

Are you jumping right in the middle of the story?

It's not at all immediately obvious where I'm headed with this question, and its selection was admittedly driven by the fact that we are currently in the midst of the Christmas season.

Any truly informed person would tell you that Christmas is ultimately about the birth of Jesus, even though society wants to misdirect and make it all about joy, giving, being with the ones you love, and Satan (oops, must have been a typo, I meant to say Santa – or did I?).



So, Christmas is actually all about Jesus, and the most important thing about Jesus is that He is the central focus of the Gospel message. Unfortunately, this can often lead to us “jumping right in the middle of the story.” In a sense, we are offering a solution to a problem many skeptics are not even aware exists! It's somewhat like talking to someone who knows very little, if anything, about the United States and beginning by saying, “You see, the northern armies, led by General Grant were fighting the southern armies, which were under the command of General Lee.” You might get a response of something like, “Wait a minute! Who were these armies? Where did they come from? Why were they fighting? What started it all?” Even a brief overview of American history at that point would be very helpful in making sense of the event we call the Civil War.

In a similar fashion, when we share Christ with others, we are really “jumping right in the middle of the story” if we're not careful and thoughtful as to how we approach this crucial subject. We're telling someone they need to be “saved” when they didn't even know they were lost. And even if they realize that things in this world are a bit *messed up*, why should they look to Jesus as the solution?

It would be much better if we could help them understand the *big picture*, briefly stepping through the history of the world, explaining why things are the way they are and how they got that way. It would certainly be a daunting task to learn all the details of history, but that's not what I am talking about... just the big picture, from a biblical perspective. I suggest starting by learning the simplest overview and then adding a few details here and there as time goes by. Eventually, you will be much better versed in sharing your faith with others when you personally better understand the *big picture* narrative.

Within the confines of this brief article, here's one version of a fairly simple, yet accurate, *big picture*. (I am purposely keeping this as concise as possible, only adding additional commentary when appropriate.)

- God created everything miraculously out of nothing. (This is very reasonable, given the fact that you either have to believe that *nothing* created everything, or *something* created everything.)

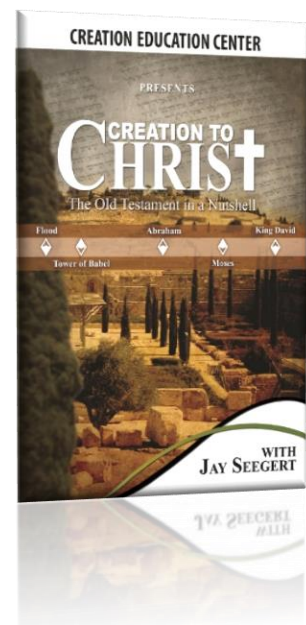
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- When God created mankind (i.e., Adam and Eve), they originally were perfect. He gave them the ability to choose to honor Him as their Creator or to decide to do things *their own way*. (This enabled Him to have an actual relationship with them, as opposed to making them *robots* which could only do what they were pre-programmed to do.)
- Unfortunately, Adam and Eve decided to *do their own thing*, which led to their separation from God. It also led to everyone today having a tendency to want to do things their own way and not follow God's standards.
- God could rightfully have *exterminated* Adam and Eve and started over, but He loved them so much, He was willing to provide payment for their sin, Himself.
- God's plan involved choosing a group of people (all offspring of Adam and Eve) through which, His son would take on human form and be born into this world. These people were the Israelites (or Jews). The entire Old Testament is the history of God giving special revelation to His people and foretelling, through prophecies, all about the coming of *the Messiah* (His son) to pay for the sins of the world.
- The New Testament starts with the birth of Jesus who actually fulfilled 100% of the Old Testament prophecies about the arrival of the Messiah.
- Jesus' death on the cross paid the penalty for our sin, for all those who accept this gift by faith. His resurrection from the dead also fulfilled prophecy and was an incredible confirmation of His Deity.
- Christianity is all about a relationship with God through His son Jesus Christ. Whereas, all other belief systems are premised on our own efforts to be *good enough* to achieve some promised reward of *heaven, paradise, or nirvana*, etc. (which represents mankind still trying to *do it their own way*).

This (i.e., the above overview) is why Christmas matters and is the backdrop to the birth of Christ. It would be very helpful if we understood this history and could convey it succinctly and graciously when sharing our faith with others. You can use this as a "starting point" and then fill in some of the more interesting details as you learn more about them yourself. A few of the other very significant events to be able to discuss would be the following:

- The flood
- The Tower of Babel & the origin of the "races"
- The formation of the nation of Israel, along with their captivity in Egypt, release and entering into the *Promised Land*.
- Various prophecies regarding the arrival and ministry of the Messiah.

We have a [DVD](#) in which we build a timeline of all the major events from [Creation to Christ](#). It would greatly aid in helping you understand the *big*



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picture and in becoming more effective in your evangelism efforts or in mentoring your own children and grandchildren.

In the meantime, if you have any questions about this or any other issue, please don't hesitate to [contact us!](#)