

THE STORY OF LOVE

He came to earth as a helpless baby, born to a humble young girl who miraculously conceived the child, having never been with any man! In fact, the news of her pregnancy was so shocking that when the man to whom she was engaged to be married learned about it, he promptly decided to break the engagement.—Until a powerful celestial being intervened and instructed him to stay with her and protect and care for this special child that she was carrying.

Although ordained and predestined to be the King of kings, He was not born in a palace with the honor and praise of the establishment. Instead, He was born on the dirty floor of a barn amidst the cattle and the donkeys, wrapped in rags and laid to rest in the animals' feed-trough.

Though His birth brought no great fanfare or recognition from the institutions of men, that night on a nearby hillside, some poor shepherds were awestruck as a brilliant light shone in the starry sky and a host of heavenly messengers filled the night with their joyful declaration: "Glory to God in the highest! Peace on earth to men of good will! For unto you this day is born a Savior, Christ the Lord."

His earthly father was a carpenter, a humble hewer of wood with whom He labored. He conformed to our human ways of life, custom, and language that He might understand and communicate with us within our limited human understanding. He saw people's suffering and had great compassion for them.

When He began His life's work, He went about everywhere doing good. He not only preached His message, but He *lived* it. He not only ministered to people's spiritual needs, but He cared for their physical and material needs, miraculously healing people when they were sick, feeding them when they were hungry, and sharing His life and His love with them. Throughout His ministry He gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, cleansed lepers, and raised the dead.

He made Himself of no reputation, and was accused of being a companion of drunks, prostitutes, and sinners, the outcasts and downtrodden of society. He even told them that they would enter the kingdom of heaven before the religious leaders who rejected Him and His message of truth and love.

As His message of love spread and His followers multiplied, the leaders of the established religion realized what a threat Jesus had become to them. They finally had Him arrested and brought to trial on false charges of sedition and subversion. Although the Roman governor found Him innocent, he was pressured and persuaded by these religionists to execute Him.

Just prior to His arrest, He had said, "They couldn't even touch Me without My Father's permission. If I would but raise My little finger, He would send legions of angels to rescue

Me!" Instead, He *chose* to die, to save you and me. Nobody took His life from Him. He laid it down; He *gave* His life of His own free will and accord.

But even His death did not satisfy His enemies. To ensure that His followers couldn't steal His body and claim He had come back to life, they placed a huge stone over the door of His tomb and posted a detachment of Roman soldiers there to guard it.—A scheme that proved futile, as these same guards became eyewitnesses to the greatest miracle of all, as three days after His lifeless body was laid to rest in that cold tomb, He *rose* from the dead, the victor over death and hell forever!

Since that miraculous day over 2,000 years ago Jesus Christ has done more to change history and the course of civilization and the condition of man than any other leader, group, government, or empire. He has saved billions from the fear and uncertainty of a hopeless tomb and has given eternal life and the love of God to all who call upon His name.

Jesus Christ is not a mere philosopher or teacher or rabbi or guru or even a prophet. He is *the* Son of God. God, the great Creator, is all-powerful, all-knowing, everywhere and in everything—far beyond our limited human comprehension. The Bible tells us that God is love (1 John 4:8), and because He so loved the world, He sent Jesus, in the form of a man, to show us what He Himself is like and to bring us to Himself.

Jesus *is* love and He *is* God.—The only one who died for the sins of the world and rose from the dead. He's the only Savior. He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father but by *Me*."

How can you know beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus Christ really is the Son of God, the way to salvation? Sincerely ask Him to reveal Himself to you. He's real and He loves you.—So much so that He died in your place and suffered for your sins, so that you would not have to, if you'll receive Him and His free gift of eternal life.

Will you receive Him? If so, He will be your closest friend and companion who will be with you *always*. For He alone is the lover of all lovers, who came for love and lived in love and died for love that we might live and love forever.

You can personally receive Jesus into your heart and life by sincerely praying this prayer:

Dear Jesus, please forgive me for all my sins. I believe You died for me. I believe You are the Son of God, and I ask You to come into my life. I open the door and I invite You into my heart. Please help me to tell others about You so that they may come to know You too. Amen.