

After Paul

1

- 1. SOME ISSUES IN EARLY CHRISTIANITY**
- 2. HOW THE BIBLE CAME TO BE**
- 3. SHIFTS**

1. Some Issues in Early Christianity:

2

1ST FOUR CENTURIES

Note

3

These were open questions

Different Christian groups disagreed

It's not as if there was one right
answer and everyone else's opinion was wrong

Issues

4

- **What Was the Right Focus?**
 - ✦ Law? Faith? Insight?
- **What Writings**
 - ✦ What writings were authoritative?
 - ✦ What teachings were true? False?
 - ✦ Should the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible be retained? Abandoned?
 - ✦ If Torah is no longer valid, how do we decide ethical issues?

Issues

5

- **The Kingdom of God**
 - ✦ **Where was the expected Kingdom? Why the delay?**
 - ✦ **Is it an earthly kingdom?**
 - ✦ **Should the concept of the Kingdom be spiritualized?**

Issues

6

- **Jesus**

- ✦ **Was Jesus in some way special? Was he a teacher or something more? Was he human? Divine? A divine-human?**
- ✦ **Was his birth special?**
- ✦ **Was his death significant?**
- ✦ **Was his death necessary**
- ✦ **Why did Judas betray Jesus?**
- ✦ **Did he fulfill the requirements for being a Messiah?**

Issues

7

- **Mary (Mother of Jesus)**
 - ✦ **Was Mary in any way special? Why was she singled out for special attention?**

Watch for Shifting Emphases

8

- **Tendencies**

- ✦ **to shift blame for Jesus' death from the Romans to the Jewish people**
- ✦ **to downplay role of Jesus' family**
- ✦ **to vilify Jews, Judaism**
- ✦ **to upgrade Mary Mother of Jesus and downplay role of Mary Magdalene**

2. How the Bible Came to Be

9

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

Hebrew Bible/Old Testament – up to 70 CE

10

- **Gradual grouping of documents:**
 1. **Books of the Torah**
 2. **Prophets**
 3. **Writings**
- **Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible**
- **Different Jewish groups favoured different texts**
 - ✦ **Pharisees – 3fold set of writings**
 - ✦ **Sadducees – only the Books of the Torah**
 - ✦ **Dead Sea Scroll community – their own writings plus books above**

After 70 CE

11

- Sadducees, members of the Dead Sea Scroll Community, Zealots – killed
- Only the Pharisees survived
- Around 90-100 CE
 - ✦ Pharisaic leaders convene at Yavneh (Jamnia) to reconstruct Judaism
 - ✦ Decided upon the 3fold Hebrew Bible: Torah, Prophets, Writings

New Testament/Christian Scriptures

12

- **No New Testament in the first 3 centuries CE**
 - ✦ **Late 2nd century CE: Bishop Irenaeus develops the idea of a “New” Testament to complement the “Old”**
 - ✦ **Many writings to choose from**
 - ✦ **Most congregations probably had very few writings**

Different Groups: Different Favoured Writings

13

Jesus Movement/Ebionites

- **Gospel of the Ebionites (probably a shorter form of the Gospel of Matthew)**
- **Rejected Paul's Letters, Gospels of Mark, Luke, John**
- **Probably some other lost writings**

Christ Movement/Proto-Orthodox

- **Paul's letters**
- **Gospels such as Matthew, Mark, Luke, John**
- **Other writings such as Acts**
- **But these were not collected together as one unit**

Gnostic Movement

- **Gospel of Thomas**
- **Book of Thomas**
- **Gospel of Philip**
- **Gospel of Mary Magdalene**
- **Apocryphon of John**
- **Gospel of the Savior**
- **etc**

Bear in mind...

- That these writings were “authoritative” for their various communities
 - ✦ The others were “false writings”
- There were many other writings
 - ✦ Letters of Ignatius of Antioch
 - ✦ The Didache
 - ✦ Gospel of Peter
 - ✦ Acts of Thecla
 - ✦ Etc.

