

## Christianity?

One day, years ago, a Buddhist friend turned to me and asked something like this; “Just what does it mean to be a Christian?”

Actually I was surprised at the question; even though it was certainly a valid one. I wasn't walking closely with the Lord at that time and realized in a flash that my own ideas on this subject were at best, very hazy. I gave some kind of vague answer at the time; I don't even recall what I said, but I do know I was far from satisfied with it myself.

Also at this time I had heard that all religions were basically the same. This came as a shock to me; not so much the statement, as the fact I could not effectively answer it at the time. I realized that even though I had been nominally a Seventh-day Adventist Christian most of my life, a group that claims to have 'The Truth', my own understanding and knowledge of that 'Truth' was very superficial indeed.

After this, I began to pray a prayer: “Lord, Teach me what it means to be a Christian!” You see it is an ongoing quest, an eternal learning, a walk with God. As I began to learn, I realized more and more my own deficiency. Then I also prayed; “Lord, re-create me, to be what a Christian is actually meant to be.”

I learned that for most of us 'Christians' it really was true that it *was* just another religion, not a lot different from all the others. This is so even for many, if not most of my own people. Let's explore a little deeper, shall we?

First insight is that True Christianity is not anything we do for God; it is what God in His mercy did, and does for us.

True Christianity is a personal relationship with God; a Love affair with Jesus Christ. It is made available as a free gift to us from the Father, through Jesus. We can do nothing to deserve it, we can do nothing to earn it. All we can do is accept it by believing. But once we truly accept Jesus and His salvation, we accept His plan for our lives and there is not one aspect of our life that is not affected when we truly believe. The true Christian lives “by every Word that procedeth out of the mouth of God.” As we feed on His Word, the unique book, the Bible, by studying it and praying and meditating on its words, the channel is opened to us of God's Grace and Power, and He begins to re-create us in the image of His Son, Jesus.

The Christian Life:

Life for the born-again Christian is a process of learning and striving in this Power to become more like Jesus. We study His life, “for by beholding we become changed.” And what was Jesus like when he walked this earth? Here is one inspired description:

“He was at variance and at war with the whole ungodly world, yet He did not give way to passion and violence manifested in words and actions, although receiving shameful abuse in return for good works. He was afflicted, He was rejected and spiteful treated; yet He retaliated not. He possessed self-control, dignity, and majesty. He suffered with calmness and for abuse gave only compassion, pity, and love...”

“Christ never murmured, never uttered discontent, displeasure, or resentment. He was never disheartened, discouraged, ruffled, or fretted. He was patient, calm, and self-possessed under the most exciting and trying circumstances. All His works were performed with a quiet dignity and ease, whatever commotion was around Him. Applause did not elate Him. He feared not the threats of His enemies. He moved amid the world of excitement, of violence and crime, as the sun moves above the clouds. Human passions and commotions and trials were beneath Him. He sailed like the sun above them all. Yet He was not indifferent to the woes of men. His heart was ever touched with the sufferings and necessities of His brethren, as though He Himself was the one afflicted. He had a calm inward joy, a peace which was serene. His will was ever swallowed up in the will of His Father” 3 Manuscript Releases 427.

When the converted Christian turns from his former worldly and sinful ways of life, he does not have to struggle to give up things he really desires, No! As he sees more of Jesus, he loses his taste for what he formerly loved; it even becomes odious to him. If he has harmful habits, he does not have to struggle and go through painful withdrawal to get rid of them, He merely tells the Lord that he refuses to keep this bad habit, and asks Him to please, take it out of his life and set him free. Jesus does this. His mighty power breaks the chains of habit and sin. The Christian stands free in the uplifting power of Jesus' Grace.

You take anger; a converted Christian does not struggle against inside angry feelings, forcing them down, gritting the teeth, appearing calm on the outside but really boiling over on the inside. When Jesus gives victory the Christian doesn't even feel angry inside, he feels compassion for those who hurt him, like his Master, Jesus, who prayed, “Father, Forgive them!”

