

How Christianity (Jesus) Changed the World

FEBRUARY 14, 2021

HAPPY VALENTINES DAY!!



But first, I just had to share....

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- An anniversary cake for my 39th wedding anniversary on January 16th for me AND my Angel in heaven Amy.
- Thank-you Jillian, Emma, and Karen!
- I feel blessed to be part of this Church family!

What was the World Like Before Jesus?

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- ▶ Jesus was born into essentially a third-world context under a military dictatorship
- ▶ 10% of people lived lavishly, the other 90% lived a precarious existence
- ▶ NO Civil rights and human life was worth little; Herod could kill anyone he wanted
- ▶ Life Expectancy < 40 years
- ▶ Gender separation; men and woman only interacted in bed
- ▶ King Herod had 10 wives, murdered one of them (and two of his sons)
- ▶ Common modes of killing: hanging, burning alive, beheading, drowning inside a bag of scorpions, and crucifixion
- ▶ Caesar Augustus (Emperor when Jesus was born) declared himself God
- ▶ Tiberius (Emperor when Jesus was crucified) was history's most perverted ruler

What were Christianity's Impacts

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- ▶ People transformed by Jesus
- ▶ Sanctification of Human Life
- ▶ Sexual Morality
- ▶ Woman's rights
- ▶ Charity and Compassion
- ▶ Hospitals and health care
- ▶ Education
- ▶ Labor & Economic Freedom
- ▶ Science
- ▶ Liberty and Justice for All
- ▶ Slavery abolished
- ▶ Art and Architecture
- ▶ Music
- ▶ Literature
- ▶ Holidays, Words, Symbols and Expressions

From "How Christianity Changed the World" by Alvin J Schmidt

What this sermon is NOT!

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- ▶ Not meant to be Elitist!
- ▶ Not a chest bumping speech about how great we all are

**Rather; I hope it will inspire and give us
a sense of responsibility we have as
followers of Jesus Christ**

People transformed by Jesus

- ▶ His Disciples
 - ▶ They were fearful, uneasy, and uncertain about the future at the end of Jesus' life
 - ▶ Yet, then they were ready to take on the world, and they did!!
 - ▶ All but John were killed for what they preached
- ▶ Many Christians who were brutally killed during the rise of Christianity
 - ▶ 64AD Christianity made illegal by Nero. Many Christians killed from 64-67AD, some as human torches
- ▶ Roman Emperors; Galerius and Constantine the Great, co-signed Edict of Toleration in 311AD. Christianity legalized in 313 AD
- ▶ Famous people: Alice Cooper, Denzel Washington, Justin Bieber, George Foreman, Mark Wahlberg, Matthew McConaughey, Nick Jonas, Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson
- ▶ Approximately 2.5 BILLION Christians in the World, about 1/3 of population

Sanctification of Human Life

- ▶ Ancient Greece & Rome: human life had little value
- ▶ Infanticide was common, especially for girls
 - ▶ “Infanticide is one of the regular institutions of the ideal State” - Plato
 - ▶ Condemned by Christians, formerly outlawed in 374AD
- ▶ Child Abandonment
 - ▶ Condemned and often adopted children
- ▶ Abortion – very common and used as birth control
 - ▶ Plato, Aristotle (300-400 years before Christ) supported state rights over a woman to have an abortion to control population (like some countries today)
 - ▶ Christians opposed and this gave way to anti-abortion laws in 374AD
- ▶ Human sacrifices @ Gladiator shows outlawed by Christian Emperors by 404AD
- ▶ Suicide: Was generally condoned and advocated. Christians opposed and this became illegal in many western countries



Sexual Morality

- ▶ Rejection of Promiscuous Sex, Group Sex, and Pedophilia (a lot of times homosexual)
 - ▶ All were very common in Ancient Greece/Rome
- ▶ Rejection of Bestiality
- ▶ Adultery changed from being a double standard to Christ's single standard
- ▶ Marriage re-defined
 - ▶ Greco-Roman: Man-made custom for the good of the State
 - ▶ Christian: A lifelong holy estate instituted by God

Woman's rights before Jesus

- ▶ Ancient Greece and Rome
 - ▶ Wife had status similar to a slave; wives not present with Husbands guests
 - ▶ Divorce not reciprocal
 - ▶ Girls didn't go to school, only upper-class in Rome
 - ▶ Girl babies more likely to get killed at birth (infanticide)
 - ▶ Woman were a possession; Roman man could kill his wife
 - ▶ Sex was practiced in Temples as a religious activity
 - ▶ "In woman, reason is present, but unused" - Aristotle
- ▶ Hebrew woman
 - ▶ Couldn't speak in public with men
 - ▶ Separated by a partition in Synagogue – couldn't speak/sing

