



Our inner heart . . .

. . . and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

Acts 11:25

Christianity, as a religion, has not “always existed” –its name arose as the outgrowth of a belief system that had spread to the ancient town of Antioch, in the Middle East. Rooted in a belief projected within the opening pages of the Hebrew Bible (“Bible” –from biblios: a collection of books) —This hope (or belief) pointed to the coming “Messiah”—a person projected to be larger than (our present) life, able to bring humankind back to the Paradise lost in the opening pages of the book of Beginnings (called Genesis).

Yes, Christians “believe.” This is important, for it is not that Christians do not think, or meditate, or do not study: all of these mental exercises are important, of course. Yet, when we *believe* this implies that we are considering an ultimate reality that is outside of ourselves. Yes, you can believe in yourself . . . but, when you run into a wall, or find a problem (which any person venturing outside of their bed in the morning, is bound to run into: Problems, I am speaking about)—We all experience challenges that confront us: seeking to block us from everything: ranging from daily routines . . . to an ultimate hope, for living.



Let us be ready...

These are things that distinguish us from mere animals, who only need to breathe (if land animals), eat and drink, and copulate (if they are mammals). Such creatures/animals understand to some degree that they are alive, yes, and may even experience love and happiness in some way—but are not intelligent creatures that can originate or grasp concepts beyond themselves, or imagine “living” beyond their present existence . . . into . . . eternity. For the Scriptures (i.e. the Holy Bible) say that humankind has the ability to experience “eternity in their hearts.” (Ecclesiastes 3:11)

“Eternity” is where God dwells and where

(continued)

1. WHY THE HOLY BIBLE?
2. WHY, THE CROSS??

Christ (the Messiah) has come from. — And this place, where God dwells, is “holy”—a special condition of being, defining all else within biblical law; personal boundaries, and the attributes of both God Himself, and of those who aspire to follow Him.

¹⁵ *For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, With him who has a contrite and humble spirit, To revive the spirit of the humble, And to revive the heart of the contrite ones."*

Isaiah 57:15

Such is the starting point of all that now exists. The Bible, itself, assumes that the reader understands this intuitively, within our soul and spirit. As the second part of the Bible puts it, “. . . *the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.* (John 1:17). —This statement, made within an amazingly concise description of what Christians believe, is what another first century apostle (a primary leader within the Christian belief system) put forth within his magnum opus, the book of Romans:

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,

Romans 1:20

The statement, above, about “His invisible attributes” —speaks about a key aspect of the Christian belief system: that God remains unseen and unknown, unless He chooses to reveal Himself to us. We now return to our earlier writer (the apostle John) with that beautiful introduction to his gospel (a “gospel” in this sense, is a general biography of the life and ministry of the Christ, or Messiah). Says John, within that concise statement of Christian beliefs:

¹ *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*
² *He was in the beginning with God.* ³ *All things were made through Him, and without Him noth-*

ing was made that was made. ⁴ *In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.* ⁵ *And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.*

John 1:1-5

Perhaps, you have never read the Bible for yourself? Allow me to recommend the above writing, found in the opening words of John’s gospel, as a starting point. Do you meditate? May I suggest, that what you are really looking for when meditating, is what the fourth verse (above) tells us about God and Christ: That Christ is the “light of men”—He is the one who illuminates our “knower” on the inside of us, within our spirit. As the writer of the Proverbs says (in the book of wisdom, written by wise king Solomon)—“**The spirit of a man is the lamp of the LORD, Searching all the inner depths of his heart.**” (Proverbs 20:27).

This “inner chamber” of our being (our spirit) is designed to “hook up” with the God of the universe, when the barrier between our *unholiness* and His holiness is bridged by the work of the Christ (the Messiah) --allowing us to regain fellowship and restart the fullness of life, that was lost when our first ancestors “fell” in Paradise, in the opening chapters of the Book. As the apostle Paul writes in his magnum opus (letter to Roman Christians):

¹⁶ *The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,* ¹⁷ *and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, . . .*

Romans 8:16-17

One point more, before we do a deep dive (if all of this is new to you, you may wish to pause, later, to talk to God, for yourself, from your own spirit: This is what we call “prayer”)—So remember this, that the God of the universe communicates directly (or “bears witness with”) with individual believers within the Christian faith, through His Spirit, whom we call (you guessed it) the Holy Spirit. But, we are getting a bit ahead of ourselves. We need to get back to the basics: for God most often communicates with us through the Holy Bible. Why the Bible?

