
The Genesis Of Christianity: Origin And Spread

Christianity is a devotion observed by billions across Earth. It is a faith established on the events of Jesus Christ's life. It is also an Abrahamic faith as it descends from the worship of Abraham's God. It is the belief in one God who exists as Trinitarian. It was not always the faith with the biggest following. It started and grew in the most unlikely of circumstances. It started after its founder's death as a sect. It is a mystery to both theologians and historians how Christianity emerged and grew to become the largest faith, with or without any supernatural assistance. This paper will discuss the origin of Christianity. It will discuss the life of its spiritual leader, influential spiritual leaders, the challenges faced, significant moments and Christianity's spiritual texts.

Christianity has either human or supernatural origin. Those who argue it is of human origin argue that it has borrowed heavily from other pagan religions (Williams, 1977). The supernatural theory considers several factors. Firstly, its unlikely leader Jesus did not possess any traits of a leader neither in stately form nor appearance (Isaiah 53:2). He was also a poor man. Second, its unlikely origin, the country of Palestine, which is very small. Thirdly, the persecution observers of the first three centuries faced should have extinguished Christianity. Therefore, Christianity is almost certain of supernatural origin.

Jesus' birth occurred in 4 BCE. An angel appeared to Mary to announce to her that she would bear a son (Mathew 2). An angel also appeared to her betrothed Joseph to warn him not to leave Mary as he was planning to after he noticed that she was pregnant. After his birth, another angel appeared to shepherds to announce the birth. Shepherds also witnessed angels singing in celebration. A star appeared to wise men in the west who followed it to see Jesus. Supernatural events surround his birth and conception. Angels continuously appeared to Joseph to warn him of Herod's intentions.

Jesus' father Joseph was a woodworker, and Jesus took this profession until his late twenties when he began his ministry of healing and teaching. Jesus observed Mosaic laws and was a rabbi. At around 30 years of age, he underwent baptism by John, a servant of God who claimed to prepare the way for the Messiah. After baptism, he took 12 apostles and went to the surrounding areas, speaking of good news, doing wonders, asking individuals to repent for the end is near, and calling out hypocritical Jewish officers. Jesus tasked his apostles to spread the Good News to all nations.

Jesus' ministry garnered a large following in the three years of his ministry. The first century was hard because of the continuous, increasing, and oppressive rule of the Romans. The oppression attracted people to the lessons of Jesus as they were messages of hope or good news. He also taught about the promise of eternal life to his adherents, which was an inviting message. He performed miracles such as delivering people from death, turning water into wine, and so on. Miracles were a promise of supernatural gifts to his adherents.

Jesus gained more critics than supporters. Jewish officials opposed him for his continuous attacks on their bigotry. Jesus criticized them for following the mosaic laws blindly without recognizing the core value of love of one's neighbor, faith, and hope. Jesus also ignored some

rules, which angered them more. The Roman rulers did not like Jesus' uprising as they were opposed to Jewish guerilla sects, which were common in these times. Rulers did not receive well his claim to be the supreme ruler of Jews was not well received by officers. They called for his arrest.

Jesus was arrested after betrayal by one of his disciples Judas for 30 pieces of silver. The betrayal happened as he had foretold. He was beaten and dragged on the streets on the way to meet the Roman official in charge of the city. The officer was convinced that Jesus was guiltless, but he was afraid to lose the favor of his subjects. He referred them to King Herod instead. King Herod is the same King who sought to kill him when he was born. He had wanted to meet Jesus for so long. He mocked Jesus, commanded his torture, and then sent him back to Pilate the ruler. This time he gave in to the peoples' demands and released Barnabas, and ordered Jesus' crucifixion. Jesus died in the year 30 CE.

Jesus' death marked the start of a revolution. On Sunday, some women's adherents of Christ went to visit the tomb where they found it empty. In the next few days, Jesus appeared to several people. On the 40th day after he came from the dead, Jesus went into heaven in the presence of some of his followers. Ten days later, as his disciple gathered in a room, the Holy Spirit whom Jesus had promised them ascended in the form of tongues of fire. The day the tongue of fire came down was named the day of Pentecost. Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost marked the beginning of Christian sermons.

Peter and James, the brother of Jesus, spearheaded the ministry (Book of Acts). James was the leader of the church of Jerusalem, where they concentrated their ministry. They spread the gospel to Jews, baptizing people and healing the sick. Their congregation was mostly Jewish-Christians. They also spread the good news to Gentiles living in Jerusalem. The baptism of a Roman centurion Cornelius is a crucial point in the spread of Christianity. The gentiles who joined this congregation had to follow Jewish culture and practice the Law of Moses.

The most significant figure in the expansion of Christianity is Paul of Tarsus. The ministry of Jesus lay a strong foundation for Christianity, but it is Paul's missionary work that Christianity became a success. Paul was a Jewish Roman citizen and an avid persecutor of Christians. He would go door to door arresting those who were followers of the 'way' and throwing them in jail. However, one day as he was on his way to Damascus, he was blinded by a bright light, and he fell. A voice called him from the heavens asking him why he was cruel to the Lord. It was during this encounter with God that he was converted and tasked with spreading the gospel (Acts 9:1).

The ministry of Paul was to the Gentiles. Paul believed that the gospel was not just for the Jews, as previously thought, but to all nations who were willing. He traveled through the Mediterranean provinces, Greece, Syria, and Asia Minor preaching and baptizing people in the name of Jesus Christ. He wrote many letters to churches he had established as a way of checking up on them and urging them to keep the faith. Paul's directives make up the majority of guidance for adherents. Paul established his lessons on his familiarity with the scripture and his personal view on the life and ministry of Jesus.

