Introduction: Did Jesus Christ Found a New Religion, or Was Christianity Born After His Death?

One of the most interesting questions in the history of Christianity is also one of the questions that causes the greatest confusion: **Who really founded Christianity?**

The answer seems simple: Jesus Christ. However, when we examine the subject more deeply from a historical perspective, several questions arise that deserve a much more careful explanation.

Jesus was born a Jew, lived as a Jew, attended the synagogue, celebrated the festivals of Israel, knew the Hebrew Scriptures, and died under Roman authority on an accusation connected with His status as the "King of the Jews." He did not establish a religion in the modern sense of someone abandoning one tradition in order to create an entirely different one.

Furthermore, His first disciples were Jews. The apostles, the Virgin Mary, and the earliest followers of Jesus all belonged to the people of Israel. During the first years, Christ's followers continued to visit the Temple and observe many of the religious practices of Judaism.

So how did the separation between Judaism and Christianity take place? Did a single Church exist from the beginning, or were there several different forms of Christianity in its earliest days? Was Saint Paul the one who transformed Jesus' movement into a universal religion? And, above all, **is the Christianity that emerged from those beginnings the same Christianity professed today by the Catholic Church?**

To answer these questions correctly, we must distinguish between three realities: the historical preaching of Jesus Christ, the birth of the apostolic Church, and the historical development of Christian communities.

History will help us understand this process, but it is the Catholic faith that allows us to discover its deepest meaning.

1. Jesus Christ Was Jewish: Christianity Was Born in the Heart of Israel

To understand the origins of Christianity, we must begin with a historical and theological reality that admits no dispute: **Jesus Christ belonged to the Jewish people**.

He was born in Bethlehem into a Jewish family, was circumcised according to the Law of Moses (Luke 2:21), and was presented in the Temple (Luke 2:22-24). He grew up in Nazareth and participated in the religious life of His people.

The Gospel of Saint Luke tells us that Jesus went to the synagogue in Nazareth "as was His custom" (Luke 4:16). He also celebrated the Jewish Passover with His disciples (Luke 22:7-15).

His teaching was deeply rooted in the Scriptures of Israel. When He spoke about the Kingdom of God, the Law, the prophets, the covenant, or salvation, He did so using the religious and spiritual concepts of His own people.

Therefore, it would be historically incorrect to imagine Jesus as someone who appeared before the world founding a religion completely disconnected from Judaism.

However, it would also be theologically incorrect to conclude that Jesus was simply another Jewish teacher whose teachings were subsequently transformed by His followers.

The Christian faith maintains something far deeper: **Jesus is the Messiah promised to Israel, the Son of God made man, and the One in whom the promises of the Old Testament find their fulfilment**.

He Himself declared:

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfil them" (Matthew 5:17).

This statement is fundamental to understanding the birth of Christianity.

The Church does not understand its origins as an arbitrary break with the religious history of Israel, but as the culmination of the history of salvation prepared by God from ancient times.

The Old Covenant was neither a mistake nor a reality devoid of value. It was a fundamental stage in God's divine plan, reaching its fulfilment in Jesus Christ.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church recalls that the election of Israel and the Old Covenant form part of the preparation for the coming of Christ (CCC, 121-123).

Christianity was not born against the Scriptures of Israel, but from them and from their fulfilment in Jesus Christ.

2. Did Jesus Christ Found Christianity If He Died as a Jew?

Here we must distinguish between two questions: the religious and historical identity of Jesus and the nature of the mission He carried out.

Jesus died as a Jew in terms of His birth, His belonging to the people of Israel, and His religious context. There is no historical basis for claiming that, before His death, He formally abandoned Judaism or converted to another religion.

Nevertheless, during His public ministry, He did something extraordinary: He gathered disciples, chose twelve apostles, and entrusted them with a mission that went beyond that of a rabbinical school.

The choice of the Twelve has particular significance.

They were not simply twelve prominent followers. The number twelve directly evoked the twelve tribes of Israel. Their selection symbolically expressed the intention to gather and restore the people of God.

Jesus did not merely transmit moral teachings. He proclaimed the Kingdom of God, forgave sins, performed signs of divine authority, and presented Himself as the fulfilment of the Messianic promises.

Furthermore, He entrusted His apostles with a particular authority and mission.

In Matthew 16:18-19, we find the words addressed to Peter:

“You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church.”

It is important to observe that Jesus does not say that His disciples will establish a Church in the future through their own initiative. He speaks of His Church: a community that belongs to Him and whose establishment He attributes to His own authority.