Why might we decide to *believe in* the Bible?

Glad you asked.



WHY THE BIBLE?

*And God said, “Let there be light,”;
and there was light.*

Genesis 1:3

IN the economy of the Bible, the universe is voice activated. “For He spoke, and it was done. He commanded and it stood fast.” (Ps. 33:9). It was by His word, that Jesus awoke in a nearly capsizing fisherman’s boat, to rebuke to the wind, and hush the raging waves, by saying “Peace, be still” (Mark’s gospel, 4:39). Humankind was created with the ability to speak, fully and coherently, in the Garden of Paradise: they did not grunt and stumble over their words, while communicating with their Creator—even after disobeying His fully coherent command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. When the first architect of “critical theory” spoke to Adam’s wife (Eve), she fully understood what was being conveyed.

... Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

Genesis 3:1 (KJV)

This challenge was itself, voice activated—being somehow enabled from the “voice box” (??) of that serpent of old: the devil and Satan (Rev. 12:9). Further, when the Creator simply *moved* within the Garden, His very movement whispered His presence. “. . . they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

⁹ *Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, “Where are you?”*

Genesis 3:8-9

Adam answered, “I heard Your voice in the garden,

and I was afraid . . . and I hid myself.” (vs. 10). Thus we see, in the very first recorded discourse between God and man, that humankind started hiding from the true God, as the false one hid in the shadows awaiting a judgment. Yet, we also see the God of love, as a father laboring over His prodigals, even while expelling them from Paradise—carefully defining our relationship with our new “master” (the devil who is called “the god of this world,” within the New Testament –2 Cor. 4:4 kjv).

¹⁴ *So the LORD God said to the serpent: “. . . I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.”*

Genesis 3:14-15

Why had they rebelled? What were they thinking? (Where was Adam?) Was not all the rest of the Garden—indeed the entirety of the whole world, laid out before them? God had given them dominion: Dominion and control over everything upon the earth (Gen. 1:26). So, why tell them to avoid learning from a law of good and evil? —Excuse me, Why deny them a *tree* of good and evil, upon which the Son would one day hang, to deliver us from the Law, after we had freely chosen rebellion, instead of simply hanging our hopes of freedom on simply believing in God

In Paradise?

Before we leave this beautiful Garden, however, let us not forget the promised *Seed of the woman*. Someday, the Promised One would come through a woman—without the aid of a fleshly man, Who

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WHY THE CROSS?



But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

Galatians 6:14

Given that crucifixion was invented approximately six centuries before Christ was born, and outlawed approximately 4 centuries after his death—the question begs to be asked: Why the cross? Why was history’s most notable (and venerable) personage who demonstrated love, healing, and power, subjected to such a brutal death?

The twenty-second psalm (which Christ quoted from, from the Cross)—was written approximately four centuries before the Persians invented this brutal torture—and yet it states:

... They pierced My hands and My feet; ¹⁷ I can count all My bones. They look and stare at Me.

Psalm 22:16-17

This amazing prediction is given in spite of the agony of Christ’s earlier scourging (an extreme form of flogging; equipped with a lash having pieces of metal, and possibly broken glass)—which lacerated His back in a manner that could expose vital organs (such as the kidneys) to the external elements, and obviously hastened Christ’s death . . . before the crucifying authorities broke the legs of attending criminals on either side of Him, to avoid the “inconvenience” of desecrating a yearly religious practice (i.e. the Passover!) by religious leaders who were attending the carnage . . .

Thus, Christ’s bones were actually left in tact (although his joints were pulled out of their sockets . . . Ps. 22:14). —while having His body hoisted up between heaven and earth, with arms extended, as it became obvious that even there, while dying, Jesus thought of others more than Himself, as He prayed:

Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do . . .

Luke 23:34

They didn’t know what they were doing?? They were hanging up an innocent man to die. They were “punishing” a man who had healed the sick by opening blind eyes, deaf ears, and raising the dead (Matt. 11:5, Luke 7:22, . . .)! So universally accepted was His miracle working power that those opposing Him sought to attribute these powers to witchcraft and the demonic, saying, “He casts out devils, by the prince of devils” (Mk. 3:22 KJV). This prompted Jesus’ famous statement about a house being divided against itself not being able to stand, “And if Satan has risen up against himself, and is divided, he cannot stand, but has an end.” (Mark 3:25-26).

