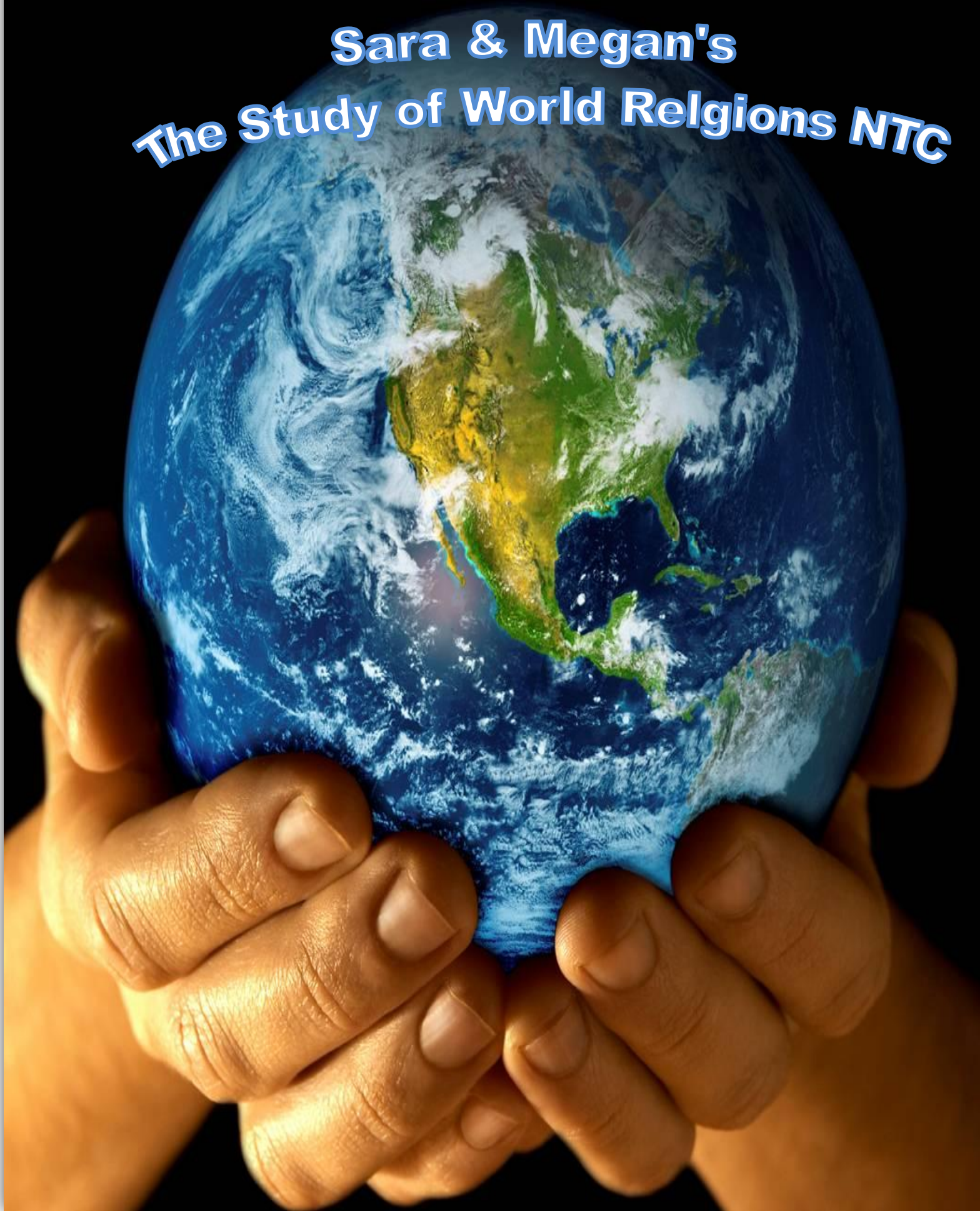


Sara & Megan's
The Study of World Religions NTC



Christianity

- Last class we talked about the development of the Hellenistic rule, the **Book of Maccabees**, and the eventual Roman rule.
- The **Gospels** speak of the infancy of Jesus but neglect to say much about his childhood. The books start with Jesus' ministry. What is Jesus' ministry? It is the part of his life where he taught parables, interacted with his followers and died on the cross and was resurrected. Jesus is rumoured to have died in 33 CE, and his ministry period was 3 years before that. The Gospels concern themselves with this timeframe.
- The beginning of Jesus' ministry starts with **John the Baptist**, who was Jesus' cousin. John the Baptist was a preacher who lived off the land. He was depicted as un-groomed and wild. He baptized people as a cleansing from their sins. One day, John the Baptist was baptizing people in the river of Jordan when Jesus decided to get baptized. Some of the Pharisees came by and asked both of them who they were. John the Baptist confirmed that he was not Jesus or a prophet. He was only there "to build a highway to the lord."
- The baptism of Jesus is interesting because it is a **theophany**- an early manifestation that Jesus is God.
- The parables and the miracle stories are not only said for their instructional values alone, they also have a continuous theme about the **Kingdom of God**. The concept of the Kingdom of God is related to the concept of the **messiah (Christos)**, which means the appointed one. This shows that Jesus has a royal lineage from the royal line of David.
- Jesus is not out to break the Roman rules. He is not a political liberator. He is more of a spiritual liberator. There is an intervention of God in earthly affairs. Although Jesus is called the Christ, there are different concepts of messiah and Jesus is portrayed in a different fashion. He is portrayed in his own special fashion and he is not depicted as a typical messiah.