In Matthew 18:17, He explicitly mentions the Church again, and in Matthew 28:19-20, He entrusts the apostles with a universal mission:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

This command is decisive.

The mission is no longer limited to the Jewish people. The disciples must proclaim the Gospel to all nations.

Therefore, can we say that Jesus Christ founded Christianity?

Yes, provided that we correctly understand what this statement means.

Jesus Christ is the founder of Christianity because He is the source of its faith, the centre of its doctrine, the author of the salvation it proclaims, and the founder of the Church that continues His mission throughout the world.

The fact that He died as a Jew does not contradict this statement. On the contrary, it helps us understand that the Church was born within Israel and received a universal mission from Christ.

From the Catholic perspective, His disciples did not invent a new religion after His death: it was Christ who, through His preaching, His redemptive sacrifice, and His Resurrection, established the foundations of the New Covenant and founded His Church.

3. Pentecost: The True Public Birth of the Church

If Jesus Christ is the founder of the Church, when can we historically place its birth?

The Catholic answer leads us to a fundamental event: **Pentecost**.

After the Resurrection, Jesus appeared to His disciples, instructed them, and promised them the coming of the Holy Spirit. Before His Ascension, He commanded them to remain in Jerusalem until they received “power from on high” (Acts 1:8).

The apostles obeyed.

Acts of the Apostles, chapter 2, describes how, during the Jewish celebration of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended upon them. This was manifested through a powerful wind and tongues as of fire that rested upon each of them.

Peter, who had previously denied Jesus out of fear, stood up and publicly proclaimed His Resurrection.

His preaching had an extraordinary effect: that day, approximately three thousand people were added to the community (Acts 2:41).

This event is of decisive importance for several reasons:

- **The Church publicly receives its mission:** the disciples cease remaining in private gatherings and begin proclaiming the Gospel.
- **The Holy Spirit manifests His presence:** the Christian community will not simply be a human association, but the people of God, brought to life by the Spirit.
- **Preaching acquires a universal dimension:** people from different regions hear the proclamation of God's mighty works in their own languages.
- **The apostolic community begins to become visible:** the teaching of the apostles, the breaking of bread, fraternal life, and prayer constitute its fundamental elements.

Saint Luke summarises this first form of Christian life with particularly significant words:

"They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers" (Acts 2:42).

Let us observe that the essential elements of the life of the Church are already present: apostolic doctrine, communion, Eucharistic celebration, and prayer.

We are not dealing with a community that merely remembers the teachings of a deceased master. Its members believe that Jesus Christ has risen and continues to be present and active among them.

From Catholic theology's perspective, Pentecost is the public manifestation of the Church and the beginning of its evangelising mission throughout the world.

The Catechism teaches that the Church was manifested to the world through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (CCC, 767).

The Church was not born from an organisational decision made by the apostles, but from the will of Christ, who established it and gives it life through the Holy Spirit.

4. Did a Single Christianity Exist from the Beginning, or Were There Several?

This question requires us to distinguish between the unity of the apostolic faith and the historical diversity of the earliest communities.

During the first decades, Christianity did not resemble the religious reality we know today. There were no great basilicas, dioceses organised territorially as they are today, or administrative structures spread throughout the Roman Empire.

Christians gathered mainly in private homes and small communities. Jerusalem occupied a fundamental place, but communities of believers soon emerged in other cities.

Furthermore, an important question arose that would lead to significant discussions: was it necessary to convert to Judaism first in order to become a Christian?

Early Christianity: A Community Born Within Judaism

In its beginnings, the followers of Jesus were predominantly Jewish.

They believed that Jesus was the Messiah announced by the prophets and that God had raised Him from the dead. They remained connected to many of the religious customs of Israel.

The Book of Acts shows, for example, that the first disciples went to the Temple (Acts 2:46; 3:1).

However, apostolic preaching began to attract people who came from pagan backgrounds, that is, men and women who did not belong to the Jewish people and who neither knew nor practised the Law of Moses.

This is where a decisive problem arose.

Did the pagans who embraced faith in Christ have to be circumcised, observe Jewish dietary regulations, and assume the ritual obligations of the Old Covenant?

This was not a secondary matter. It directly affected the understanding of salvation and the nature of the New Covenant.

The Council of Jerusalem: A Fundamental Decision

The controversy reached a decisive moment around the year 49-50 AD, when the apostles and the leaders of the community gathered in Jerusalem.