Not possible you say? You're right! It isn't possible for us in our own strength; But all things are possible in Jesus. “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation!”

Why don't we see more wonderful, loving Christians then? It is not because of any lack on God's part. I assure you! It is because man likes to “do it himself”. In order to tap into this power we have to admit we can do nothing for ourselves. We have to surrender to conquer, we have to die to live, we have to give up to succeed. All these spiritual enigmas!

It goes against man's natural PRIDE to do this, also God does not, and will not force the will. He will never take our sin from us by force, we have to see it, hate it, and be willing to part with it. We can ask Him to show us what He wants us to see and He will.

Often, even when we see it, we are not completely willing to part with it. It is not hopeless in that case, we can ask Him to make us ‘willing to be made willing’. He'll even do that for us. Great is His compassion!

Man likes to reason and rationalize his sin problem; he tells himself he is alright, certainly, he is 'not as bad as all that' and 'as good as the next guy, maybe a bit better'. He tries to play games with God. It never works; God cannot be fooled or played with because He knows our minds. We only end up fooling ourselves and we will never know what God has gone to so much pain and trouble that He wants to give to us.

To accept God's provisions for us, we have to believe He is, that He exists as a personal Being. We have to seek Him with all our heart, being serious about it. We have to believe what He tells

us in His Word is true. Why is this so hard? Because His Word tells us things we don't want to hear because they are humbling to our pride.

That is how we know Christianity is real; this is one of the ways we know that God's Word is true. You see, if this were a book just made up and written by men for men, it would not go against our grain so badly as it does!

There is so much fuss these days about so called 'better' translations of the Bible; It is claimed that the Old Fashioned Authorized Holy Bible is too hard to understand. That is not the problem, it is too easy to understand, and what it says, sinful men don't want to hear. So they try to mythicize it away, to philosophize it away, to paraphrase it away. And of course we have those who tell us the Word of God is allegorical and not to be taken literally and only certain holy-men can understand it. RUBBISH!

A child can understand the word of God! And when we have the simple faith of a child in our heavenly Father, we will understand it also. God's Word is a power source; a link to the power that created and upholds the universe: is anything to hard for HIM?

Like the life of the plant is stored in the seed, so the power of God is in His Word! When we claim the promises of that Word in faith, the Power that spoke the world into existence stands behind that Word and it cannot fail. God, who cannot lie stakes His honor on His Word, if His Word were to fail He would cease to be God! Ever think of that?

## **Part 2- A Brief History of Christianity**

So what is the history of all these religions? First we will look at the true, then a few others.

Did you know that True Christianity (not denominational Christianity) is the oldest religion in the world? Yes; that's the facts! Not witchcraft; not goddess worship; not druidism; none of these. The True first religion was what would eventually become known as Christianity!

How did it all start? How did we all get in this mess anyway?

The Bible says; "In the beginning God." So that's where we will start.

God created the universe; He made beings who were capable of loving Him and appreciating Him. He made a race of beings to be His special servants; we know them as angels. He made a very special angel to be His right hand helper, as it were. This angel stood next to God's throne. He was known as Lucifer, the 'light-bearer'. He was most beautiful and intelligent of God's creatures.

There was perfect harmony in the universe; everyone loved God, everyone was content and happy serving Him.

God has a law upon which the universe runs, it is the law of unselfish Love. Life existed only within the confines of that law and to break it, meant eternal death. Why? Because that law is the very character of God; to break it separated a being from the source of all life, which is God. Results of this eventually are death.

It was the delight of the universe to obey that law in fact most beings did not even realize there was a law; it was so natural for them to live in harmony with God.

At some point Lucifer began to have a problem; we don't know why. If sin could be explained it would not be sin, so we can't expect it to make sense. He became proud in himself, and jealous of God and decided he wanted to be equal with God himself. This was kind of silly, as he did not have power to create and give life, he was himself, a created being.

He told the angels he could run things better than God. He said Angels didn't need a law, they should be free to do whatever they wanted. So to make a long story brief, he stirred up rebellion in heaven. Finally action had to be taken, so he was thrown out. Sadly one third of God's angels sided with him and some of the others were confused. He wandered about the universe trying to win others to his side and had no success, until this earth was created.

