CHAPTER ELEVEN

Christianity

History

Christianity is a religion based on the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. It is the world's largest religion, with nearly two and a half billion adherents spread all over the globe. It is the dominant religion in the Western world and has various denominations of varying beliefs and practices that commonly revolve around faith in God and Jesus Christ. It traces its origins around the end of the first century BCE to the Jewish population of ancient Palestine when the Roman Empire ruled the land of Judea and turned it into one of its provinces (Figure 11.1). Rome had appointed Herod – a Roman of Jewish heritage later recognized as Herod the Great – their client king in Judea. Herod was more interested in maintaining law and order in the land and keeping it strictly under Roman rule than interfering in the religious and cultural traditions of the occupied Jewish population. The Jews living under Roman occupation were given the freedom to practice their faith, including their rituals, in the Second Temple in Jerusalem as long as they did not disturb peace and order in the land.