

Christianity 101

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A medical student named Li Min arrived from a foreign country to attend a university in Canada. She hoped to complete her studies in medicine and return to her own country as a doctor. On the first day of classes she met a friendly Canadian student, Kristen, who offered to assist her on her new venture. As they became closer in their friendship Li Min admitted that she did not understand Christianity and Canadian customs, but she wished to learn from her Canadian friend.

Li Min asks if it is true that Christians believe in three different Gods. Kristen explained that while God is known as a trinity, nonetheless, God is really one unified God. There are however, three aspects to God: God the Father, God the Son who is Jesus Christ, and God the Holy Ghost. But Li Min finds Kristen's explanation unusual and complex and asks whether Jesus existed from the beginning of all time or has God's Son existed just a little over 2,000 years. Kristen hesitates for a moment. She has not thought much about this matter before, but since Jesus has special supernatural powers Jesus probably existed for all time with God the Father.

Li Min then asks why God the Father would choose to have Jesus appear on earth only several thousand years ago. Kristen replies that by God's Son appearing on earth, Jesus worked among His fellow humans and taught about God's plans for human beings. Jesus was able to interpret the will of God and explain how people could behave in a manner pleasing to God. Those who accepted Jesus as the savior of humankind would be accepted by God for eternal life after their earthly death. More than that, Jesus, the Son of God, lived as a sacrifice from God to absolve people from their sins. Li Min thinks that Kristen didn't really answer the question she asked about *when* Jesus was born, however, she wonders whether Jesus was actually human or was He God? Again Kristen thinks for a few moments and answers that He was both. He had an earthly human mother, but He had no earthly human father. One could say that indirectly Jesus was God's Son.

Li Min asks Kristen to explain in what way Jesus had supernatural powers. Kristen responds that according to our scriptures, Jesus performed many miraculous things while living on earth. Jesus healed the sick. He caused the blind to see. He changed water into wine. He fed multitudes with a few loaves and fishes. He brought Lazarus back to life. He walked on water. Jesus calmed the stormy sea. Jesus arose from His own earthly death. Most important, Jesus offered eternal salvation to those who believed in Him.

Li Min wonders how Mary, the mother of Jesus, became pregnant, but she decides to leave that question for another time. She asks Kristen what sins humans are born with from which they need forgiveness. Again Kristen ponders this new question. She answers Li Min by explaining that God is so infinitely good, and humans, by nature, are self-serving creatures who seek their own interests, and pleasures. So we need supernatural aid in making us worthy of the heavenly eternal afterlife that we seek.

Next Li Min wonders if it is possible that even the most evil people in the world who have committed murder and other vile crimes could be saved by being repentant and by accepting Jesus as their savior. Once again, Kristen is faced with another difficult question, but she thinks, "Yes". Everyone who is truly repentant and accepts the gift of God's Son, Jesus, can be saved.

The time has now come for Li Min and Kristen to go to their classes on human anatomy and micro-biology. Both depart. Kristen did her best to answer Li Min's questions, but she wishes she could have presented Christianity in a more simple and positive way. Li Min, not having previous information about Christianity, is confused by the complexity and mystery of Christianity.

I think many, perhaps most, rational intelligent adults not acquainted with Christianity until their mid- twenties would have the same feelings of skepticism and puzzlement as LI Min. What do you think?

Editor's Note. The Chinese name Li Min translates into "Intellectually Astute Woman" in English. Goldwin Emerson has cleverly used this name in the imaginary conversation shown above.