This event, narrated in Acts 15, is traditionally known as the Council of Jerusalem.

Some believers who came from the Pharisaic tradition maintained that Gentiles had to be circumcised and observe the Law of Moses in order to be saved.

Peter intervened, recalling that God had granted the Holy Spirit to the pagans as well and that salvation comes through the grace of the Lord Jesus.

Finally, the assembly determined that Gentiles should not be required to undergo circumcision or observe the Mosaic Law in its entirety as a condition for joining the Church.

Certain provisions were established for these new Christians, concerning practices that were particularly problematic in that historical context.

The importance of this decision is extraordinary.

The Church recognised that **entering the New Covenant did not require becoming Jewish first**.

Salvation did not come from circumcision or the observance of Mosaic ritual prescriptions, but from God's grace, received through faith in Jesus Christ.

This did not mean despising the Old Testament or denying the value of the Scriptures of Israel. It meant recognising that the Old Covenant had reached its fulfilment in Christ.

Were There Different Forms of Christianity?

From a historical point of view, yes. Different currents and ways of interpreting the identity of Jesus and membership in His community existed.

However, it would be incorrect to imagine that, from the beginning, there were several independent Churches equivalent to today's Christian denominations, all possessing the same apostolic legitimacy.

We can distinguish three realities:

1. Diversity of communities and traditions.

The Christians of Jerusalem, Antioch, Corinth, or Rome lived in different circumstances. They spoke different languages, belonged to different cultures, and faced different pastoral problems. This diversity did not necessarily imply a division in the faith.

2. Doctrinal differences and internal controversies.

From the earliest times, discussions arose concerning the Law of Moses, the identity of Christ, the Resurrection, and other fundamental aspects of the faith.

Saint Paul had to correct numerous deviations in the communities to which he wrote. His letters provide extraordinarily valuable evidence of these difficulties.

3. Movements that departed from the apostolic faith.

Groups also emerged that maintained teachings incompatible with the preaching received from the apostles.

Among them, we later find different Gnostic currents, as well as Marcionism, associated with Marcion in the second century, who rejected the Old Testament and proposed a radically different interpretation of Christianity.

The Church had to defend and clarify the faith it had received in response to these interpretations.

Therefore, we must avoid two historical errors.

The first is to imagine that all the early Christians thought and lived in exactly the same way in every detail.

The second is to claim that original Christianity consisted of a plurality of independent religions and that the Catholic Church was simply one of them, subsequently emerging as the victorious one.

From its origins, an apostolic faith existed that sought to preserve its unity, although Christian communities experienced differences, controversies, and divisions from a very early stage.

5. Was Saint Paul the One Who Created the Christianity We Know Today?

This is probably one of the most interesting questions and, at the same time, one of the most misrepresented.

Some historical interpretations present Saint Paul as the true founder of Christianity, arguing that Jesus was a Jewish preacher whose teaching was subsequently transformed by Paul into a new religion.

According to this interpretation, Jesus essentially proclaimed a message addressed to Israel, while Paul turned His figure into the object of a new universal faith.

However, this explanation is insufficient and does justice neither to the historical sources nor to the content of the apostolic faith.

To understand this, we must know who Paul was and what his mission actually involved.

From Persecutor of Christians to Apostle of Jesus Christ

Paul, initially known as Saul, was Jewish and belonged to the Pharisaic tradition.

In his own letters, he explains that he persecuted the Church of God before his conversion (Galatians 1:13).

His encounter with the risen Christ radically changed his life.

In Galatians 1:15-16, he states that God was pleased to reveal His Son to him so that he might proclaim Him among the Gentiles.

The Book of Acts describes his conversion on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-19).

From that moment onwards, Paul became one of the principal missionaries of early Christianity.

His work was particularly important among non-Jewish peoples.

He travelled through different territories of the Mediterranean world, founded and accompanied Christian communities, trained collaborators, and wrote letters to instruct believers and resolve their difficulties.

His writings constitute some of the oldest Christian documents that have survived.

What Did Saint Paul Actually Contribute?

His contribution was enormous.

First, he developed a profound theological explanation of salvation through Jesus Christ.

In Romans and Galatians, we find a fundamental exposition of justification, grace, faith, and the relationship between the Old and New Covenants.

Second, he defended the position that Gentiles could become full members of the Church without submitting to circumcision or assuming the ritual prescriptions of the Mosaic Law.

Third, he contributed decisively to the spread of the Gospel throughout the Greco-Roman world.