In Genesis 1 we are told, God created this earth in Seven days. Then He placed the first man and woman in a garden and told them to take care of the earth. He blessed the Seventh day and made it a special Sabbath. It was to be a day when they would worship Him and He would particularly fellowship with them and bless them. [By the way, evolution doesn't have a true scientific leg to stand on at all. This world is not millions of years old; it is all a lot of lies; but that is another story.]

They were warned about the fallen rebel leader and told he could only contact them at the one particular tree God told them not to eat from. Briefly the story is that Eve wandered away and got staring at that one tree. Lucifer; who is now known as Satan, the deceiver, was disguised as a serpent, which was an attractive animal them. He talked her into disbelieving and disobeying God, thinking she was getting something special that God did not want them to have. As a result rebellion spread to this world and Satan usurped dominion of this world.

It is important to notice the first lies in Genesis 2; Satan told her she would not die. (Immortality of the soul) and that her eyes would be opened (she would be 'enlightened') and she would become as God (evolution or spiritualism) These same lies are the foundation of all false religions. They are also repeated in nominal Christianity.

So here we have a part of the story that is often overlooked; Why didn't Adam and Eve die that very day? God said if they ate the fruit, they would die, they ate it, why didn't they die?

There is a verse in the Bible that tells us the secret; it says Jesus Christ is the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." This is connected with offering lambs as a sin offering.

Jesus didn't die until much later; so why was He 'slain from the foundation of the world'? (By the way. in case you are not aware of it, Jesus is actually our hands-on CREATOR. See John 1. )

The Godhead had made a secret agreement, that if the emergency of sin arose in any of the created worlds He had made, Jesus would pay the price of the broken law and give those beings a second chance. Thus when the penalty of the broken law fell on our first parents, Jesus stepped in between and pledged to pay the price Himself; to give them a second chance. So from that day until Calvary Jesus was on Death Row!

The promise of this is in Genesis 3:15, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." He was 'the seed of the woman that would bruise the serpents head.'

Back there in Eden, they were sent out of the garden and taught to sacrifice a lamb to point

forward to the coming Savior who was to bear their sins and give a second chance to all who would accept it; a free gift of grace.

Now what was this gift? Did it do away with the Law? No! If God's law could be set aside, it would not have been necessary for Jesus to die. His death pays the price for our past sins and allows Jesus to recreate us into a fit subject to once again be a part of the loyal universe. It does not make provision for us to go on breaking God's law but makes it possible for us, through Jesus' power to obey God's law.

If we still knowingly refuse to obey God's law, we can never be part of the free universe but will eventually die forever. [Note; not burn in hell forever, die forever. The Bible says "The dead know not anything" They do not exist any more.

We are not immortal; we are born and our one purpose in this rather short life is to show whether we will accept the offer of eternal life and let Jesus make us fit subjects for His universe, so He can give us eternal life. If we persist in refusing His gift and trying to do it our own way, so joining with the great rebel, we eventually lose our life forever, as will Satan. There really is only one way to God; all others are man's efforts to save himself in his own way, by his own works. "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." John 14:6.

In the Ten Commandments, God says don't worship any other gods; don't bow down to idols! He says, "I am jealous!" (See Exodus 20) Why does He say this? Isn't jealousy a bad thing? Not in the way He means it.

He says this because He knows there isn't actually any other gods except the devil and his fallen angels! God wants to save us; the devil wants us to suffer and die. Like a loving parent who warns a child, "Don't go with strangers! Don't take any gift from them!" His purpose is to protect us. Satan knows he is going to be destroyed and he wants to take as many as he can with him, because in that way he hurts God. The Bible says those who worship idols serve demons. Demons will destroy you in the end. God wants to save us; He loves us enough to give the efforts of all heaven to save us.

