

# THE GOSPEL STORY

Over two thousand years ago, there walked a lonely man along the dusty roads of Israel. His name was Jesus. He was alone, yet He was not alone, for He walked in the presence of His Heavenly Father. Who was this man? From where did He come? Let's let Jesus answer those questions in His own words.

When being questioned by the High Priest, Jesus was asked: "If you are the Christ, tell us. But He said to them, "If I tell you, you will not believe; and if I ask a question, you will not answer. But from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God." And they all said, "Are You the Son of God, then?" And He said to them, "Yes, I am." (Gospel of Luke 22: 67-70)

Many thought of Jesus as an ordinary human being. Many, today, still think of Him as such. They believe He was just a good man, a good teacher, a moral guide to mankind. Now Jesus was indeed a good man, a good teacher, a moral guide to mankind, but He was also more! He was the eternal Son of God, and, as is seen from above, He claimed to be in His own words.

If then, Jesus was the Son of God, where was He from? We all know the story of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem from Mary. His birth was prophesied almost eight hundred years before by the prophet Isaiah, "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel." (Isaiah 7:14)

But, if He claimed to be the Son of God, does that not mean He existed before He was born of Mary in Bethlehem? Indeed, it does! Listen to the words of Jesus given to us in John 17:5, "Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was."

Jesus came forth from God His Father, for He was with the Father from all of eternity. The prophet Micah foretold this fact many centuries before Christ. He said, "But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity." (Micah 5:2)

Jesus was more than just a man; He was also the Son of God. But His love for mankind caused Him to leave that place of power and glory, and brought Him from the highest heaven to be born in a lowly manger in the little town of Bethlehem. Why? Paul the apostle tells us in Philippians 2:5-8. He says - "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought in not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in the fashion of a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death - even the death of the cross."

Jesus left that place of glory to become a man in order to die upon the cross. Why was such a thing necessary? Because all of the human race had lost their way and had become hopelessly sick from the fruits of their sin. Every human being was under the curse of sin and, thus, condemned to an eternity in the lake of fire. This would be their lot in eternity, unless one could offer a pardon from the penalty and death of their sin. Jesus was the one who could procure such a pardon.

The apostle Peter tells us that Jesus... "bore our sins in His body on the cross..." and that "...by His wounds [we are] healed." (I Peter 2:24) The apostle Paul, another early follower of Jesus, tells us "He (God) made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." (II Corinthians 5:21). Jesus became our sin offering. He bore our sins upon Himself on that cross. He paid the penalty for our sins in order that God might now pardon us. He descended into hell (hades) for us, so we would not have to descend into hell. He was the only one in the entire universe who could do so, for He was pure and holy and never sinned. He was the only one who could be the perfect sacrifice for sin. That is why it was necessary for Him to leave the side of God and become an ordinary human being. And yet, because He was the Father's eternal Son, He was able to break the bonds of hell and death, and be raised unto life on the third day.

When the audience to which Peter was addressing heard this they were convicted in their hearts of their sin and so asked Peter, "What shall we then do?" To which Peter, in part, answered, "Repent!" And at another occasion, he said the same thing again. "Repent...so that your sins may be wiped away." This is the gospel message! Forgiveness of sins is available to every human being. Freedom from the punishment of hell is available to every human being. Eternal life with God is available to every human being. What is the one condition for such a gift? Good works? No, the Bible says, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done but according to His mercy He saved us." (Titus 3:5a)

We cannot earn this gift. A gift that needs to be earned is not a gift. A gift that is free is truly a gift. Salvation from hell is a gift. It cannot be earned. So, again, let me ask, "What is the one and only condition to receive that gift?" Faith! Jesus, Himself, tells us this in the Gospel of John, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16)

All God asks us to do is to believe in His Son and trust in His work upon the cross in our stead. Do you believe this? Do you believe that Jesus was more than just a good man? Do you believe that He was the eternal Son of God who bore the penalty of your sins upon that awful cross? If the answer is yes, then tell God you believe in Jesus and in His death for you upon the cross and receive the forgiveness of your sins and the free gift of salvation.

When Jesus rose from the dead, He then ascended back into heaven from whence He came. Jesus can hear your prayer. Tell Him you trust Him and want to be forgiven by Him. Thank Him for such an indescribable gift. Tell Him you believe in Him and want to be a Christian (a follower of Christ). He will hear you and answer your prayer immediately. Forgiveness is immediate. The pardon of sin will be granted to all of those who believe, upon request. If you trust in Him "you will not perish, but have everlasting life." If you have made such a decision, we invite you to join us this Sunday. You will be most welcomed!

**The Bible Chapel • 1931 Silica Avenue • Sacramento, Ca  
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