

## SHORT HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY (1)

The Story of Jesus Christ is found in the book we call The Book, that is, The Bible. In the pages of the Bible is told the greatest story in the world. The Bible gives the history of God's great sacrifice for the salvation of mankind, His Creation. The golden text of the Bible reads, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son..." Did humans need this salvation? Did humans need the love of God? Did humans need the Son of God?

The Bible begins the story of human salvation with an account of the creation of the earth and the universe. Every physical thing in the earth was created by God. God made human beings. On the sixth day of creation God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness". (Genesis 1:26.) God was speaking with someone when He made that statement. God used the plural number pronouns "us" and "our". "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." There was at least one other divine person involved with God in creation. Who was that divine person?

The Bible continues the story of human salvation by telling us WHY humans need a Savior! The history of salvation parallels the history of sin. That's right! Salvation makes no sense without a knowledge of condemnation. And so, we learn about sin and its consequences in God's revelation of Himself in the Bible. The English word "Sin" comes from a Greek word that literally means "to miss the target." You see, the Creator has a standard of conduct that is excellent. Human conduct falls short of that standard. Humans behave so as to miss the mark. To fall short of the standard or to cut across the standard is known as sin.

We might ask: who is big enough to tell us how to behave? Who has set the standard of human behavior? Can I not set my own standard? Our heavenly Father, the Creator of the world, the God of heaven has set the standard. The standard of excellence is God and His Instructions, His commandments. These commandments, these instructions are found the information that God has revealed. English speakers call it simple, the Book, the Bible.

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The God who created the heavens and the earth, and humans after his own likeness, could NOT help but give humans a free will. God Himself has free will. A creature created in God's image could not be a robot. God's love must give his creation free will. But God's enduring justice must also hold His created beings accountable for their conduct.

Even God's own Son, Jesus Christ, (who himself was and is deity), had the free will to disobey His heavenly Father. That's right. There was a prophecy about the free will of Jesus in the Psalms, chapter 40, verses 7 and 8: "Then I said, "Behold, I have come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me: 8 I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart." When on earth Jesus said, "For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother." (Mark 3:35.) A human being who has the will to do God's will is a near kinsman of Jesus Christ. You are not far from the Kingdom of Heaven, the church of Christ.

When God gave His creation the freedom of choice, humans soon chose to transgress God's commandments. God held those people accountable for their sins. God will also hold you and me accountable. You may think you have gotten away from the consequences of your sin; but you have not. There is coming a day in which God will judge the world by that judge whom he has appointed for the task. (Acts 17:31.) God has given the world assurance that His Son shall judge the earth by raising His appointed Judge from the dead. The Creator of mankind thought that "...it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering." And so, we see Jesus "made lower than the angels" but eventually "crowned with glory and honor because of ... [his] suffering of death, so that by the grace of God [Jesus] might taste death for everyone." (Hebrews 2:9-13.) God thought that "Since...the children [were] in flesh and blood, [Jesus] himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death [Jesus] might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery." (Hebrews 2:14, 15.) Yes, human beings are in slavery to sin, and the father sin, Satan. The Holy Spirit says in Hebrews 2:17 that God had to make Jesus "...like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because [Jesus] himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted." (Hebrews 2:17, 18.) Well, who is being tempted? You are. I am. We

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humans are tempted by Satan. The suffering of Jesus Christ was meant to save us from our temptations. Christ is a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God. By saving human beings, Jesus was and is working for his heavenly Father, but His good works are for us. He can save us from our sins.

John the baptizer saw Jesus walking by one day, and his comment to his followers was: "behold, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." (John 1:29.) Later, John the baptizer said, "'I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.'" (John 1:32-34.) Do you believe this man John was sent from God? Do you believe like John that Jesus is the Son of God?

One of John's disciples was a man named Philip. After hearing John's testimony that Jesus was the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world, Philip went and found a friend of his by the name of Nathaniel. Philip said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, "**Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!**" Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "**Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.**" Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" (John 1:46-49, ESV.)

I do know what Nathanael was doing under the fig tree, but whatever it was, he was impressed with Jesus' knowledge of him. Jesus replied to Nathaniel, "**Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these.**" "**Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.**" (John 1:50, 51, ESV.)

The apostle John wrote, "Whoever believes in him (Jesus) is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in

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the name of the only Son of God. (John 3:18 ESV.) In verse 36, John wrote, “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him. (Joh 3:36 ESV.) Do you believe this testimony about Jesus Christ. Have you obeyed the Son? “Whoever does NOT obey the Son shall not see life.” And he is speaking of eternal life, the life that your Creator wants you to have with Him.

Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. (John 5:25 ESV) Jesus is talking here about those who are spiritually “dead.” He continued, “... as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. And [the Father] has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is [also] the Son of Man.” Jesus continued in verse 28, “Do not marvel at this, (that is, that He could give life to those who are spiritually dead) for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.” Jesus has not only the power to grant spiritual life to the spiritually dead, but He has the power to raise his voice and call out of the tombs those who are physically dead! Those who have done good will be raised to eternal life, those who have done evil will be raised up to face their judgment.”

Yes, God holds human beings accountable for sin. But God sent His Son to save us from our sins. Jesus Christ has been appointed as the Judge of all mankind, because He himself was once just like us, yet without sin. Jesus will judge every person from Adam to the last person standing. Do you believe in the Son of God? Do you believe in the resurrection of the dead? You need to obey Jesus Christ while you are alive. What will you do with this information from God’s Word? You can be saved from the wrath to come!