Woman's rights – Jesus changes things

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- ▶ Samaritan woman at the Well
- ▶ Mary/Martha dinner
- ▶ Jesus taught Martha – on another occasion
- ▶ Jesus appeared to woman after his resurrection
- ▶ Women were very active in the early Church, then things reverted for sometime
- ▶ Became illegal for men to murder wives and children, 374AD
- ▶ Bridal freedom and rejection of child brides
- ▶ Removal of the Veil
- ▶ Polygyny nullified – Matthew 19:5 “...the TWO will become one flesh”
- ▶ Widows not burned alive in Hindu culture from Christian pressure
- ▶ Chinese girls' foot binding abolished in 1912 from Christian pressure
- ▶ Clitoridectomy banned

Ephesians 5:25 - Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her

Charity and Compassion

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- ▶ Early Church provided a fund to care for widows, physically disabled, orphans, the sick, prisoners incarcerated because they were Christian, teachers, and burials for the poor
- ▶ Christians practiced “caritas” giving – not expecting return
 - ▶ Also give to non Christians
- ▶ Greco-Romans practiced “liberalitas” – owed the giver a favor
- ▶ A poor man should be left to die – Plato (427-347BC)
- ▶ Christians build orphanages (4th Century) and buildings to care for elderly (5th Century)
- ▶ Salvation Army founded by William Booth – 1865
- ▶ Christian found the United Way – 1888
- ▶ YMCA (1844) and YWCA (1855) formed
- ▶ Christian Giving to charity

Matthew 25:45 – “Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.”

Hospitals and Healthcare

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- ▶ Jesus cares about our Physical well being as well as Spiritual
- ▶ In Greco-Roman culture, the sick were left to die. To care for them was a sign of weakness.
- ▶ Greeks and Romans only had hospitals to care for soldiers, etc.
- ▶ First hospital to care for all was built by Christians in 369 AD.
 - ▶ Christians cared for Christians and non-Christians
- ▶ By the 13th Century, most hospitals in Europe were under the direction of Christian Bishops.
- ▶ In the US, it was mostly Christian denominations that built hospitals (name origins are being replaced as Hospitals get bought and consolidated).
- ▶ The Red Cross founded in 1864 was with Christian origins (the Cross is for Christ); it became the Red Crescent in Muslim countries

Matthew 25:36 - I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me

Education

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- ▶ Education for boys and girls together is a Christian innovation
- ▶ Religious schools started in 2nd Century
 - ▶ Eventually expanded to include reading, writing, math, etc.
- ▶ Universal Education, Martin Luther and John Calvin, 1530s, 1550s
- ▶ Public Schools and Tax supported education, Martin Luther, 1530s
- ▶ Universities grew out of Christian Monasteries
 - ▶ Through the 19th century, all universities had Christian roots
- ▶ 1636: Harvard College in Boston founded by Congregational Church
- ▶ **1932 in USA: 92% of the 182 Colleges/Universities founded by Christian denominations**



Labor and Economic Freedom

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- ▶ Greco-Roman World: manual labor is demeaning, no middle class
- ▶ Christian Work ethic grew over time from our Hebrew roots – labor was honorable
- ▶ Jesus was a Carpenter and set an example
 - ▶ Luke 10:7 ..."the worker deserves his wages"
- ▶ Paul warns Christians about idleness and admonishes them to work (2 Thessalonians)
- ▶ Personal property rights are rooted in the 10 Commandments
- ▶ Dignity of labor produces a middle class
- ▶ Socialism of Jamestown and Plymouth fails
- ▶ Individual freedom and economic freedom are inseparable – come out of the Christian ethic

Exodus 20: 15, 17 – You shall not steal, You shall not Covet thy neighbor's house....

- ▶ Judeo – Christian belief: there is one God, a rational being
 - ▶ We are made in his image
- ▶ Robert Grosseteste, Christian Philosopher (1168-1253) proposed the inductive, experimental method
- ▶ Many Christians contributed to science:
 - ▶ Leonardo da Vinci (1475-1519, Anatomy)
 - ▶ Gregor Johann Mendel (1822-1884, Pre-genetics)
 - ▶ Copernicus, Brahe, Kepler, and Galileo (Astronomy, 1473-1642)
 - ▶ Isaac Newton (1642-1727, Physics), Gottfried Leibniz (1646-1716, Differential Calculus)
 - ▶ Blaise Pascal (1623-62, Pascals Law)
 - ▶ Alessandro Volta (1745-1827, Electricity), Georg Ohm (1787-1954, Ohm's law)
 - ▶ Michael Faraday (1791-1867, Physics), William Thompson Kelvin (1824-1907, Physics)
 - ▶ George Washington Carver (1864-1943, Chemist)
 - ▶ Louis Pasteur (1822-1895, discovered bacteria and use of antiseptics)

Liberty and Justice for All

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- ▶ Moses – “One witness is not enough to convict someone of a crime” – Deuteronomy 19:15
- ▶ “No one is above the law” – St Ambrose, 4th Century Christian Bishop. This was not the case with the Greco-Romans
- ▶ Equality of individuals, Galatians 3:28
- ▶ Separation of Church and State; Matthew 22:21 - “So give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.”
- ▶ Declaration of Independence: God has given us unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness
- ▶ Emancipation Proclamation, 1863, Abraham Lincoln
- ▶ Greater equality of condition in countries with Christian roots