In retrospect, it really is quite obvious that Jesus voluntarily offered himself to his tormentors. Consider, for example, that as authorities approached in the night (where the lighting was dim, within the glow of primitive torches)—one disciple, in his zeal, swung his sword at a servant of the high priest and (missing his throat) to cut off his ear. Jesus’ response? —To perform one more miraculous healing, by restoring the man’s ear (Luke 22:51)!

Earlier, as they approached him that night, and there was a question of which man was to be apprehended among those standing in the garden (where Christ had been praying), Jesus asked, “Whom are you seeking?”

⁵ *They answered Him, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said to them, "I am He." . . . ⁶ Now when He said to them, "I am He," they drew back and fell to the ground.*

John 18:5-6

The words “I am He” has the pronoun added to the sentence, for readability. The actual discourse only includes the words “I am.” Now, for those familiar with Scripture, this should set off an alarm bell(!), for it

brings to mind the special covenant name of God given to Moses, at the burning bush. For when Moses asked God of His name that should be given to the children of Israel, when seeking deliverance, God answered:

¹⁴ *And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"*

Exodus 3:14

What a name for the pre-existent, eternal God, of the universe! The God Who is there: I AM. This is the name that Christ invoked when the guards came to arrest Him. "Who are you seeking?" Jesus asked. "Jesus of Nazareth," they answered.

"I am," Jesus replied, and those burly men fell backwards to the ground! Then, it was as if having to gather up His anointing and power, Jesus restrained the powers of the universe from decimating those coming to take Him to the Cross. Later, similar events that took place after Christ surrendered His life into the Father's hands, by bowing His head, to leave this world (for a time).

... It is finished!

John 19:30

"Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit"

Luke 23:46

And Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and breathed His last. ³⁸ Then the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

Mark 15:37-38

Why was the temple veil (which was a hand's breath thick) torn *from top to bottom*?

That is why Jesus came, to begin with! It was to remove the barrier between ourselves and the most holy, the God of Eternity! As the Jewish prophet projected in his writing:

All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

Isaiah 53:6

So this is why—the Cross:

⁵ *But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.*

Isaiah 53:5

Can you see it? Can you see it? This was all a "set up" . . . to save us!!

The serpent clipped the heal of our Lord (on the

Cross)—but the Messiah *crushed the head* of the serpent, and ruined the devil's power over those who now place their trust in Him. So that we may all say, on the day of our passing from here (into Eternity):

⁵⁵ *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?* ⁵⁶ *The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.*

1 Corinthians 15:55-56 (KJV)

What started in Paradise Lost (in the Garden) has now been vanquished, and Paradise regained. That is why Jesus could speak to the man dying next to him—after he suddenly caught a glimpse (and understanding) of Who was really dying next to himself.

For there was another thief, on the other side of Jesus, who was haranguing Him, and hurling insults into the face of Jesus. Struck by the injustice of it all, the thief who repented, cried out to the other thief in his agony:

... "Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation?" ⁴¹ And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong." ⁴² Then he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom."

⁴³ *And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."*

Luke 23:40-43

Yes, that is why we glory in the Cross (the *empty* Cross) because it represents Paradise regained! As the angels said to the women coming to perform their last honors: Hoping to anoint Christ's dead body that had lain in a tomb for three days:

⁵ *Then, as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth, [the angels] said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead?" ⁶ He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, ⁷ saying, 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.'"*

Luke 24:5-7

Yes, this is why Christians glory in the Cross of Jesus: It is Heaven's banner of victory! —It is a badge of honor within a victory parade leading into eternity, for those who believe in Him. Do you believe in Him?

For the believing Christian the Cross, as we pass from this present life—represents much more than "dust to dust" or "ashes to ashes"—it represents going from victory to Victory, forever!

Amen.



(Continued from page 3) ...*WHY, THE HOLY BIBLE?*

would be able to offer us redemption from the curse. But, we are getting ahead of ourselves.

So, again, why deny Adam & Eve the right to eat of one tree in the Garden? Because humanity was made in God's image, and God is good and righteous. Righteousness requires the ability to deny one's self of one ability, in order to maintain another. Innocence was simply not enough: being good requires that we avoid evil to accomplish what is good. You do not assign an "innocent" Police Officer to a community known for its organized crime. You assign an agent/Officer who has successfully resisted bribery, in the past. You cannot determine the virtue of a virgin who has never resisted personal advances, within compromising situations: true virtue will stand & resist, when tempted. Righteousness is more than innocence: it is good.

