Initial Rejection of Buddhism

- China did not take to Buddhism right away
  - Commitment to a secluded life for Buddhist monks and nuns contradicted Chinese belief in strong family values
  - Focus on individual salvation and enlightenment = selfish and against Confucianism
  - China was focused on “this world” with Confucianism and were wary of the concept of infinite time with Buddhism
Buddhism Takes Hold in China

- When Han dynasty collapsed, people began to question Confucianism.
- Many turned to Buddhism instead and liked its emphasis on compassion, morality, and meditation.
- Rulers and elite families donated money to build Buddhist temples and monasteries.
Buddhist Monasteries

Provided:

- Accommodation for travelers
- Refuge for people fleeing from China’s upheavals
- Charity for the poor
- Seeds for struggling farmers
- Treatment and care for the sick
- Education and books for children
Buddhist Backlash

- As Buddhism grew, some criticisms and resistance arose:
  - Resentment of its enormous wealth
  - Threat to imperial authority of China
  - Still seen as “foreign”
  - Withdrawal of monks from society = against family-based values of Confucianism
Chinese Imperial Decrees

- Ordered monks and nuns to pay taxes
- Thousands of Buddhist monasteries and temples were destroyed or turned to public use
- State confiscated Buddhist land and property
- Buddhists forbidden to use gold, silver, copper, iron, or gems to make their images