His communities helped Christianity move beyond its predominantly Jewish environment and acquire an increasingly universal dimension.

But there is one fundamental detail that dismantles the idea that Paul invented Christianity.

Paul does not present himself as the creator of a new message, but as the transmitter of a faith he has received.

In 1 Corinthians 15:3-5, he writes:

“For I handed on to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures; that He was buried; that He was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures; that He appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve.”

This passage is especially important for historical research.

Paul is transmitting a confession of faith that existed before this letter was written. He is not presenting a doctrine of his own invention.

The death and Resurrection of Christ already constituted the centre of the earliest Christian proclamation.

Furthermore, Paul acknowledges the importance of the apostles who preceded him. In Galatians 1:18, he recounts his meeting with Cephas, that is, Peter, and also mentions James, the brother of the Lord.

In Galatians 2, he describes his relationship with the authorities of the Church in Jerusalem and the recognition of his mission among the Gentiles.

Therefore, Paul was not acting as an independent founder of a parallel religion.

His apostolate was connected to the same faith proclaimed by Peter, James, and the other apostles.

Does This Mean That Paul Did Not Influence Later Christianity?

Not at all.

His influence was extraordinary.

Later Catholic theology found in his letters a fundamental source for deepening its understanding of questions such as:

- Justification by grace.
- Redemption through the death of Christ.
- The Resurrection and its consequences for humanity.
- The relationship between the Old Law and the New Covenant.
- The nature of the Church as the Body of Christ.
- The universal call to salvation.
- Life in the Holy Spirit.

Saint Augustine, Saint Thomas Aquinas, and numerous later theologians studied his writings in depth.

But developing, explaining, and transmitting a doctrine is one thing; inventing it is quite another.

Saint Paul did not found Christianity: he was one of its principal apostles, evangelisers, and theologians.

Jesus Christ is the foundation; the apostles are the authorised witnesses of His teaching and His Resurrection.

6. When Did the Followers of Jesus Begin to Be Called Christians?

A particularly interesting historical detail appears in Acts 11:26:

“It was in Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians.”

Antioch of Syria was one of the fundamental centres of the expansion of early Christianity.

Communities from different backgrounds and cultures lived there, and important missionary initiatives were promoted from that city.

The emergence of the designation “Christians” reflects a historical reality: the followers of Jesus were beginning to be recognised as a religious group with its own identity.

Nevertheless, we must be careful about the conclusions we draw.

The fact that they received a specific name does not mean that they separated completely from Judaism at that precise moment.

The separation between Christianity and Judaism was a gradual historical process, with differences between regions and communities. It cannot be reduced to a single date or an isolated decision.

For quite some time, there continued to be Christians of Jewish origin who preserved certain practices of their ancestors, while communities originating from pagan backgrounds grew and spread.

The destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem by the Romans in the year 70 AD had an enormous impact on the Jewish world and on Christian communities of Jewish origin.

During the first and second centuries, distinct religious identities gradually developed.

It is important to point out that not all Jewish and Christian groups followed the same path or experienced this process in the same way.

The Church must never forget this historical and spiritual root.

The Second Vatican Council expressly recalled this in *Nostra aetate*, number 4, noting that Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, the apostles, and many of the first disciples came from the Jewish people.

It also recalled that Christians receive a fundamental spiritual heritage from Israel.

The Christian faith cannot be properly understood by ignoring its Jewish roots.

7. Was Early Christianity Already Catholic?

We now arrive at one of the fundamental questions for understanding the identity of the Church.

If Jesus Christ founded a Church and the apostles spread it throughout the world, can we affirm that this Church was already the Catholic Church?

To answer this, we must distinguish between the reality of the Church from its origins and the historical development of the words used to identify it.

The Church Existed Before the Term Catholic Became Widespread

The Greek word *katholikós* means universal, according to the whole.

Its use to designate the Church appears very early in Christian literature.

One of the most important testimonies is found in Saint Ignatius of Antioch, bishop and martyr of the early second century.

In his letter to the Christians of Smyrna, traditionally dated to around AD 107, we find one of the earliest surviving references to the expression “Catholic Church”.

In chapter 8, paragraph 2, of that letter, we find this statement:

“Wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church.”

This quotation allows us to verify that the term was already being used in the earliest centuries to express the universal identity of the Church.

It does not mean that the Church was born in the second century, when this designation began to be used in documented sources.

The Church existed from the time of the apostles; the term Catholic subsequently expressed, with particular clarity, a characteristic that had belonged to its identity from the beginning: its universality.