And yet, we have all fallen short: this is what the Bible calls "sin" (Romans 3:23).

Back to the Law, which has defined God's moral boundaries, for both individuals and community—as He descended upon a mountain in Arabia so forcefully, that the whole mountain began to quake, and started smoking terribly:

¹⁸ Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off. ¹⁹ Then they said to Moses, "You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die."

Exodus 20:18-19

Thus, we see God's people stepping back from God (again) and establishing a priesthood, in the Old Testament: A special delegation/section of society, that would bring sacrifices and offerings to God, and return the Lord's blessings, commandments and teachings to the people. Because these people (the children of Israel, whose origins the first book of the Bible takes great pains to describe)—were originally intended to be a "kingdom of priests" and a holy nation (Exodus 19:6)—they needed to be individuals who could individually gain access to God's special communication to His people. **Thus, when Moses descended from the Mount with the Ten Commandments they were not only being given a short version of the Law (the longer version would be written out as Moses returned to the Mount)—but were also receiving the world's first alphabet—a means of communicating by lettering based on vocal sounds, instead of pictographs (or hieroglyphics).**

Moses and Israel had arrived at this point, in history, after humankind had been allowed to "feel their way in the dark" so to speak, for hundreds of years—trying to "find their own way" back to Paradise, if you will—and had failed, miserably. Humankind, as well as fallen angels, had intermingled in what appears to have been a milieu of wickedness that preceded the Flood: with Humankind rebelling against the very genetic stream of their natural creation, to become (they thought) a super race—which God erased, with the exception of Noah and all those who floated with him inside an ark: A special boat designed to withstand the Flood (Genesis, chapter 6). This was God's "reset" of the human experience.

Then, **a human reset was attempted** with the tower of Babel, wherein humankind sought to build a tower that would (apparently) reach up to heaven (or the heavens)—just in case God should renege on His promise not to blanket the whole earth, once again, with water—which is what the rainbow in the sky is all about!

¹³ I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth. ¹⁴ It shall be, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the rainbow shall be seen in the cloud; ¹⁵ and I will remember My covenant which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh.

Genesis 9:13-15

Now, after the "human reset" at Babel was confounded by God (with "babeling")—as the Lord *scrambled* the human ability to speak and communicate universally—God divided up the human race into genetic societies (racial & national groupings) —that was facilitated by the limitation of their ability to speak to anyone but those understanding their personal dialect within their particular group (or race)—until finally, . . . We came to the point where God's Law was later defined for humankind from Mt. Sinai, which would ideally define a special nation of "priests" (Israel) that would ultimately reach its golden age under King Solomon.

King Solomon's strong point? When God asked him what he wanted (as a young fledgling king, in Israel)—he requested wisdom to govern the nation. Thus, the Bible also includes a sampling of wise sayings from this great king. This part of the Bible is called (you guessed it): **the Proverbs**, and is included within in the Book after the recorded Psalms of David, which form a sort of hymnal of faith ventures, experienced by king David, and others.

A great story, isn't it? Adam and Eve fell in the garden after eating from the tree of the knowledge of "good and evil" — and finally, God graciously defined for Israel, exactly what good and evil is (through the Law)!

Unfortunately, however, Israel utterly failed in her "national charter" with God, and often found herself being

“reinstucted” and rebuked by various prophets (such as Isaiah, Jeremiah—and the very illustrious Elijah, who called fire down from heaven in a contest with false prophets (1 Kings 18th chapter))—and the nation was ultimately dragged off into captivity, where the story of the Bible continued. For this period of captivity included their being subjugated to the Grecian and Roman empires, which also allowed the Bible to be translated into a new and more technical language (Koine Greek, Greek, which was in common usage, at the time) in preparation for the coming of the promised Messiah. This translation is called the Greek Septuagint.

An important point which must not be ignored, about the prophets, is their focus on the holiness of God—not just on foretelling the future. As we have already noted, it was the tendency to push God out of our lives . . . that first robbed humanity of Paradise.

However, biblical prophets *were* able to project future events because God, Himself, knows and fashions the ultimate trends, in our world. We saw a proto-example of this in the Garden, when the Lord told Eve that her Descendant (the Promised Messiah, or Christ) would eventually conquer the seed (evil rulers, and the one we will ultimately call the Antichrist).

