



Extracts of Teachers' Notes

Film One: *The Roots of Christianity*

Watch the film *The Roots of Christianity* and read through the Background Notes.

1. Invite students to make a timeline of Jewish history to include the following:
 - a) Return from Babylon
 - b) Rule of Alexander the Great & subsequent Ptolemaic and Seleucid rulers
 - c) Maccabean uprising
 - d) Authorship of Book of Daniel

2. Look up the following Old Testament Prophecies and New Testament verses currently haphazardly arranged. Correlate the prophecy with the fulfilment the New Testament writers wish to convey.

Jeremiah 23:5 (c. 600BCE) written circa. 600 B.C.E. John 1:26 – 27
Zechariah 11:13 (c. 487 BCE) Matthew 21:7
Psalm 22:16 (c.1000 BCE) Matthew 26:15
Psalm 22:18 (c.1000 BCE) Luke 3:23, 31
Zechariah 9:9 (c. 500 BCE) Luke 23:33
Malachi 3:1(c. 500 BCE) John 19:23-24

3. The rededication of the Temple is celebrated every year with a special festival.
 - a) What is the festival called?
 - b) What is the miracle associated with rededicating the Temple
 - c) Write a sentence of exactly 10 words defining what a miracle is. Compare sentences and vote on the most accurate.
 - d) 'Miracles were commonplace for Jesus but unheard of since.'
Discuss



4. **Headline....*Christianity didn't start with the birth of Jesus!***

Using the arguments below and any others you can think of, write a newspaper article to back up that claim. Give reasons for what you say. E.g.

The time was ripe

Jewish culture was under threat

Foreign influence put new ideas in the air

The End of Time was longed for

Hidden literature bred a sense of urgency

The Jews were still the Chosen People

5. Along with the title 'the Son of Man' Jesus called himself by other names. Research what these are and how commonly they occur in the gospels and list them in order of frequency.
6. If you were a Jew in 1st C Judaism what would you *most* want any Messiah to say or do?
7. Son of Man is a translation from *ben* (son) *Adam* (thing of dust). If men and women are ultimately just things of dust is God more or less like them and why?
8. Whether or not to include various books caused huge controversy when early editions of the Bible were being finalised. To some extent the debate still continues
- Imagine you are making a time travel box. As a group, come up with five modern texts that you think sum up the spirit of the age that must be included in your box.
 - Analyse what criteria you used when making your selection (eg they are the most widely read)
 - For the Church of England, scripture means the 66 'Canonical books' of the Bible (39 of Hebrew Old Testament and 27 of Greek New Testament) as established by the Early Church Fathers. What criteria do you think the Early Church Fathers might have used to establish that Canon (think of things like 'orthodoxy', known use among early Christians etc)



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FILM SCRIPT

If you think Christianity started in 1 AD – you can think again. Not only is the actual date of Jesus' birth a rough guess, but more importantly the Christianity that we know today grew over several centuries.

To start with, it grew out of Judaism but it was the Judaism of a particular time. To understand the world of the Gospels we have to go back to those roots.

Some things are taken as read. All Jews had in common a belief in the Torah as God's word, debated and explained in synagogues throughout Judaea. They believed that they were a people whom Yahweh had especially selected. This same Yahweh had rescued them from slavery in Egypt and had given them a law that He expected them to obey. First among the commandments was the demand to love him and not to worship any other gods.

For a Jewish person of the 1st century, the temple in Jerusalem was sacred. The office of High Priest was the most important religious and political position anyone could hold. Once a year he – and he alone – would enter the inner sanctum of the temple - the Holy of Holies.

Here, before the Ark of the Covenant containing the stone tablets of the 10 commandments handed over to Moses, the divine radiance of God was felt to actually dwell. So sacred was the action of the High priest that under no circumstances could anyone join him and the practice developed of having a safety rope tied around his leg – in case he collapsed in the Presence of God, and could be then dragged back to safety.

As the people God had chosen to reveal Himself to the world, the Jews were ready. They would reveal Him as the one God, who would restore them to a golden, Promised Land where His law would finally rule.