Galatians 3:28 - There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus

Slavery Abolished

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- ▶ Slaves were 75% of population in Athens and 50% in Rome at the time of Jesus
- ▶ Early Christians communed with Slaves
- ▶ Constantine imposed death penalty on those that stole children to bring up as slaves 315 AD.
- ▶ Slavery outlawed: USA (1865), Ethiopia (1942), Saudi Arabia (1962), Peru (1964), India (1976). Still exists in Sudan, Africa's largest country
 - ▶ **Christian Solidarity International** buy slaves in Sudan to set them free
- ▶ The Quakers and then Evangelical Christians were first to oppose slavery in the US
 - ▶ Many Christian lay people and clergy also active as Abolitionists
 - ▶ Some clergy however still supported slavery at the time
- ▶ MLK Jr, 1957 formed the Southern Christian Leadership Conference

Christianity is not a segregated Religion

Art and Architecture

- ▶ First three centuries, Christians contributed very little to Art
 - ▶ Fish became a Christian symbol in the 2nd century
- ▶ After 313 AD (Christianity legal), this changed
- ▶ Glass mosaics (5th century) were Christian innovation
- ▶ 313 -1000, Churches mostly built as Basilica (Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, 336 AD)
- ▶ 1000-1150: Romanesque style built in the shape of a Latin Cross
- ▶ Gothic Architecture followed well into the Renaissance era
 - ▶ Best exemplifies Christianity; no two were alike, took decades to build, adorned with biblically based art, towered above everything else, bells regulated the towns activities, stained glass windows
- ▶ Leonardo de Vinci's (1452-1519) ***Last Supper***
- ▶ Michelangelo's (1475-1564) ***The Creation of Adam, The Creation of Eve, The Last Judgment***
- ▶ Rembrandt's (1606-69) ***The Prodigal Son, The Elevation of the Cross***

Music

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- ▶ In the first three centuries, Christians sang/worshipped in their homes
- ▶ Ambrose (340-97), Bishop of Milan, psalms were sung in the Cathedral
- ▶ Prudentius (348-413), Spanish lawyer and poet wrote “Of a Father’s Love Begotten”
- ▶ Church operas performed in the 9th century in France
- ▶ Guido of Arezzo (995-1050), Benedictine Monk, invents written music
- ▶ Famous Christian’s: Bach (1685-1750), Handel (1685-1759), Mozart (1756-91), Beethoven (1770-1827)
- ▶ Martin Luther, 1529, “A Mighty Fortress is our God”
- ▶ Country and Contemporary Christian music inspired by many devout Christians

Ephesians 5:19: Speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord

Literature

- ▶ Early Christian Church writings
 - ▶ Exhortational, Polemical (ex: Gnosticism), Apologetic
- ▶ **The City of God**, St Augustine, 5th century
- ▶ **Opus Majus**, Roger Bacon (1214-94), Franciscan Monk
- ▶ **The Canterbury Tales**, Geoffrey Chaucer (1343-1400)
- ▶ **An Open Letter to the Christian Nobility**, Martin Luther, 1520
- ▶ **Utopia**, Thomas Moore, 1551
- ▶ **Paradise Lost**, John Milton, 1667
- ▶ **The Wealth of Nations**, Adam Smith (Scottish Professor), 1776
- ▶ **A Christmas Carol**, Charles Dickens, 1843
- ▶ **Uncle Tom's Cabin**, Harriet Beecher Stowe, 1851
 - ▶ Slavery is incompatible with Christianity
- ▶ **Ben-Hur, A Tale of the Christ**, Lewis Wallace, 1880
- ▶ **The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism**, Max Weber (German Sociologist), 1905
- ▶ **The Screwtape Letters, Mere Christianity**, CS Lewis, 1942/43

Holidays, Words, Symbols and Expressions

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- ▶ Sunday: Christ rose from the dead
- ▶ Christ's Mass (Christmas Day), New Year's Day (8 days after Christ's birth), Easter, Thanksgiving, Halloween (from All Saints Day)
- ▶ AD and BC
- ▶ Baptism/Christening
- ▶ Cathedral, Chapel, Cross, Church, Creed, Pastor
- ▶ **Sayings:** *A good Samaritan, Brother, Doubting Thomas, Avoid it like the Plague, The Gospel Truth, Rob Peter to Pay Paul, Turn the other Cheek, Wolf in Sheep's Clothing*

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Now What? So what?

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- ▶ How did Jesus do it?
- ▶ What does that mean for the Church today? What lessons does it teach us?

- ▶ What do we do about it?
 - ▶ We have a **Christian duty** to serve each other
 - ▶ It is in our service that all will see God's grace in action as we demonstrate our faith
 - ▶ How will you continue to change the world for good?

1 Peter 4:10 "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.."