are told concerning its origin. Everyone knows, however, that this tiny hamlet on the banks of the Tiber River grew into a town, then into a city, and then into a small state. Through wars and treaties it expanded into an empire covering most of the civilized world.

Five hundred years after it was founded Rome controlled all of the area we now call Italy. Its empire then began to spread across the sea. Roman armies conquered the islands of Corsica, Sardinia, and Sicily in the Mediterranean. They advanced into North Africa and Spain. Turning northward, the Romans conquered much of what is modern Germany and France. Later England was added to the Roman Empire.

Rome asserted its control over the Land of Israel in 63 BC and established Judea as a province in AD 6, shortly after the birth of Christ. The Roman navy made the Mediterranean a Roman sea.

Roman influence and culture spread into every conquered country. Latin became the official language everywhere, and distant lands were ruled by governors responsible only to Rome. The empire was bound together by a marvelous system of roads, bridges, and **aqueducts** so well constructed that they can still be seen today. Throughout the world all roads led to Rome. The government and military power of Rome united all people of the empire.

Roman architecture was seen in every land. One of its greatest triumphs, the Colosseum in Rome itself, still stands. The beauty of the Colosseum, however, was not reflected in many of its uses. In the Colosseum were held various “games” that resulted in the death of many Christians who gave up their lives for Jesus Christ.



Complete these sentences.

- 1.1 The Roman Empire stretched from a. _____ and
b. _____ and from the c. _____ to northwestern
d. _____.
- 1.2 Most of the Roman Empire surrounded the _____ Sea.
- 1.3 The center of the Roman Empire was the city of _____.
- 1.4 Rome was about _____ years old when Jesus Christ was born.
- 1.5 The city of Rome was founded on the banks of the _____.
- 1.6 The Land of Israel came under Roman control in a. _____ and Judea
became a b. _____ of the empire in AD 6.
- 1.7 The millions of people in the Roman Empire were united by the a. _____
and b. _____.
- 1.8 The Romans built a. _____, b. _____, and
c. _____ to link all the parts of the empire together.

Government. The Romans were the first group to maintain central control over a vast empire while allowing its conquered people to have some freedom in their lives and government. Roughly, Roman civilization lasted a thousand years; the first 500 years as a republic and the last 500 years as an empire.

In 509 BC Rome became a **republic**; citizens elected representatives to run their government, much as we do in the United States today. However, it was quite unlike a democracy such as ours in which everyone has equal rights. Some Roman citizens had full citizenship and were known as **patricians**. Another group, called *plebeians*, had fewer rights and could not hold public office. While Rome was still a republic, plebeians won equal rights with patricians after a long, bitter struggle. A new group of wealthy families, the senatorial class, was made up of both patricians and plebeians and ruled through control of the Senate. Other businessmen, known as equites, collected Rome's enormous taxes and ran the courts. At the time of the republic, people suffered under greedy tax collectors, such as Matthew who later became one of Christ's disciples (Matthew 9:9 and Luke 5:27). This condition improved later, under the strong rule of the emperor.

Slaves were also a part of Roman society. Often they were men who were captured in Rome's frequent wars. Although many slaves were treated very well, they performed society's hardest and most unpleasant tasks.

The Empire was established by Caesar Augustus in 27 BC and lasted until Rome fell in AD 476. He and all later emperors held supreme authority through their office of **consul**. Even during the rule of emperors, however, the city of Rome kept its republican form of government; the new emperor was elected either by the Senate or the powerful army. Gradually, however, the power of the emperor grew while the power of the Senate decreased until elections were discontinued, and Rome became



| Roman Soldier

an **absolute monarchy**, or dictatorship, ruled solely by the emperor.

Roman officials ruled as governors in distant provinces of the empire by allowing self-government to the people while still maintaining Roman control. These Roman governors had titles such as *legate*, *proconsul*, *prefect*, and *procurator*; terms we still use today. Herod the Great, for example, was king of the Land of Israel when Jesus Christ was born (Matthew 2:1, 3, 7, and 16 and Luke 1.5). Herod's grandson, Herod Agrippa I, was also given the title of king by the Roman emperor. King Agrippa II, who succeeded his father to the throne, was the same Agrippa who said to the apostle Paul (Acts 26:28), "...Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."