Contents of the NT

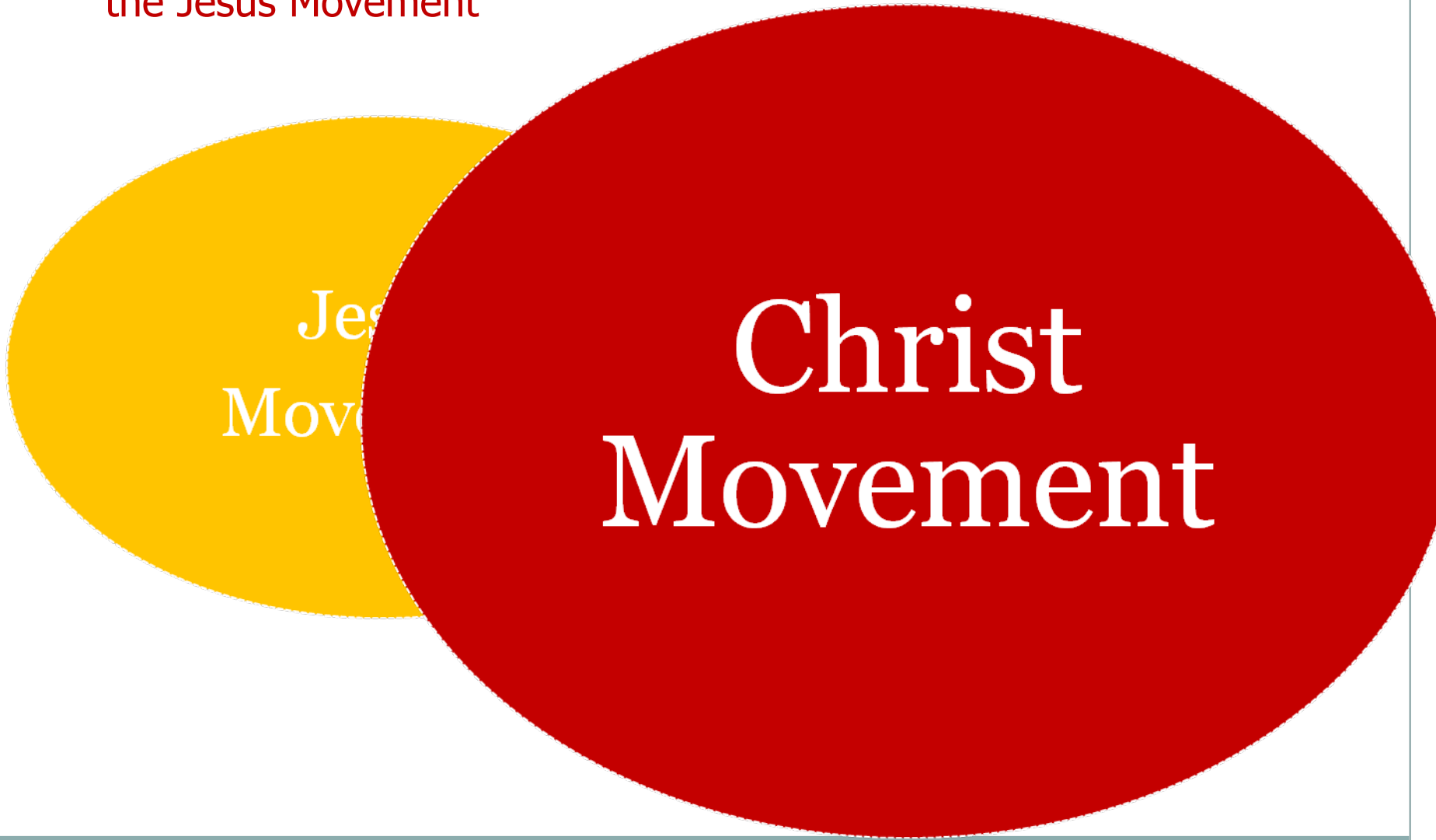
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- **Determined in 367**
- **Archbishop Athanasius of Alexandria, Egypt**
 - ✦ **Sends letter to all parishes, monasteries under his control**
 - ✦ **These – and these only – are the approved books of the NT**
- **This list becomes approved by other bishops**

3. Some Shifts

16

Paul's religion
overshadows
the Jesus Movement



Jesus
Movement

Christ
Movement

WHY ?

Shift

19

from

to

Jewish
Human
Teacher

Divine-Human
Savior

Shift

20

from

to

Teachings OF
Jesus

Teachings ABOUT
the Christ