
Christianity as a Basis for Europe

Introduction

- 1. Jesus, the Christ or Messiah (anointed one), offered eternal life to individuals.
 - 2. By his sacrificial life and death he had established a radical new ethic affecting all of life.
 - 3. His Coming Kingdom was imminent.
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Introduction

- 4. His followers should live ethically as He lived.
 - The difficulty of being objective about Christianity.
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Questions

- 1. Put those statements above in your own words. Don't use mine. Do they sound different in your own words?
 - 2. Are the statements above or your own phrasing of them an accurate version of what Christianity represented (represents)?
 - 3. Fully God and fully man? What does that mean? Does that statement alone define Christianity?
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Frame of Reference: Christianity from Judaic Beginnings to 200 A. D.

- Review of Judaism.
 - New Beliefs in the centuries before Jesus.
 - Messianic hope.
 - Communal living. The Essenes.
 - Growing belief in an afterlife.
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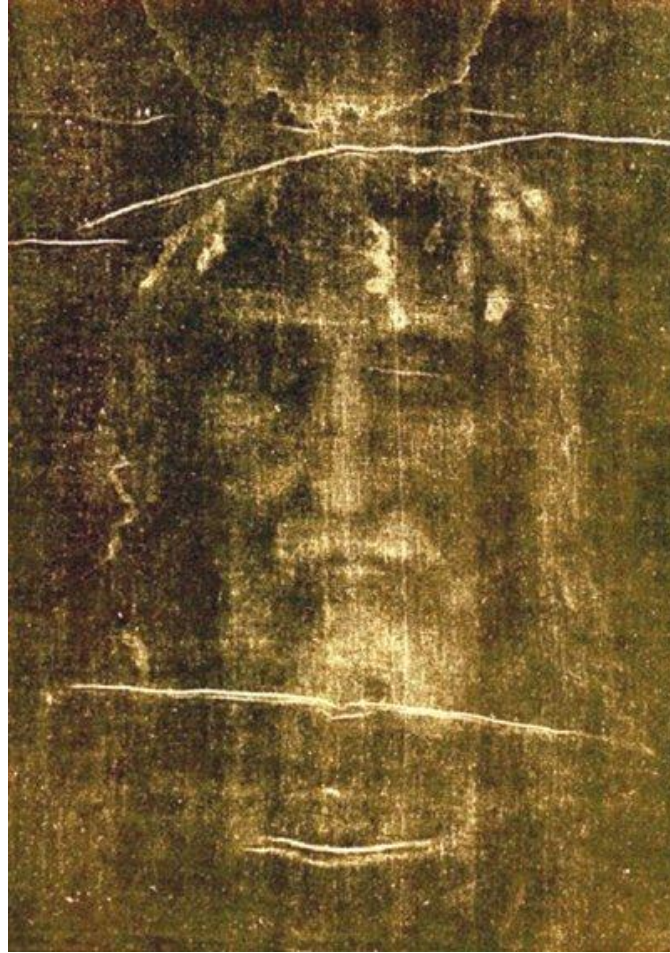
Frame of Reference: Christianity from Judaic Beginnings to 200 A. D.

- Early Christians paid little attention to details of Jesus' life.
 - Jesus (Jeshua-"savior") born 4 B.C.
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Jesus as Pictured in St. Catherine's Monastery



The Image from the Shroud of Turin



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Questions

- 1. Are you shocked by the statement that Jesus was a Jew? Or that the first Christians were Jews?
 - 2. Given those facts, can you explain why some Christians have been anti-Semitic?
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Frame of Reference: Christianity from Judaic Beginnings to 200 A. D.

- The Nature of his Teachings
 - Central was Coming Kingdom ([Mark 1:15](#)).
 - Taught in imperative declarations, stories, parables.
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Questions

- 1. Are you offended by the statement that Jesus taught radical beliefs? Or that his teachings were paradoxical? (Meaning that they contained seeming contradictions.)
 - 2. Does this explain to your satisfaction why Jesus' teachings could be used both to conserve tradition and to reject it?
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Questions