What Elements Do We Find in the Apostolic Church?

When we examine the New Testament, we find elements that constitute the foundation of the

Catholic Church.

The authority of Peter.

Jesus entrusted Peter with a particular mission, expressed in Matthew 16:18-19 and further developed in John 21:15-17.

The college of the apostles.

Christ did not leave behind merely a collection of written teachings. He chose and sent specific men to proclaim the Gospel and exercise a pastoral mission.

Apostolic succession.

The mission received by the apostles had to continue. In Acts 1:15-26, we find the account of the election of Matthias to take the place left vacant by Judas.

The Eucharist.

From the earliest times, the breaking of bread occupied a central place in the life of Christians. In 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, Saint Paul transmits the tradition he received concerning the institution of the Eucharist.

The communion of Churches.

The first communities were not isolated groups inventing their own doctrines. There were bonds of communion, recognition of authority, and a concern to preserve apostolic teaching.

These elements help us understand why the Catholic Church recognises the apostolic community as the origin of its own identity.

Did the Catholic Church Appear Centuries Later?

It is necessary to avoid a common misunderstanding.

It is true that, during the following centuries, numerous doctrinal formulations, juridical structures, institutions, liturgical forms, and theological expressions developed.

For example, the solemn formulation of certain dogmas took place centuries after apostolic preaching.

However, this does not mean that the truths defined later were invented at the moment of their definition.

The Church distinguishes between divine Revelation, transmitted by the apostles, and its progressive understanding and formulation throughout history.

The Council of Nicaea, celebrated in the year 325, formulated important affirmations concerning the divinity of the Son in response to Arianism. It did not turn Jesus into God at that moment: it solemnly defended a truth that had belonged to the Christian faith from its origins.

In the same way, the Church developed its understanding of the Trinity, the sacraments, the nature of Christ, and other fundamental truths.

The development of doctrine is not equivalent to the creation of a new religion.

This distinction is essential for understanding the historical and doctrinal continuity of the Catholic Church.

8. How Did We Arrive at Today’s Different Christian Denominations?

To complete our understanding of the origins of Christianity, we must remember that the early Church did not remain historically free from conflicts.

From the first centuries onwards, doctrinal controversies, disputes over authority, and tensions between communities emerged.

Some differences were resolved through dialogue and councils. Others led to lasting separations.

Among the most important events, we find the following:

First to third centuries: the earliest controversies.

The Church had to defend the identity of Jesus Christ against interpretations that denied or distorted His divinity or humanity. It also had to clarify the relationship between the Old and New Testaments.

AD 325: Council of Nicaea.

In response to Arianism, the Council affirmed that the Son is consubstantial with the Father. This was a fundamental event in the formulation of the Trinitarian faith.

AD 381: Council of Constantinople.

It further developed the confession of the divinity of the Holy Spirit and completed the formulation of the Creed commonly known as the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed.

AD 451: Council of Chalcedon.

It defined that Jesus Christ is true God and true man, possessing two natures, divine and human, united in one Person.

The Christological controversies of the early centuries led to ecclesial separations that gave rise to different Christian traditions.

AD 1054: The rupture between East and West.

The distancing between the Eastern and Western Churches was a lengthy process involving doctrinal, liturgical, political, and cultural factors. The year 1054 represents an emblematic event in the rupture between Rome and Constantinople, but it should not be interpreted as though the entire separation had occurred instantaneously.

Today’s Orthodox Churches emerged from this division. They preserve apostolic succession, the episcopate, and the sacraments, although they are not in full communion with the Bishop of Rome.

Sixteenth century: the Protestant Reformation.

The Reformation initiated by Martin Luther in 1517 and subsequently developed by other reformers led to significant ruptures with the Western Catholic Church.

Different Protestant traditions emerged, with doctrinal differences concerning the authority of the Church, the sacraments, justification, and other aspects of the faith.

Over time, the Protestant world diversified into numerous denominations and communities.

It is important to understand that these events do not represent different moments in which

Christianity was founded, but different stages in its history and in its divisions.

The Catholic Church recognises that these separations contradict the desire for unity expressed by Jesus Christ in His priestly prayer:

“That they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you” (John 17:21).

The unity of Christians is not merely an administrative matter. It belongs to the very nature of the Church and constitutes a spiritual requirement of the Gospel.

