

10 JUSTIN, THE MARTYR.

One day a young man is strolling along the beach of the Mediterranean Sea. He is thinking deeply. Now and then he gazes over the endless mass of water, but his thoughts are miles away. He gives a big sigh, shakes his head despondently and keeps walking. His eyes are full of sorrow.

Who is that young man, and why is he so sad?

Listen!

That lonely man, walking along that almost empty beach, is Justin! He was born in Shechem, a Samaritan country town. His father and mother were pagans. Already as a young boy, Justin showed that he was a good student. As his parents were well off, they allowed him to study. And yes, he thoroughly enjoyed his studies. The most learned men of his days were his tutors. After many years of intense study, it is not surprising that Justin also became a scholar. To further increase his wisdom, he travelled far and wide. He visited Egypt and became a student at one of the most prestigious schools of its time.

He left Egypt to travel to Rome, the capital of the vast Roman empire, where he became acquainted with prominent Romans. He also visited the city of Ephesus.

Justin became ever more educated, but ... he was not happy. Why not?

Well, his many teachers had told him that there was a God Who ruled and governed all things, and he wanted to get to know this God. Where, oh, where was the teacher able to instruct him in the knowledge of that God?

Justin searched and searched. He travelled everywhere, but no one could help him. That was not surprising, because his teachers were all pagans.

One teacher had advised him to regularly seek solitude to meditate on the things which he had heard and learned.

Justin followed that advice, and that is why we find him walking on this lonely beach, deep in thought.

But the rest and peace which he so ardently seeks still escapes him. Solitude does not help either.

A WONDERFUL MEETING

Suddenly he notices that he is no longer alone. Someone else is also walking along the beach. Who is that? Justin does not know. He has never seen that older man before.

When he gets closer, he asks the stranger: "Why are you walking along the beach?" "Oh," answers the old man, "I am waiting for some of my relatives. May I know what you are doing here?"



Justin is taught in the Christian doctrine.

Maybe Justin blushed at that question. What should his answer be? Should he share the longings of his heart with this total stranger? Should he tell him that he so dearly wants to learn to know God?

He hesitates a moment while observing that grey-haired man. Justin does not know why, but he feels that he can confide in him. Then Justin begins to share all that fills his heart. He tells the stranger that he has learned much and that the most knowledgeable men of that time have been his teachers. But he also admits that despite his knowledge, he is still unhappy.

Finally, he cries out: "Oh, where can I find a teacher who can show me how I may learn to know God?"

Quietly the old man listened. When Justin finally finished talking and falls silent, the man tells him: "My young friend, all your teachers, no matter how clever they are, cannot tell you how you can learn to know God. If you really want to know who God is, read the prophets, who lived among and prophesied to the Jews."

And then that stranger tells him about the only true God, Who created heaven and earth out of nothing. He tells him about the Lord Jesus, Who came to suffer and to die for lost sinners, Who came to give His life, so that doomed humanity may live through Him.

Breathlessly young Justin listens. He has never heard anything like this before! His teachers had never spoken to him about Jesus of Nazareth!

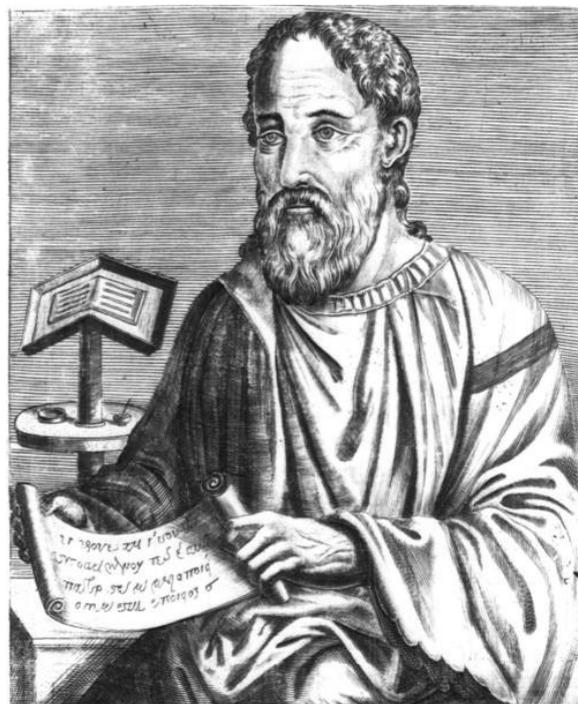
Finally, the old man bids him farewell. "My friend", he says: "search the Scriptures, but above all, pray that you may learn to understand those Scriptures. Pray that the Spirit may enlighten you."

Then the old man departs, and Justin never saw him again. Nobody knows who this man was, but one thing I do know: That stranger was a true Christian. God led events in such a way that Justin met that Christian on the beach.

We often say, 'by chance', but that is wrong! Nothing on earth happens outside of God's providence, also here. That ordinary Christian showed Justin the way to the wisdom he sought.