- 3. What do you make of the recorded statement that Jesus spoke Aramaic to Paul in the famous encounter on the Damascus Road? Does this mean that God is tied to language, place and time, not to mention gender?
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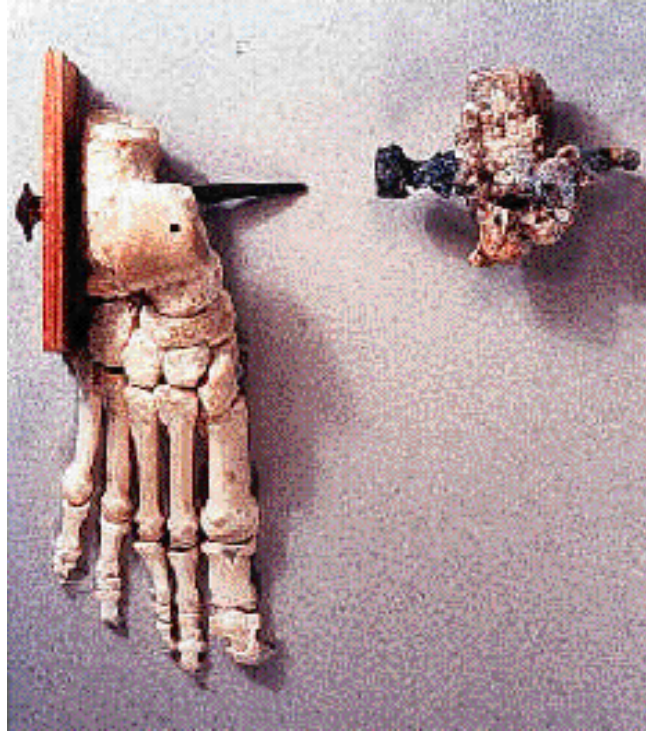
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Frame of Reference: Christianity from Judaic Beginnings to 200 A. D.

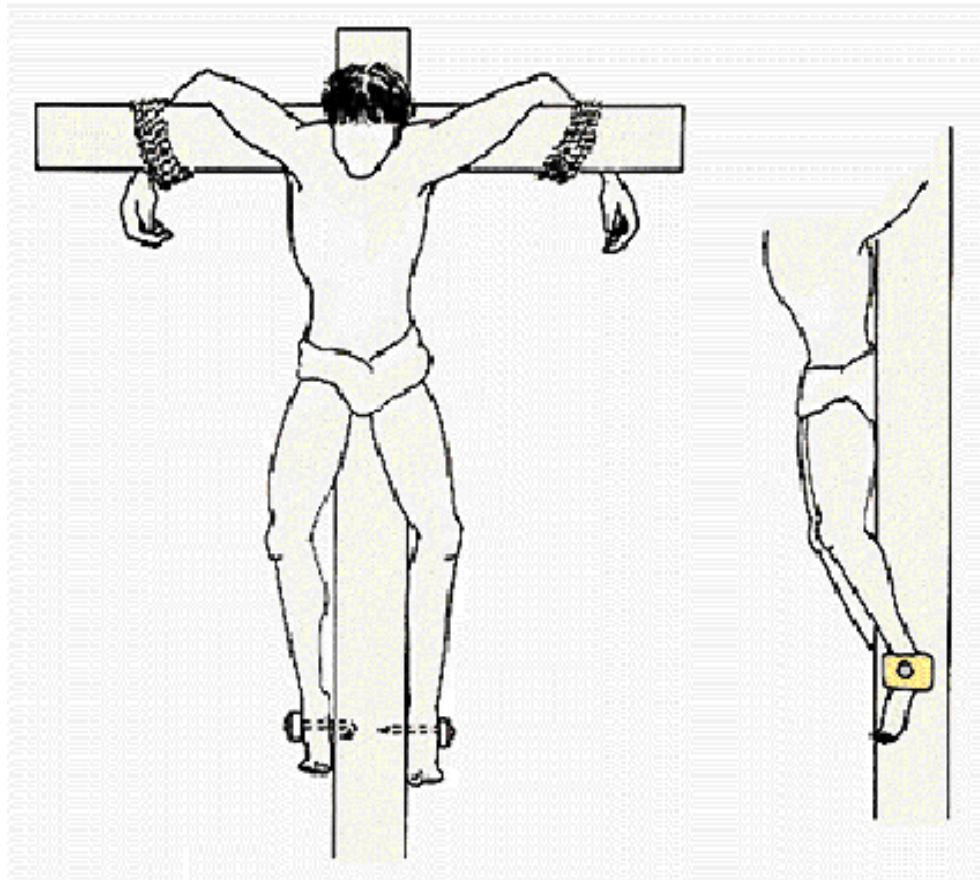
- Crucified about 30 A. D.



Detail of foot and nail from 1968 tomb:
'Jehohanan the son of HGQWL'



Crucifixion (From a tomb at Giv'at ha-Mivtar uncovered in 1968)



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Frame of Reference: Christianity from Judaic Beginnings to 200 A. D.