You may have heard the old joke, 'Is there anything God can't do?' Well, Yes, there is. He can't save us against our will. He made a way for us but we have to choose that way. That is all we have actually, the power of free choice. We don't have the power to change ourselves or save ourselves, but we can choose to give ourselves to Jesus, so He can save our lives. Or we can choose to do things in our own way, and eventually die with the great rebel and his fallen angels.

Now, let's explore the history of some of those man-made ways to 'salvation'. As we study the religions of the world in the light of Bible Truth, we realize that they are all various corruptions and counterfeits of the true worship of the Creator God.

After the fall of man into sin, God instituted the offering of a lamb or other clean animal to point towards the sacrifice that His own dear Lamb, the Son of God, would one day make for man. By humbly offering this lamb, as God had directed, the true worshippers of God showed their faith in the coming Redeemer, their only hope of salvation.

Corruption of this system was not long in coming; in two of Adam's children we see what happens when those who want to weave self into their religion are confronted by a faithful, obedient worshipper. Cain, the first born of Adam and Eve, became the first false worshipper. He brought the best fruit out of his garden; representing his own works, to make a present to God and God did not accept it.

Cain's idea of the greatness of God was very blurred for sure, if he thought he could make a gift to the Creator of the universe, because anything he had, was God's already!

Abel had humbly offered his lamb, showing his belief in the coming Redeemer and acknowledging his need of salvation. God accepted his worship, as he had obeyed God. Self did not come into Abel's humble worship. Abel tried to show Cain that God would accept him just the same if he would obey God's instructions to worship acceptably.

The result was that Cain's pride rose up, and he hated his brother. He refused to humble his heart and obey God's commands, even when God tried to reason with him. Finally he angrily murdered his brother. Ever since then, the true worshippers of God, obeying Him, have been hated and persecuted by those who want to do it their own way. Wherever you see persecution, no matter what the persecuting side claims to be, they are NOT true Christians! True Christians will try to teach you, they will warn you that you are wrong and this may make you uncomfortable in wrong doing; BUT no true Christian will torture or kill other people. God's true religion is not based on force.

After this cruel deed, Cain's idolatrous worship spread throughout the world. Violence and lawlessness increased until the true worshippers of God were few and had to live in secluded places because of the hatred of those who refused humble obedience to God.

Finally God could see that if He did not step in, the human race would destroy itself before the time would come for the Redeemer's birth. He chose the faithful family of Noah, and asked him to build a huge ship to save all who would believe. After Noah warning the world for 120 years; God caused a worldwide cataclysmic flood that swept away the wicked race of Cain and those who refused to obey God.

How quickly the true worship was again corrupted! The great-grandson of Noah, Nimrod and his mother or wife, Semeramis set up the idolatrous system of Babylon and had everyone worship them as gods. After the death of Nimrod, Semeramis claimed that her illegitimate son Tammuz, was the promised virgin birth of holy promise. Tammuz's birthday was December 25th, sound familiar?

Semeramis was modeled as the "Mother and Child" and was known as the "Queen of heaven" and the "Mother of God". At this time the idea of 'Mysteries' arose; systems of priest-craft whereby the ordinary person was taught one thing and the priests themselves moved up through various levels of knowledge of the mysteries; each level with an initiation rite and what was supposed to be ancient secret knowledge. (Like masonry and occult religions do today)

The idea of Cain, in offering his own works as a "Gift" to God instead of accepting God's great gift to man, which we can do nothing to deserve, developed into various systems of earning 'merit' with God which later developed into gods, plural. The ultimate corruption of the

sacrificial system was human sacrifices; offering up of children and virgins as burnt offerings to appease the gods.

It was later from Babylon that we get the idea of astrology, the horoscope and zodiac as used today in fortune telling. This was all a corruption of earlier prophecies like the prophecy of Balaam, along with the writings of Daniel, that were known world-wide, that allowed the Wise-men to know approximately when Christ was to be born and in what country to find him.