The officials of the first church after Jesus are another reason that this devotion is of supernatural origin. Ordinary men like Peter, James, Philip, Paul, and many others possessed supernatural powers. Peter was well known for healing people. The locals of Jerusalem brought

their sick on the streets, hoping that he would pass by, and his shadow would fall upon them, and they would receive healing. He is also said to have raised Tabitha from the dead. All these gentlemen had the power to heal and cast out evil powers. Another supernatural gift these men enjoyed was miraculous prison breaks.

The first Church was composed of the ministries of Paul, Peter, and James. It experienced many challenges within itself. Firstly, there was confusion about the relevance of the extended practice of Judaism. Most Jewish-Christians practiced these religions simultaneously. The early Jewish-Christians also imposed upon the Gentile congregation to assimilate the Jewish culture and practices. The assimilation of the Jewish culture was not agreeable to the gentiles, and it brought division (Vermes, 2012) This division led to the establishment and sitting of the first church council, The Council of Jerusalem. After this sitting, James issued the James decree, which ended the requirement of gentiles to observe Judaism.

The worst challenge the early followers faced was ill-treatment by the Jews. Most Jews did not want to acknowledge Jesus as their long-awaited messiah. The hard times the Jews were facing under the Roman rule made them think that the end times were close. It also made them hope for a literal king who would come from the line of David. When Jesus claimed to be the promised king, they found it blasphemous. He did not have any skill to lead them into battle. He also did not possess any armies or wealth to buy mercenaries. They refused to believe him instead and persecuted his followers to silence them.

The Romans, on the other hand, viewed Christianity as a Jewish sect. After the second Jewish revolt, the Romans declared all sects illegal, and the punishment was death. What followed was a series of killings. Those days, crucifixions were a common method of punishment. While other criminals received a trial, those arrested on the grounds of Christianity received execution, without trial. Many people died, but much to the bewilderment of the authorities, the sect persevered. People such as Stephen died by stoning, others burnt alive, and others such as Peter and Paul died by crucifixion in Rome in 64 C.E. This is why the first and the second centuries of the Common Era are known as the era of martyrdom.

Despite all the challenges the church faced, they remained strong. Several factors influence the strength of the early church. Firstly, they possessed great unswayable passion which made them reject paganism and sexual immorality. A common expectation was high degrees of the morality of all followers. Morality sets them apart from the rest of the people. Their union and constant fellowships were a source of strength and perseverance. Jesus had promised that he had gone to prepare a place for them and he would be back for them soon. For this reason, they remained vigilant, hopeful, and full of faith. Many of them died due to persecutions but the advancement of this movement was stronger than ever.

The growth of Christianity made a good turn when Emperor Constantine accepted it in the year 313(All About Religion, n.d). It was in this year that he legalized it and became patron and protector of the devotion. Legalization ended persecutions and made Christianity a free religion. In the year 325, the emperor called the first church council, known as the council of Nicaea (Vermes, 2012). This council served the purpose of unifying the church and solve the controversy of Arianism. In 380 C.E, Emperor Flavius made Christianity the official devotion of Rome. The collapse of Rome in the year 410 assisted in the growth of Christianity to more nations in the east and the west (All About Religion, n.d).

Several influences led to the success of Christianity. Paul of Tarsus is an influential figure. While Jesus did task his disciples to teach the good news of love, forgiveness, and hope, it is in Paul's doctrines that Christianity is based (All About Religion, n.d). A second key influencer of Christianity is the culture of the early Christians; Jewish, Greek, and Roman cultures. The Jewish belief of one God is the primary belief of the Christians. Greeks brought their intellectual culture which has influenced the success of Christianity. From the Romans, the Christians borrowed their political systems and models. Paul's doctrine and culture influence over the movement made it the religion it is today.

The Christian religious texts are a key feature of the religion. The Bible gives Christians a sense of direction. Without texts to show who they are, where they are from and where they are going Christianity would have perished as first as it started. In the 2nd century C.E, the bible was compiled when the eyewitnesses of the life of Jesus started dying (Patheos.com, n.d). There was a key interest in preserving their memories. Many books were written and this is how the new attestation came to be. The new attestation also comprises of several letters written between individuals or individuals and groups. The old atestation is derived from the Judaism scripture.

In conclusion, the parable of the mustard seed that grew to become the largest tree best explains the growth of Christianity. It sprout from a small sect to the largest devotion on Earth. It is a religion of supernatural origin and yet scholars and theologians argue that Jesus did not intend to start a religion. It all began with the extraordinary conception and delivery of Jesus. Jesus began his ministry in his late twenties, speaking of good news, working wonders such as bringing up the dead, healing the sick and casting out demons. He attracted a large following of believers and critics alike. His critics and enemies pushed for his arrest and crucifixion. He died, and he rose into heaven. Thereafter, he sent the Holy Spirit to his followers. The adherents took over his work and continued the spread of Good news to all nations. The authorities and other Jews, like Paul, persecuted the adherents. Paul later received a miraculous conversion and is the most significant figure in the spread and doctrines of the devotion. In the fourth century, it was legalized and made the official devotion of Rome. Formalization of this religion occurred through the Nicaea Council. Most Romans accepted it and after the fall of Rome, it spread to more nations in the east and the west. In the second and third century C.E, the scripture was compiled and comprises of the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. The New Covenant is credited to the eye witnessing of Jesus' adherents and letters other adherents credited to Paul.