

Christianity Part I

Christianity

- Judaism and Christianity share many common elements
- Christianity grew out of Judaism
- Main difference is regarding Messiah
 - o **Christianity:** Messiah has already come
 - o **Judaism:** he is yet to come

The Life and Teachings of Jesus

- What we know about the life of Jesus and his teaching is **four Gospels**
- They are considered in Christianity the **basic sources**
- **Jesus was born in 4 B.C.E.**
- At the time Jesus was born, Jerusalem was part of the **Roman Empire**
 - o Romans might have ruled Jerusalem harshly
- At the time Jesus is born, there were Judaic groups
 - o The Sadducees kept up temple rituals
 - o Pharisees very observant of Jewish laws
- The Jews waiting for Messiah, foretold in books Isaiah, Daniel, Micah
 - o Would bring new order based on the principles of justice and love
- **Messiah** means **one who is “anointed”**, refers to ceremony of anointing a new king with olive oil
- Miraculous conception of Jesus took place in Nazareth; was born in **Bethlehem**
- Was **circumcised on eighth day** according to Jewish tradition
- Probably attended synagogue school as a child
- Later as an adult he took up the profession of carpentry with his foster father Joseph
- Raised as a devout Jew, Jesus accepted the sacred authority of the Law:
 - o Observed Sabbath and dietary laws
 - o Well versed in the Hebrew Bible
 - o Soft spoken
 - o Appeals to common people, speaks their language
 - o Simple straightforward, and occasionally very witty
- Surprisingly, the four Gospels do not inform us anything about Jesus from the age of 16 to almost 26
 - o *He is just out of sight! One does not know what to speculate*
- Jesus started preaching of the “Kingdom of God” in his twenties
 - o Baptized by John the Baptist
 - o Also formed the ministry

- After preaching for about four years, arrested on the charge of public disturbance in Jerusalem
- The Sadducees, who were in charge of religious matters, considered him dangerous
- From Roman Empire, he was potentially a source of unrest
- Somehow the charge was changed to blasphemy and he was crucified at the age of thirty two (25 – 26 C. E)
 - o *Was seen after three days...
- **Two Great Commandments**
 1. Love God and love your neighbor
 2. The end of the world is near and the new world is about to come, meaning, there would be new social and political reality where justice and love would prevail

Four Gospels *ALL WRITTEN IN GREEK

- **Mark**
 - o Written in 65 – 70 C.E.
 - **Matthew**
 - o Written in 70 – 80 C.E.
 - **Luke**
 - o Written in 75 – 85 C.E.
 - **John**
 - o Written in 90 – 100 C.E.
1. **Mark** is the shortest and simple.
 - o From the point of view of history, it is very valuable as it describes the facts as they were
 - o It speaks of Jesus as son of God and Messiah, performed miracles and speaks of his public life
 - o Ends with account of Jesus' empty tomb
 2. **Matthew** is the most charming Gospel
 - o Portrays Jesus as "New Moses"
 - o It speaks of his birth, death, and resurrection
 - o Traces his genealogy to David
 3. **Luke:** written for Greek audience
 - o The Christianity for all and universal religion
 - o He also traces Jesus' genealogy to David
 4. **John:** Jesus is divine incarnation of God
 - o Made visible in human form
 - o Jesus was Messiah
- First three Gospels are called **synoptic** and John is called **asynoptic**

Early Christianity

- Early Christian beliefs simple and dew
- Following Jesus' resurrection, disciples gathered

- Then the Spirit of God came upon them in form of fire and encouraged them to spread belief in Jesus as Messiah
- **The early Christian belief consists of:**
 1. Jesus is indeed the expected Messiah
 2. These are the final days before coming of the new world order. The early Christians were Jews living in Jerusalem

The Christian Bible (New Testament)

- The New Testament Comprises following books:
 1. Four Gospels
 2. The Acts of the Apostles
 3. Epistles
 4. Revelation

The Acts of Apostles (85 C.E.)

- It is maintained that book of Acts of Apostles is really second part of Gospel Luke
- The Gospel of Luke and book of Acts of Apostles sometimes referred as single world, Luke-Acts
- In these two books the parallels are drawn between Jesus and Paul
- In Luke, Jesus is portrayed as moving toward his sacrifice in Jerusalem
- So does Paul makes his final journey to Rome for his sacrifice in Rome
- Here the impressive image of stone dropped in a pond that makes ever-widening ripples is presented, suggesting life of Jesus spreading widely

The Epistles

- They can be divided in to **two parts:**
 1. **Early Pauline Epistles**
 - o Genuine Pauline letters date 50 – 60 C.E.
 2. **Universal Epistles**
 - o Include Hebrews, Timothy, Titus, Ephesians, Colossians, and others are debated
- Impressive images are also used in the Epistles
- Christian community is like solid building set on secure foundation
 - o Church becomes the body of Christ, etc.
- Main focus of the Epistles is proper belief, morality and church order

Paul of Tarsus and The Epistles (Letters)

- Paul's original name was **Saul**
- Spread Christianity among non-Jews
- Born as Pharisee, educated in Greek system
- Roman citizen