At the time of Daniel, about 500 years before Jesus birth, there were two major incidents that resulted in the knowledge of the true God and the religion of Judaism sweeping the world. One was the fiery furnace incident, [Daniel 3] where God saved three Hebrew boys from death when they refused to worship the idol the king set up to represent himself. He threw them into a furnace, but God protected them and even appeared in the furnace with them. At that time the defeated king sent messages to the entire inhabited world, telling the story of this Great God to all people.

Then years later, in the rule of one of the Medo-Persian kings, Daniel himself, now an old man, was thrown to the lions for refusing to worship the king. [Daniel 6] Again God protected him and the wonder of it all caused a second message to sweep the world by royal decree.

These two messages had great and far-reaching results and influenced Siddartha Guatama, in his development of Buddhism. He lived shortly after Daniel and was aware of him and his prophecies. From the writings of Daniel, Guatama learned the prophesied time of the Messiah's advent and told his followers: "About 500 years after my death, will arise a great prophet who shall teach you all things; follow him!"

There were other religions influenced by Daniel's writings; Zoroasterism was one. Pythagorean philosophy and Buddhism were others.

Until the time of Buddha, about 500 BC, India had been in the grip of Brahmanism, loaded down with the caste system and given over to idolatry. The new religion of Buddha swept successfully into this subcontinent. Buddhism changed idolatry from the worship of millions of gods to the worship of Buddha himself, but this was still worshipping idols.

Hinduism was descended from the mystery religions of Babylon and had the people enslaved and degraded. Guatama thought he would improve things by inventing a new and better religion. He drew some ideas from the Hebrew scriptures [interesting to note that early Buddhists kept the seventh-day Sabbath] but unfortunately decided the people should worship him instead of all those other gods and failed to teach the people about the True God taught in the Hebrew scriptures.

The original Buddhism as taught by Guatama was far different from that taught today; It has had a few more infusions of concepts from true Christianity down through the years, but has remained non-Christian, in spite of having adopted many concepts from True Christianity. This was mostly in an effort to combat early Christian influences which were very strong in the East right after Christ and up to about 8-9th century. [There were likely more Sabbath keeping Christians in China and the East in 8th century than there are in the whole world today]

This conglomerate religion was imported into Japan a bit later by Kobo Diashi; where it was

blended with Shintoism.

Under the two fold threat of Buddhism and Apostolic Christianity, the Brahmins began to loose their influence and stranglehold on India's people. The Christian church in India, established by Thomas, the disciple of Christ, flourished and grew. At one point the Brahmins decided to do something, and apparently they made up the myth of Krishna. Yes; He was counterfeited around 600 AD. Note the following:

"The Brahmins awoke with a start. They realized that new truths were wrenching their power from them. They doubtless reasoned thus; "Why sit we here as fools? Have we not seen the church at Rome in the west build up a successful rival to the New Testament church? Let us outrun both Rome and the simpler bodies of Christianity. Let us fabricate such a dazzling scheme of imitation that all other religions, even our own former teaching will be totally eclipsed." Then about 600 AD they invented the Krishna legend and in support of it they falsified their chronology.

The Power of the Gospel to challenge error is revealed in the stirrings among the Hindu leaders. The pagan priests were aware that it meant the end of their powers unless they fabricated new weapons. Success depended on their ability to imitate. They must make the same powerful appeals to the human emotions, which for the first time had been brought to the world through Jesus Christ. They must revamp their religious duties and copy or counterfeit the services of the true church.

The 'fairy-tale' of Krishna was what came out of their plotting. It had little effect however on the true Christians in India; the historic "St. Thomas church". Later in the Roman counter reformation, the Jesuits virtually wiped this true church off the map and took over what was left. To learn the rest of the story many little known details are found in the rare and fascinating book, 'Truth Triumphant' by professor Benjamin Wilkinson. It is a treasury of historic truths. These truths are rare and precious, as the Jesuits have sought to destroy all records of the true church and their own dastardly doings.

The best way to really know the truth of the Bible and Christianity is to read the Bible and claim its promises for ourselves! God invites, "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." Jeremiah 29:11-13.

"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." John 6:37.

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Isaiah 1:18.

"O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him." Psalm 34:8.