The army. Rome's conquests were made possible through the size and strength of its army, the strongest the world had ever seen. Roman soldiers were professionals. For many Romans military service was a lifetime career. Soldiers trained endlessly and died willingly in the service of Rome. One of the greatest Roman soldiers of all time was Julius Caesar, who was a general that became dictator and consul in 49 BC

At the time of Augustus, the first emperor, about two hundred and fifty thousand men served in the Roman army. They were divided into *legions* composed of about six thousand foot soldiers and one hundred twenty

cavalrymen. Members of these choice *legions* were Romans who enlisted for twenty years. Attached to a legion was an auxiliary composed of noncitizens who were drafted for a twenty-five year term. Next to the legions in size were the **cohort**, the **maniple**, and the **century**. Smaller cavalry units were called **alae**.

Soldiers occupied the countries they defeated in battle and became a peacetime force for progress and civilization. They built roads, walls, and bridges. They were an important source of Roman influence wherever they went.

In 27 BC, after disastrous civil wars that had lasted more than a hundred years, the full

power of Rome was given to Gaius Octavianus. This man is known in history as Caesar Augustus, the first and greatest of the Roman emperors. With him the republic ended and the empire began. Augustus reigned from 27 BC to AD 14. He is the Caesar of whom Luke wrote (Luke 2:1), "...in those days...there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed." Except for some minor fighting on the frontiers of the empire, the reign of peace begun by Augustus lasted more than two hundred years. During these two centuries, Christianity arose out of the life and work of our Lord and became an empire-wide witness to the Gospel.



Write true or false.

- 1.9 _____ Rome's territories were administered by a republic until 27 BC.
- 1.10 _____ The Romans were the first to impose central authority on a large area.
- 1.11 _____ Rome was a republic after 27 BC.
- 1.12 _____ All citizens had equal rights in the empire.
- 1.13 _____ The patricians enjoyed full citizenship.
- 1.14 _____ The new senatorial class was made up of the patricians and plebeians.
- 1.15 _____ Under the republic the people were taxed fairly.
- 1.16 _____ Under Caesar Augustus the Roman republic ended.

Complete these statements.

- 1.17 The king of the Land of Israel when Jesus Christ was born was _____ .
- 1.18 The main division of the Roman army was called a. _____ which included about b. _____ infantrymen and c. _____ cavalrymen.
- 1.19 Legionaires were a. _____ who enlisted for b. _____ years.
- 1.20 Attached to every legion was an a. _____ made up of b. _____ drafted for a c. _____-year term.

Pax Romana: Roman peace. In the Empire the *Pax Romana* or Roman peace made trade and travel both easy and safe. Travel from one end of the empire to the other; whether by land, sea, or river, was safe. The Roman peace encouraged the development of culture in every possible way, leading to great achievements in literature, architecture, and sculpture. The study of law was encouraged and greatly developed. The economy, during this period, provided varying degrees of prosperity throughout the empire. Everywhere, the Roman army was a symbol of Roman power, Roman law, and Roman peace. Greek was the most common language used to communicate in the

Read Acts 10:1-2;
21:27-40; 23:16-35;
26:30-32; 27:1-8;
and 28:11-16.



larger part of the empire. A careful reading of the book of Acts reveals a great deal about the Roman Empire.

During the reign of Tiberius, while Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Jesus Christ was put to death. Christ's teachings began to spread after the Cross, and in AD 64, the Emperor Nero condemned Christians on the charge of setting fire to Rome.



Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

- 1.21 What does the term *Pax Romana* mean? _____

- 1.22 How did the Roman peace affect transportation? _____

- 1.23 What was the common language during the Roman peace? _____

- 1.24 Who was the emperor when Jesus was put to death? _____

- 1.25 Who was the governor of Judea when Jesus died? _____

- 1.26 What event took place that affected Christianity? _____

THE JEWISH BACKGROUND

The roots of Christianity extend backward into the history and religion of Israel. Jesus, in speaking to the Samaritan woman, said (John 4:22), "...Salvation is of the Jews." Jesus came not to destroy the Law but to fulfill the Law and the prophets (Matthew 5:17). Those who belong to Jesus Christ through salvation are Abraham's spiritual offspring. Therefore, believers become heirs according to the promise of the Word of God (Galatians 3:29), "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." The Land of Israel was part of the Roman Empire. The church was deeply related to Israel and the people. The earliest church was Jewish, the Savior was a Jew, and much of the New Testament was written by Jews.

To understand the Christian faith, we must study the background of Israel from David's kingdom to the reign of Alexander the Great. We shall also examine the Maccabees, the synagogue, and the Sanhedrin. We shall look at the Jewish leaders, the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the effect they had on the early life of the church. Finally, we shall examine the effect that the dispersion of Jews had in the spread of the church throughout the Roman Empire.