How much better, to have remained in Paradise!

God also informed Abraham that his descendants would enter a nation that would afflict them for 400 years, suffering oppression —“And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions.” (Genesis 15:14)

Of particular interest is the *reason* that God gave for the extended delay, after which Israel *would* inherit the land that he was then only a traveler in—forever (Genesis 13:15).

Why the 400 year delay? Because the then present inhabitants had not yet run out their ownership rights of the land. More specifically God said,

. . . in the fourth generation

they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete."

Genesis 15:16

God said that the “iniquity” of the people of the land, had not yet run its full course. What is “iniquity”? It is an attitude of the heart that the Bible compares to witchcraft and idolatry (1 Samuel 15:23).

Thus we see that it is God, Himself, who determines the lifespan of nations and empires. Here also, we catch a glimpse of God’s ultimate purpose for dividing the nations, at the tower of Babel. **It was to form an internal form of checks and balances**

Righteousness exalts a nation . . .

upon evil, within the earth. As wise king Solomon observed “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people” (Proverbs 14:34). —So that the less decadent (and stronger) nations may be used as correcting agents over the more depraved societies. **This very check mechanism (while on the subject)—is what “critical theory” rooted in Marxist ideology (and hell itself) seeks to the reverse, by uniting people under ungodly principles: by way of envy and malice, for example—by making the masses of oppressed, or poorer persons, envious of those who are more wealthy while (theoretically) advancing towards a Utopian dream, wherein society is (supposedly) leveled to one egalitarian level—as they eject God from human society.**

(Yet we now know, from experience, that all such “leveling” takes place beneath the elevated privileges of Comrade Dictator, and his autocrats . . .)

BY now it must dawn upon the reader that the Holy Bible is an unusual Book. For it contains much more than a mere “religious” dialogue. Indeed, it is a historical document that may also be verified by archeologists digging up the ancient ruins of cities in the areas where empires spoken of within its pages have risen and fallen, and where cities have been rebuilt upon the ruins of earlier civilizations. These mounds, that newer cities are built upon, are called “tells” and their excavation, particularly in the nation of Israel, today, is being carefully monitored.

As we progress into the New Testament (or new covenant, sealed in blood: for a “will and testament” is only in force after the death of the testator) the opening words of the first gospel of Matthew includes a long list of names, some of whom have become familiar to the careful students of the Scriptures. This list of names *literally traces* the lineage of the promised Messiah, out of antiquity into the first century.

As a side note: the fact that Old Testament prophecies were also translated into Greek, approximately 300 years before the opening of the New Testament—strengthens the view that its prophecies were not “made up” in New Testament times. Further, 1st century developments included the existence of a group of devout Jews, called the Essenes (possibly connected to John the Baptist) whose life long work of copying Old Testament manuscripts was allowed to lay dormant and undisturbed, for over a thousand years—until 1946, when they were discovered “by chance” by Bedouin youths herding goats in that deserted area.

These famous Dead Sea Scrolls (and other sources) assure those born in the twentieth century and beyond, of the relevance of biblical prophecies yet to be fulfilled.

However, the *most* important projection of the prophets involves the significance of . . . the Cross.

What Must I do?

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.”

Acts 16:31

How?

If you will confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Romans 10:9,10

In Other Words

Acknowledge: your need

—as a sinner (Romans 3:23, II Cor. 5:14-15)

Accept: His work on the Cross —to be your Savior

Confess: your acceptance of His lordship over you.

Live for Him: with your new life!

For the scripture says, “Whoever believes on Him will not be ashamed.”

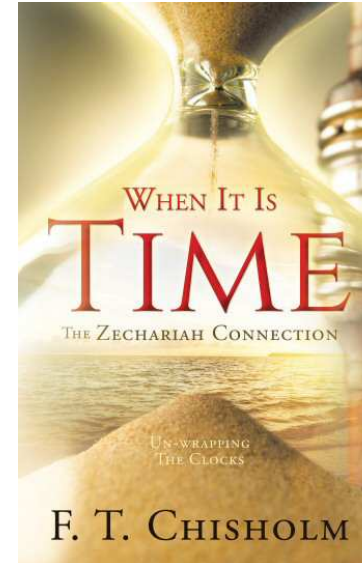
Romans 10:11

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