The Apostles

- Jesus had 12 chief followers called **Apostles**. The Apostles were specific people that Jesus called to follow him to form the foundation of his crowd. Here are some of the important ones:
 - **Simon (Peter Cephas)**- Simon was a fisherman and Jesus renamed him as Peter Cephas, which means "the rock." Simon was chosen for a leadership position in Jesus' crowd. He was highly favoured and given authority in Jesus' community.
 - **Matthew** was a tax collector. Tax collectors were not fondly looked upon at the time because they took money from their own people and pocketed some of it. Jesus asked him to be part of his crowd. This emphasizes how Jesus was willing to socialize with people that were marginal. Jesus often sat down with sinners.
 - **John the beloved** was attributed with the Gospels as well.
 - **Judas** is the betrayer of Jesus in the Gospels, which sets into motion the events of the Passion. The Christian view of Judas is a bit negative.
- The **Last Supper** was when Jesus and his apostles rented a room for the celebration of Passover. Keep in mind that the dinner table for the last supper was not set up like our modern supper tables. In the bible, during the course of this meal, Jesus takes common food items of that time (bread and wine)

and identifies it as his blood and body. He then shares it with his apostles. This is the **Eucharist**, which means “thanks giving.”

The Gospels

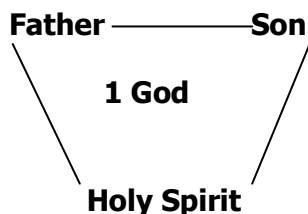
- There are two pivotal doctrines in the Christian Tradition that stem from the Gospels.
 - From the perspective of the Christian faith, the **Atonement** (the act of Jesus dying on the cross) fundamentally reconciles humanity to God, in that Jesus died on the cross because of the sins that people committed, and the grace that results from this action is the assistance that brings Christians closer to God. It is a way that humanity can be restored and rejoined to God through the act of the crucifixion. The grace that comes from this action can't be bought or sold; it is an unmerited gift from God. After his crucifixion, Jesus was put into the burial chamber. Three days after the crucifixion, some followers came to see his body. They found that there was no body in the tomb. The **resurrection** is the breaking of death. It is the action that liberates Christians from the impossibility of achieving eternal life. This resurrection was at the end of Jesus' ministry.

The Book of Acts and the Pentecost

- The Book of Acts talks about when Jesus goes back up to heaven and finding a replacement for Judas.
- The Apostles were sitting in a rented room and all of a sudden the **Holy Spirit** illuminates them. The Holy Spirit is depicted as a dove with rays of light coming out of it. The Apostles went out in the streets of Jerusalem and spoke in the different languages of the people they encountered. This event is called the **Pentecost** and it is the beginning of the ministry of Jesus' followers once Jesus has left earth.

The Holy Trinity

- The idea of the trinity was formally defined 2 centuries after the writing of the Gospel. This Holy Trinity is usually represented as a triangle similar to the following:



- The Holy Trinity can be interpreted as three separate people that are one God. This is the Christian explanation of monotheism. This is the most accepted orthodox model.

Saul of Tarsus

- Another important figure in the book of Acts is **Saul of Tarsus**. After the Pentecost, one of the Apostles embarks on a journey full of miracles but there is martyrdom early in the story. There is a man named Steve, a follower of Jesus, who was being persecuted by a group of people who did not agree with Jesus' take on Judaism. Recall that at this point the followers of Jesus still considered themselves Jewish. There was a strife between the people in the Jewish community that agreed with Jesus and those that didn't agree with Jesus. Steven, who was a follower of Jesus, was marred by a group that did not agree with Jesus. Saul of Tarsus was amongst the group that was marring Steven. Tarsus is present day Southern Turkey. Saul was born into a Hellenistic Jewish Family and was given the best education of the time under the Rabbi **Gamaliel**. Saul was a persecutor of the community that followed Jesus. Saul was later converted to Christianity. Saul was on his way to **Damascus, Syria**

when he received a blinding light revelation. He fell down on the ground and when he stood up he was miraculously converted to Christianity. Saul's name then changed to **Paul**.

- Peter, an Apostle, had a dream where he was confronted with various non-kosher foods and dined with gentiles. After this dream, the Apostles were confronted with the following question: do they dine with gentiles? It was eventually decided that Christianity could accommodate a less exclusive form of membership and could include people that were not Jewish by heritage and wanted to join and believe. The members of the Christian community are unbound by the kosher laws and the act of circumcision. There was an act to move away from Jewish practices and begin to make their own consensus about how to be followers of Christians.
- The Book of Acts is also a travel log. It is a story of Paul's travels in the Mediterranean, where he encountered situations with different ethnicities, religious groups, etc. The Acts end up with Paul on trial in Jerusalem. He was brought before the court for preaching Jesus' message. Paul was a Roman citizen, unlike Jesus. Being a citizen was not just granted by birth, it was a privilege.
- Paul formed the bedrock of Christianity. He defined the boundaries of the new Christian community. He gave boundaries on how to live the new Christian life. He talked about how to live a Christian life if you lived in a Roman house. He talked about the role of a Christian in a Roman society. Paul also elaborated on the life of Jesus.