David to Alexander the Great. The kingdom of Israel was expanded by David, the son of Jesse, about 1000 BC David placed such a stamp on the kingdom and upon the kingly office that he became a symbol of Israel's later Messianic hopes for a king to come and to relieve them of oppression by outside nations (1 Chronicles 22:8–10; Psalms 83:3 and 4; 27–29; and 34–37). For about forty years David reigned over a powerful and strong Israel. Solomon, David's son, added to Israel's boundaries and power during his reign. After Solomon's death about 930 BC, the kingdom David had established was split into two parts.

Read 2 Samuel 7;
Micah 5:2–4; Zechariah
3:8–9; 6:12–13; 9:10;
Zechariah 12:8; 13:1;
and Luke 1:30–33.



The northern part, called Israel, was taken into Assyrian exile about 721 BC because of their sin and their idol worship. The northern kingdom was never restored. The southern kingdom, Judah, which had remained true to the house of David, had a longer history. About 686 BC the southern kingdom began to leave the teachings of the Scriptures and the Law of God. In 586 BC the southern kingdom went into exile in Babylon. We read about Daniel in Babylon and the three Hebrew boys who served God and who were punished for their love for God (Daniel 3 and 6). In 539, Cyrus, king of Persia, conquered Babylon. He allowed any Jewish exile to return to Jerusalem if they wanted to do so. The following year a number of them returned to Jerusalem. These Jews, in time, rebuilt the Temple which had been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon.

After the first return, other groups went back to the Land of Israel. One of the leaders of these groups was Ezra, a priest who was deeply devoted to the Mosaic Law. Ezra's desire was to make the observance of the *Torah*, Israel's Law, a living part of the Jewish religion again. The Pharisees, who are discussed in the Gospels and the book of Acts, grew out of the movement to restore the Law that Ezra had begun.

At the close of the writing of the Old Testament about 430 BC, Judea was a Persian province. Persia had been a world power for about one hundred years and remained so for another one hundred years. During this period not much is known of Jewish history. Persian rule was, for the most part, mild and relaxed.

Up to that time the great powers of the world had been in Asia and in Africa. Greece, however, was looming on the western horizon.



| Syria and Egypt, The Hellenistic Empires

The beginnings of Greek history are somewhat vague. Greece is thought to have begun about the twelfth century BC, the time of the Biblical judges. Then came the Trojan War, and Homer, about 1000 BC, during the age of David and Solomon. The beginning of Greek history has usually been recorded from the First Olympiad, 776 BC. The formation of the Hellenic states followed in 776 to 500 BC. The Persian wars followed from 500 to 331 BC with the famous battles of Marathon (490 BC) and Thermopylae and Salamis, 480 BC. The brilliant era of Pericles (465 to 429 BC) and Socrates (469 to 399 BC) followed this time of war. This era paralleled that of Ezra and Nehemiah in the Old Testament.

Alexander the Great, the son of Philip I, at the age of twenty assumed the command of the Greek army in 336 BC. Alexander swept eastward and over the lands that had been under

the dominion of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, and Persia. By 331 BC the whole world lay at Alexander's feet. On his invasion of the Land of Israel in 332 BC, Alexander showed great consideration to the Jews. He spared Jerusalem, and offered immunities to the Jews who would settle in Alexandria. Alexander established Greek cities all over the conquered domains. Along with these cities, Greek culture and the Greek language were established. After a brief reign, Alexander died in 323 BC.

When Alexander died, his empire fell to his generals. Syria went to General Seleucus, and Egypt to General Ptolemy, with remaining areas going to two other generals. The Land of Israel, which lay between Syria and Egypt, went first to Syria. A short time later the Land of Israel was passed to Egypt (301 BC) and remained under the control of Egypt till 198 BC.



Complete these items by writing the letter of the correct answer on each line.

- 1.27** The kingdom of Israel was expanded by _____ .
 a. Jesse b. David c. Solomon d. Jesus
- 1.28** David became the king of Israel around _____ .
 a. 800 BC b. 3200 BC c. 1200 BC d. 1000 BC
- 1.29** David reigned over Israel for _____ years.
 a. forty b. forty-five c. twenty d. fifty
- 1.30** David was succeeded as king by his son _____ .
 a. Jesse b. Ezra c. Solomon d. Saul
- 1.31** After the death of Solomon, Israel was divided into _____ kingdoms.
 a. northern and southern b. northern and western
 c. southern and eastern
- 1.32** The northern kingdom was known as _____ .
 a. Judah b. Israel c. Persia d. Syria
- 1.33** The southern kingdom was known as _____ .
 a. Judah b. Israel c. Persia d. Syria

Complete these statements.

