

Christianity: A Brief Introduction

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Introduction

Imagine for a moment that you woke up one day only to discover that all that you have ever believed about the world and your faith were all wrong or untrue? I am sure not a little commotion would ensue (Jones n.d; p 5). First, the shock would be hard to accept and then as reality dawned, much would affect you so that for some time you would be unsure of whatever you have in your hand. The Bible that you have held so dear, the other literature and indeed whatever else that has warmed and comforted your heart would suddenly lose their comforting grip, if not repulsive. Those things that you previously had rejected and despised would suddenly become special and dear.

That's what happens when someone arrives at the truth that they have sought all their lives. They discard everything else if only they may gain a deeper appreciation on what they have long searched for. All the misinterpretations and wrong understanding are in the past, consigned to the confusion rubbish heap. That is what truth does to the person that comes to the Christian faith. While other people hold on to other religions and faiths, the saint finds sweet rest and communion in the Lord. The Muslim would boast about their deity, the Buddhist with rituals and the atheist with their irreligion (which really is a faith based "religion" in itself), the novice will find rest for their soul once and for all. They can safely declare that "My soul finds rest in God alone" (Psalm 62:1) which the nominal Christian may just give a mental assent to.

Defining the Christian faith

But at some point however, it becomes important to define issues. From being hewn from the rock of sin, the new born babe in Christ craves pure spiritual milk as well as an intelligent appreciation of the new found faith. They want to fondly talk about the saviour wherever they go so that others too can share in the peace and tranquillity that is theirs. How do they do this? What is the simplest definition of the Christian faith? How can it be explained in capsule form so that others without any previous connection to it may understand the faith? Why is the faith different from all others and who are the chief architects relating to the faith?

These are indeed deep and legitimate questions but are not so easily explained though the mature saint finds great delight in talking about their saviour. The nice jewels and pearls are too numerous to pick and choose from for our redemption is a great and mind blowing one. Thankfully, authors like Douglas Jones, Thomas Watson, Dan Strange, A.W. Pink and C.H. Dodd among others have done a great work already in their write ups that help us highlight or synthesize some important points for our consideration. We adopt their models, thought process and structure of course, with some additional modifications.

First, Christianity is a faith that cannot be fully understood or appreciated apart from its Jewish origins, Judaism. For thousands of years, God had promised a messiah that would come and redeem His people, since the fall had taken place in Genesis 3, the garden. With time, God entered a covenant with His people with a promise to raise a deliverer, which deliverer came in the person of Christ Jesus (Deuteronomy 18:18). It should be noted that Judaism is based on covenants which God made with His people Israel and in the fullness of time, He fulfilled them. This is one connecting point between Christianity and Judaism. Second, the Old Testament is the same for both religions though the Christian faith has a New Testament. Actually, as far as the Christians were concerned in the first century, Christianity was an outgrowth and completion of what God had promised for ages past. Unlike what we know and probably observe today, the primitive saints did not consider or see any distinction between Judaism and Christianity. They were one and the same people but with time, the separation occurred with the Jews actually rejecting Jesus as the promised Messiah (John 1:12). A cursory reading of Acts will confirm what we state. That also explains why Paul was at pains to handle the Judiasers in his epistles (especially Galatians) because there was some serious confusion and contradiction in those early days. It would take some years to fully understand the full import of the Messiah's coming on the world, in fulfilment of the prophecies scattered right across the scriptures.