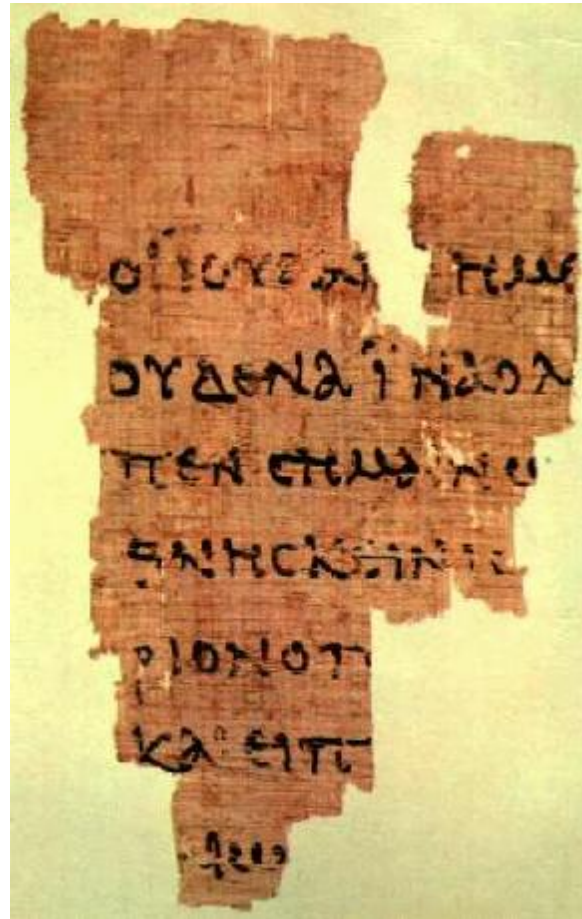
- Early Christians believed he rose from the dead.
 - New faith spread to non-Jews as well as Jews.
 - Saul of Tarsus. Or Paul.
 - Because of his work Christianity broke from its Jewish moorings. By 70 A. D.
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Frame of Reference: Christianity from Judaic Beginnings to 200 A. D.

- Christians mainly in cities of empire.
 - By 150 a creed, writings, sacraments, and leaders.
 - Creed. (From “Credo”). Public confession.
 - Instruction and writings.
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Oldest Fragment of New Testament- Gospel of John



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Frame of Reference: Christianity from Judaic Beginnings to 200 A. D.

- By 200 a “New” Testament alongside the Old.
 - Also agreed on 2 sacraments--baptism and Lord’s Supper. (sacramentum, oath).
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Frame of Reference: Christianity from Judaic Beginnings to 200 A. D.

- Leadership: Elders (presbyteros); bishops (episcopus).
 - What were major tenets of early Christianity?
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Revelation and Jesus Christ: a New View of God

- Christianity affirmed Judaism's beliefs.
 - But Jesus was God. Jesus himself was tentative about this. Matthew 16: 13-20.
 - Set them at odds with Jews.
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Revelation and Jesus Christ: a New View of God

- New Understanding of God
 - A Father. Luke 11:2. John 3:16. Romans 8: 14-17.
 - Humble and lowly.
 - You accept this on faith. I Corinthians 1: 18-24.
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Questions

- 1. To believe in the Christian affirmations about God one has to reject at least one of the Jewish affirmations: God is one. Agreed? What are the implications? Is the Old Testament passage "Hear Oh Israel, the Lord our God is One Lord" wrong?
 - 2. The ancient world's gods did not die for human beings. That was irrational, nonsensical. Where did Christians get the idea?
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Questions

- 3. Do you remember David Koresh (1993, Waco, Texas) who spoke of himself in Messianic terms? Most of us probably think he was a nut case. But we do not think the same about Jesus. What's the difference?
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Revelation and the Uniqueness and Worth of Man

- The individual is little lower than God but sinful.
 - Sharper focus to unique moral worth of individual. Matt 10: 29-31. Matt 5: 1-11. Gal 3: 26-28.
 - By God's help human nature would be perfected. Romans 7: 19-26.
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Questions

- 1. Do you agree with the assertion that Christianity gave sharper focus to the unique worth of the individual? Why? Why not?
 - 2. What about the idea of the universal brotherhood of human beings? If this comes from Christianity and Judaism, can an atheist believe in this concept?
 - 3. Here we are again at the two programs for the betterment of man: the ancient Greco-Roman belief that political life or social influence shapes man for the better; and the Judaic-Christian belief that man is elevated only by inner moral transformation, coming from a higher religious power into the human personality and remaking it in the image of God. Which is correct?
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Questions