- 1.34** Israel was conquered by _____ .
- 1.35** Judah was taken into captivity by _____ .
- 1.36** Babylon was conquered by a. _____ , king of b. _____ .
- 1.37** Cyrus allowed some of the Jews to return to _____ to rebuild the city.
- 1.38** One of the leaders of the returning Jews was a. _____ who desired to restore the observance of the b. _____ , Israel's Law.
- 1.39** After the Persian Empire the _____ conquered the world.
- 1.40** Ezra and Nehemiah lived about the same time as the Greek philosopher _____ .
- 1.41** By 331 BC all the known world had been conquered by _____ .
- 1.42** When Alexander died his empire was divided among a. _____ ,
 b. _____ , and c. _____ .
- 1.43** After the death of Alexander, Israel first came under the rule of a. _____ ,
 then the rule of b. _____ .



Review the material in this section in preparation for the Self Test. This Self Test will check your mastery of this particular section. The items missed on this Self Test will indicate specific areas where restudy is needed for mastery.

SELF TEST 1

Write true or false (each answer, 1 point).

- 1.01** _____ Most of the Roman Empire surrounded the Persian Gulf.
- 1.02** _____ The Roman Empire stretched from England to Persia and from the Sahara Desert to northwestern Germany.
- 1.03** _____ The center of the Roman Empire was Rome.
- 1.04** _____ Rome was about two hundred fifty years old when Jesus Christ was born.
- 1.05** _____ The city of Rome was founded on the banks of the Po River.
- 1.06** _____ The Land of Israel came under Roman control in 63 BC and Judea became a province of the empire in AD 6.
- 1.07** _____ The millions of people of the Roman Empire were united by the military and by the government.
- 1.08** _____ The Romans built roads, aqueducts, and bridges to link all the parts of the empire together.
- 1.09** _____ Rome's territories were independent until 21 BC.
- 1.010** _____ The Romans were the first to impose central authority on a large area.

Complete these sentences (each answer, 3 points).

- 1.011** Rome was a republic from a. _____ to b. _____ BC.
- 1.012** The patricians enjoyed full _____ .
- 1.013** The patricians and plebeians made up the new _____ class.
- 1.014** Caesar Augustus became the first a. _____ of Rome in b. _____ BC.
- 1.015** The king of the Land of Israel when Jesus Christ was born was _____ .
- 1.016** The main division of the Roman army was called a. _____ ,
which included about b. _____ infantrymen and
c. _____ cavalrymen.
- 1.017** Roman citizens who enlisted in the army for twenty years were called _____ .
- 1.018** The term *Pax Romana* means _____ .
- 1.019** The common language during the Roman peace was _____ .
- 1.020** The emperor when Jesus Christ was put to death was a. _____
and the governor was b. _____ .
- 1.021** The kingdom of Israel was expanded by _____ .
- 1.022** David reigned over Israel for _____ years.
- 1.023** After the death of Solomon, Israel was divided into the northern and
_____ kingdoms.
- 1.024** The northern kingdom was known as _____ .
- 1.025** The southern kingdom was known as _____ .