Having laid the ground for the Christian faith, we now proceed to summarise the content and meaning thereof. The Christian faith can be easily understood in three ways/stages: Creation, Fall and Redemption. Although this suggestion does not fully "box" Christianity in capsule form per se, it however does give a snap shot and bird's eye view of what Christianity is. We break it down accordingly:

Creation

When God created the world as told in Genesis 1 & 2, He created things out of nothing or no pre-existing material (*ex nihilo*). God created out of His good pleasure not out of need or insufficiency in Himself. Out of the hand of the creator's hands, a perfect world was given into which man, the highest of

creation, was placed to work and keep it. Man was created positively righteous and placed there as a test to see whether he would obey God, a probation of sorts (Watson 1958; Genesis 2:15-17). For a while, everything progressed well according to plan. Some have called this "*Paradise given*" from the hands of the Creator (Strange 2011 p 5,7; Douglas n.d)

Fall

However, with time, the ancient serpent made his way into the garden and deceived Eve to eat the forbidden fruit. She, in turn, caused her husband to eat of the same with devastating consequences which ramifications haunt us today, as long as eternity tarries. In the bid to get wisdom and to be like God, the duo fell from the original state of righteousness and plunged into the dark abyss of spiritual ruin (Ephesians 2:1;4:17-21). The image of God in man was corrupted, darkness fell over the mind and depravity would become the sinful man's lot. The propensity to sin and love darkness rather than light became the norm (Boston 1964). At that moment, enmity between the serpent and the woman's seed was declared, though in the same breath, the *proto evangelion* is declared, that a saviour would come (Genesis 3:15). This spiritual death, separating man from God would reign for a myriad generations, without hope and without God in the world (Ephesians 2:12-13). Only those that exercised faith in the true God were declared righteous by faith. This was a dark, dark day for humanity! This is dubbed "*Paradise lost*" by some writers.

Redemption

However, God had a plan to remedy this devastating consequences of the fall. In the fall, Adam committed what is known, by theologians, as the "*original sin*" and thus acted as a representative head, causing all men to fall into sin with him (Genesis 3:14; Romans 5:12-13). Thus all humans sinned in Adam and consequently held guilty before God. It would take the promised Messiah, in the person of Jesus Christ, to incarnate, live and die on the cross for the human race. He did much more. He rose for their justification, was seen of men to be alive and taken up to glory where He ever lives to intercede for the saints (Romans 4:25). This has been dubbed "*paradise gained*". Further, when Jesus atoned for sin on the cross, he propitiated God, thus expiating God's wrath from sinful men so as to secure their redemption with its attendant fruits in justification, sanctification and ultimate glorification (I John 2:1-2; Roman 8:28-30; Romans 6 etc.). The Holy Spirit applies the work of redemption when He regenerates individuals and permanently indwells them unlike in the past when God was in a sense restricted to the Temple or occasionally filled men for service. Now the Spirit dwells in us forever as a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance (Ephesians 1:12-13).

In future, Christ will return to wrap up history and take His elect home. At that stage, Paradise will be restored as it originally was prior to the fall. Every Christian looks forward to that glorious time. But it will be an awfully tragic time for the unbeliever because theirs will be the lake of eternal fire where the wicked shall be cast for ever (2 Thessalonians 1:9).

Thus we have attempted to summarise the Christian faith. We trust this will point the person searching for reality in religion to consider carefully the words written above and better still, dive into reading the Bible itself from which all these ideas have been synthesized.

Lessons and Applications

1. Salvation is by grace alone. No one is ever saved except through Christ.
2. We live in a fallen and broken world. Things can only get worse.
3. God, in Christ has responded to redeem man and in future, all creation.
4. The gospel must not only be preached but believed by all. Christ alone is the saviour.
5. God created the world through His declarative word not through evolution as purported by some.
6. This creation was complete, mature and beautiful, very good.
7. God sustains His creation through providence.
8. In Adam, all humanity failed having failed the probationary test.
9. The ramifications of the fall are so grave as to render man totally but not absolutely depraved.
10. Only the grace of God remedies the effects of the fall.
11. The fall was no surprise to God because He is Omniscient.
12. Redemption by that token was not an after thought.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, the Christian faith may be understood as lived by faith in Jesus having gone through Creation, Fall and redemption. The solution to this

broken world is exclusively in Christ that repairs everything lost in the fall. All men must how to Christ to be saved.

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