JUSTIN BECOMES A CHRISTIAN

When the stranger left, Justin left the beach as well, determined to follow the stranger's good advice. He searched long and hard until he found the writings of the ancient prophets of whom that stranger had told him. He finally found those with



He began to read and study those ancient prophets diligently

... the Christians! He began to read and study those ancient prophets diligently. God blessed that study and gave peace to his thirsty soul. He became acquainted with other Christians, and they further instructed him in the doctrine of salvation. They explained the meaning of those old writings. Time and again they directed him to Christ, the Saviour, as the foundation and source of the true wisdom, peace, and joy which he craved.

Apart from that, Justin was amazed at the heroism with which the Christians entered death. He saw and heard how they, rejoicing and praising God, went to meet the wild, ferocious animals. Yes, then he saw that those despised and reviled Christians had real peace. They were happy, and he was unhappy.

Oh, that highly educated Justin learned, that with all his knowledge, he was a fool before God. There

he learned to bend his knees. There he learned to plead for mercy as one who had forfeited everything.

God has answered those prayers. The Light of the Word that the stranger had told him about on that lonely beach was revealed to him by God's free, unsearchable grace. He learned to know the Lord Jesus as his Rock and Redeemer. Then Justin enjoyed real peace in his heart. He learned that also *his* guilt and sin was paid for by that Jesus. At the age of thirty, he was baptised at Ephesus, having converted to Christianity with all his heart.

To make your call and election sure, you must learn the same thing. (2 Peter 1:10)

'Therefore brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour'

2 Pet 1:10

JUSTIN THE APOLOGIST

Justin continues to travel from city to city and country to country. Again, he wanders through all the vassal countries and provinces of the vast Roman empire. But now that constant feeling of unhappiness is gone. Now he is no longer *searching* for true wisdom because he has found it in Christ. No, now he travels with a different purpose. Now he preaches in the many Christian congregations he visits. That preaching is a shining light for many pagans, and, through his teaching,



Now he preaches in the many congregations he visits...

God's people are comforted and encouraged. He has been a blessing to very many. He defends Christianity wherever he goes.

In chapter five, I told you about the apologists. Well, Justin was a true apologist. Whenever the pagans scorned and ridiculed Christianity, Justin preached against that. Whenever the learned pagans wrote books, ridiculing, attacking and slandering Christianity, Justin would write against that, defending Christianity with enthusiasm and zeal. His excellent education now stood him in good stead. God was pleased to use his preaching and writings to convert many pagans who were entangled in heathenism.

He travelled the Roman empire for many years, and wherever he went, he kept preaching the gospel. He pointed out to them the riches of Christ over against the poverty of idol worship.

Eventually, he returned to Rome, where he founded a school to instruct young people in the doctrine of salvation. You can imagine that the pagans did not like this and became hostile.

THE DEBATE

At that time there lived in Rome a highly educated man who challenged Justin to a debate.

"Very well," Justin answered "I accept that challenge. You defend heathenism, and I will defend Christianity."

They met on the appointed day. Justin spoke so passionately and effectively that eventually the highly educated man no longer knew what to say. Justin brilliantly won that debate.

That pagan scholar could not stomach that.

Furiously, he went to the governor of Rome and lodged a complaint against Justin. Immediately the governor had Justin arrested. At that time emperor Marcus Aurelius ruled, and this emperor was a zealous persecutor of the Christians, and so intense persecution was raging.



Justin in debate.

Look, now Justin stands before the Roman governor.



MARCUS AURELIUS
121-180 AD

“Fool” says the angry governor, “why did you allow yourself to be deceived by those Christians and adopt their religion?”
Calmly Justin answers, “Because the religion of the Christians is the only true religion.”

“Is that so,” sneers the governor, ‘and what do they teach?’

Immediately, Justin answers: “They believe in the living God, the Creator of heaven and earth. They believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”

The governor gives a sarcastic laugh while looking at Justin with contempt. Mockingly he says: “So, if I have you whipped and then beheaded, do you think you will go to heaven?”

“Yes,” Justin answers fearlessly, “then I go to heaven.”

“Very well then,” says the governor, “then that is what will happen.”

Soon after, that cruel sentence was carried out. Rough soldiers whipped Justin till he bled, and then beheaded him.



Rough soldiers whipped and beheaded Justin.

We read how much effort Justin put into knowing God and heard how diligently he studied and searched Scripture. We also learned how God was pleased to bless that effort unto Justin's eternal salvation.

For us, it is much easier than it was for Justin as we do not have to search. God's precious Word is always available in our homes. Please, never despise the Word of God, it is God's gift to show us the way to salvation.

Read that Book of books.
Read it again and again.
Read it prayerfully.

What that aged Christian told Justin on that lonely beach, I say to you as well:

“Pray that the Spirit may enlighten you. And ask for God’s blessing.”

Then you will enjoy the same peace that Justin found.

May the LORD grant that!

QUESTIONS

1. Who is Justin?
2. What means was used by God for his conversion?
3. How did Justin fit the description of an apologist?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. To what Bible story might we compare the conversion of Justin? Compare the two.
2. In conversion God usually either brings His people to the means of grace or brings the means to His people. Which was true in the life of Justin? Explain.