9. What Does All This Mean for a Catholic Today?

After examining the first centuries of Christianity, we can understand that our faith is neither a religious construction that arose spontaneously nor a particular interpretation of the teachings of a historical figure.

Catholicism understands itself as the continuation of a reality whose origin lies in Jesus Christ and which was entrusted to the apostles to be transmitted to every generation.

This conviction has very concrete consequences for our spiritual lives.

Our Faith Does Not Begin with Us

At a time when every person seems to feel authorised to construct their own interpretation of Christianity, it is especially important to remember that the Catholic faith is not a doctrine that we can modify according to our preferences.

We have received a deposit of faith.

Saint Paul exhorts Timothy:

“Guard what has been entrusted to you” (1 Timothy 6:20).

This expression summarises a fundamental responsibility: to faithfully preserve what we have received.

The Tradition of the Church is not a collection of ancient customs or nostalgia for bygone eras. It is the living transmission of divine Revelation entrusted to the apostles and preserved in the Church under the assistance of the Holy Spirit.

For this reason, a Catholic should strive to know his faith, study the Catechism, read Sacred Scripture, and deepen his understanding of the teachings of the Church Fathers and the Magisterium.

Belonging to the Church Means Living in Communion

We are not isolated Christians who maintain an exclusively individual relationship with God.

Through Baptism, we are incorporated into Christ and His Church.

We participate in a community that spans the centuries and brings together believers from every nation.

When we attend Holy Mass, we are not simply taking part in a gathering of people who share the same beliefs.

We unite ourselves to the Eucharistic sacrifice of Christ, which constitutes the centre of the life of the Church.

The Eucharist connects us with the faith of the apostles and with the Christian community of all times.

Knowing Our Origins Strengthens Our Identity

A Catholic who is unfamiliar with the history of his Church may end up considering his faith as merely one religious option among many.

Knowing the Gospels, apostolic history, the early councils, the Church Fathers, and the continuity of apostolic succession allows us to understand the identity of our faith more deeply.

It also helps us respond calmly to certain contemporary claims, such as the assertion that Saint Paul invented Christianity or that the Catholic Church was a late creation of the Roman emperors.

History demonstrates that Christianity existed long before Constantine and that the apostolic community already possessed the essential elements of the Church we recognise today.

The Catholic faith does not need to invent a glorious past. Its own history, with its lights, difficulties, and testimonies of holiness, constitutes an extraordinary heritage.

Conclusion: Jesus Christ Founded His Church, the Apostles Transmitted His Faith, and the Catholic Church Continues That Mission

Let us return to the initial questions.

Did Jesus Christ found Christianity while being Jewish?

Yes. Jesus Christ was Jewish and died within the context of His belonging to the people of Israel. But His mission was not limited to Israel: He proclaimed the Kingdom of God, established the New Covenant, chose the apostles, founded His Church, and sent it to all nations.

Did several forms of Christianity exist from the beginning?

Different communities, diverse cultural traditions, and doctrinal controversies existed from the earliest times. Nevertheless, the apostolic faith was understood as one single faith received from Christ and transmitted by the apostles. Later divisions must not be confused with different legitimate foundations of Christianity.

Was Saint Paul the one who created the Christianity we know today?

No. He was one of its most important apostles and contributed decisively to its expansion among the Gentiles and to its theological development. But he himself acknowledges that he transmitted a faith he had received, whose centre was the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Is the original Christianity Catholic?

From the perspective of the Catholic faith, yes: the Catholic Church is the historical continuation of the one Church founded by Jesus Christ upon the apostles, preserving apostolic succession and the fullness of the means of salvation that Christ entrusted to His Church.

Ultimately, **Christianity did not begin with Saint Paul, was not invented by Constantine, and did not emerge as the consequence of a political decision by the Roman Empire. Its origin lies in Jesus Christ.**

And there is one truth that every Catholic should remember: our faith is not a human creation that has survived for twenty centuries, but a response to a divine initiative that began long before us and will continue after our deaths.

Jesus Christ did not simply leave behind a book, a philosophy, or a memory of His teachings. He founded a Church, promised it His assistance, and entrusted it with a mission that extends throughout all history:

“And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).

This is the ultimate reason for our confidence: **the Church belongs to Christ. We are His members, heirs of the apostolic faith, and responsible for transmitting it in its entirety to future generations.**

Sources and References for Further Study

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- Acts 11:26: The origin of the designation “Christians”.
- Acts 15: The Council of Jerusalem.
- Galatians 1-2: Saint Paul’s apostolate and his relationship with the apostles.
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