- 4. When we were talking about the Hebrews and Greeks, I asked you to compare their ideals of the Good Life. The Hebrew ideal might be summarized as living by the Covenant (a transcendent ethic). The Greek, by imitating the Hero (such as Achilles) or giving oneself (literally) to the Polis (a naturalistic ethic). The Christian ideal might be summarized as imitating Christ (also a transcendent ethic). Agree?
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Revelation and the Uniqueness and Worth of Man

- What was man's hope? II Cor 5:17.
Romans 8: 14- 17.
 - Christians saw people historically not mythologically. Jesus. John 11:35. Paul.
 - The individual would survive death. Jesus :
Luke 16: 19-31; John 11: 25-26; Luke 23: 43; Luke 24: 36-43. Paul also. I Cor 15: 52-55.
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Questions

- The paragraph above and the earlier section on the Judaic view of man seem to be saying that Jews and Christians were the first psychologists in trying to understand the complexity of human behavior. Do you agree?
 - What about the powers of redeemed man? Do you read those above passages differently? Would the new “redeemed” man have extraordinary, astonishing powers: (1) to move mountains ([Matthew 17:20](#); [21: 21](#); [Mark 11: 23](#)); (2) to tread on snakes and scorpions without harm ([Luke 10:19](#)); to do the works of Jesus and indeed to outdo him ([John 14:12](#)); to possess all things – world, life, present, and future ([1 Corinthians 3: 21-22](#))?
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Questions

- “Only Christianity, and Judaism before it, has had such a clear-headed view of human beings, both as they are and as they can be, if freed to become what they were intended to be. “ Do you agree with this?
 - Think about it for a minute: the assertion that the individual will live beyond this life. How does the first person think such a thought? Not later persons, but the first one?
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Revelation and the Uniqueness and Worth of Man

- But this life also important. Luke 12: 33.
John 4: 7-30.
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Revelation and the World

- Christians borrowed the Judaic outlook that the world was God's creation and, therefore, good.
 - Knowledge about man and the world was useful only to the extent that it revealed God's Purpose.
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Christianity as a Basis for Europe Revelation and the World

- Paul put it best. 1 Cor 1: 21; 2: 2.
 - Christian interest in this world grew as expectancy about Coming Kingdom waned.
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Question

- This is the first expression of the important idea that the mystery of Christ (Fully God and fully human) is central to everything else. Faith in the mystery of Christ is the key to understanding all things. Is this true today, or passé because of modern science?
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The Coming Kingdom and the Future

- Again, Judaism.
 - Christians added sense of urgency. Mark 1: 15.
 - Christianity never forgot longing for the Coming Kingdom. The transforming effect of this concept.
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Questions

- 1. Have Christians lost the sense of urgency about the Coming Kingdom? Good? Bad?
 - 2. How long can one live with the idea that all things are about to pass away and all things become new? Weeks, months? Not years and years. Why?
 - 3. Do early Christians seem to have the same apocalyptic fervor the Branch Davidians had in Waco? Or not?
 - 4. Was Jesus wrong when he said the kingdom of God is at hand? It didn't come, did it? Or did it come in different form? What do you think?
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The Coming Kingdom and Society

- At first Christians expected the Kingdom to come immediately.
 - Some scholars have suggested Jesus taught an “interim ethic”. (Question can’t be resolved.)
 - Jesus said Kingdom would be characterized by rule of love. Mark 12: 30-31. Matt 5: 43-48. Matt 18: 21-22. Matt 7: 21.
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Questions

- 1. What do you think about the idea of an "interim ethic"?
 - 2. Do you agree with the reason given for Christians not developing early a view of institutions and practical rules for ethical living?
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The Coming Kingdom and Society

- Paul called for living in love, not by laws or rituals. Col. 3: 9-15.
 - Paul's advice to early believers. The end is at hand; live accordingly. (I Cor 7:17)
 - Did early Christians follow these principles?
 - Christianity eventually paid more attention to social questions.
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Questions

- 1. Does it change your view of Paul's teachings if you think that he gave advice about how to live only for the short haul?
 - 2. What about his supposed anti-feminism?
 - 3. Many others have weighed in about why Christianity did not condemn slavery. What is your view? For the record, neither did Judaism or Islam.
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Summary

- 1. Early Christianity was a counter-culture.
 - 2. It spurned reason and logic.
 - 3. It trusted faith- the will to believe in Revelation.
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Summary

- 4. It affirmed the intrinsic worth of man as a consequence of Revelation.
 - We turn next to the period of Christianity's triumph. Christianity had the strength to survive and to save what it thought best of classical civilization..
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Question

- Christianity was a counter-culture in the ancient world. Is it today? Why? Why not?