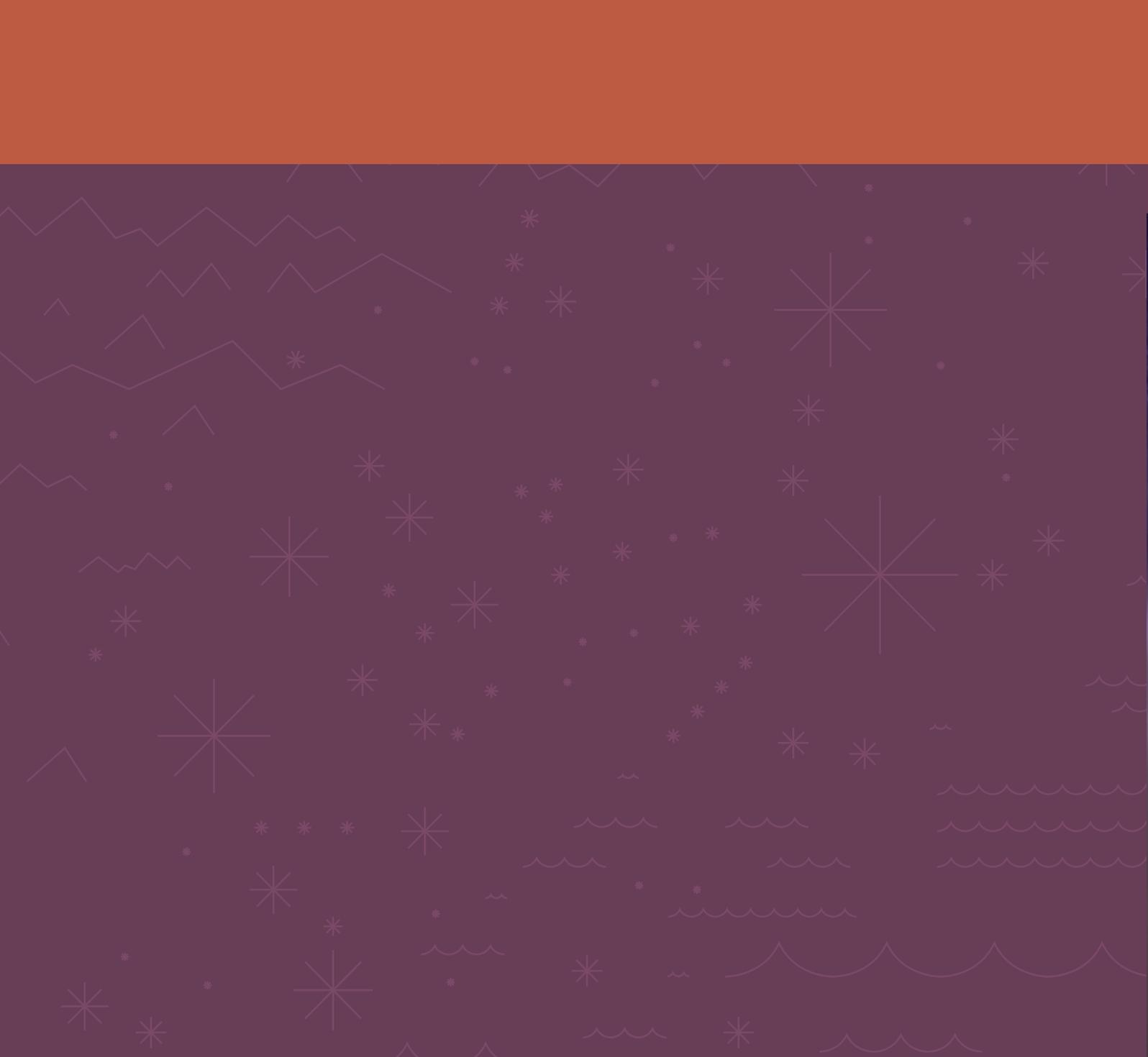
Match these items (each answer, 2 points).

- | | | | | |
|-------|-------|----------------------|----|--|
| 1.026 | _____ | Assyria | a. | conquered Babylon |
| 1.027 | _____ | Babylon | b. | conquered all the known world |
| 1.028 | _____ | Persia | c. | built altar to Jupiter |
| 1.029 | _____ | Torah | d. | governing body of Jews in the Land of Israel |
| 1.030 | _____ | Ezra | e. | Israel's law |
| 1.031 | _____ | Alexander the Great | f. | Greek Old Testament |
| 1.032 | _____ | Antiochus | g. | conquered Israel |
| 1.033 | _____ | Judas and Mattathias | h. | conquered Persia |
| 1.034 | _____ | Sanhedrin | i. | restored the Torah |
| 1.035 | _____ | Septuagint | j. | conquered Judah |
| 1.036 | _____ | Alexandria | k. | led Maccabean revolt |
| 1.037 | _____ | high priest | l. | leader of the Sanhedrin |
| | | | m. | Jewish center |

Write S for Sadducees or P for Pharisees (each answer, 1 point).

- 1.038 _____ came from priestly families
- 1.039 _____ believed the Law should be open to new interpretations
- 1.040 _____ favored old ways
- 1.041 _____ denied doctrine of resurrection
- 1.042 _____ opposed foreign influences
- 1.043 _____ concerned with outward observance of the Law

<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> 80 <hr style="width: 50%; margin: 0;"/> 100 </div>	SCORE _____	TEACHER _____ <small>initials date</small>
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