



KATOOMBA

— BAPTIST CHURCH —

CHRIST'S CHURCH THROUGH THE AGES

LESSON 15: JUSTIN MARTYR (PART 1)



BIOGRAPHY

- Also known as Justin the Philosopher
- A.D. 100-165
- One of the first Christian apologists & philosophers.
- Born of a Greek family in Flavia Neapolis (modern day Nablus, Palestine; ancient city of Shechem, Samaria).
- Family was likely pagan, as Justin clearly identified himself as a Gentile.
- Had little to no familiarity with the Old Testament.
- Justin had a keen interest in philosophy (in particular, metaphysics) from his youth.
- He describes his early education as having failed to provide him a reasonable and coherent worldview.
- For this reason, he then sought the tutelage of various philosophical schools - mainly Stoic and Pythagorean.
- He eventually adopted Platonism, after studying under a Platonist philosopher who had moved to his city.

“And the perception of immaterial things quite overpowered me, and the contemplation of ideas furnished my mind with wings, so that in a little while I supposed that I had become wise; and such was my stupidity, I expected forthwith to look upon God, for this is the end of Plato's philosophy.”

- Justin Martyr (*Dialogue with Trypho*)

- Many years later, Justin encountered an old man (possibly a Syrian Christian), who engaged him in a dialogue about God.
- The old Christian explained to Justin the words of the ancient Prophets, and how their testimony was more reliable than the reasoning of philosophers.
- Of this life-changing encounter, Justin made the following remarks:

“There existed, long before this time, certain men more ancient than all those who are esteemed philosophers, both righteous and beloved by God, who spoke by the Divine Spirit, and foretold events which would take place, and which are now taking place. They are called prophets. These alone both saw

and announced the truth to men, neither reverencing nor fearing any man, not influenced by a desire for glory, but speaking those things alone which they saw and which they heard, being filled with the Holy Spirit. Their writings are still extant, and he who has read them is very much helped in his knowledge of the beginning and end of things, and of those matters which the philosopher ought to know, provided he has believed them. For they did not use demonstration in their treatises, seeing that they were witnesses to the truth above all demonstration, and worthy of belief; and those events which have happened, and those which are happening, compel you to assent to the utterances made by them, although, indeed, they were entitled to credit on account of the miracles which they performed, since they both glorified the Creator, the God and Father of all things, and proclaimed His Son, the Christ [sent] by Him: which, indeed, the false prophets, who are filled with the lying unclean spirit, neither have done nor do, but venture to work certain wonderful deeds for the purpose of astonishing men, and glorify the spirits and demons of error. But pray that, above all things, the gates of light may be opened to you; for these things cannot be perceived or understood by all, but only by the man to whom God and His Christ have imparted wisdom."

- Justin Martyr (Dialogue with Trypho)

- Moved and convinced by the old man's arguments, Justin renounced his former religious/philosophical worldview and beliefs, and converted to Christianity.
- He drew great inspiration from the relative poverty of the Christians, as well as their notable courage and faithfulness, even unto death by martyrdom.
- Such piety convinced Justin of the moral and spiritual superiority of the Christian worldview and doctrines.
- Justin dedicated his life to the defence and promotion of the Gospel and Christian doctrine.
- He taught the Scriptures to all, irrespective of status.
- Eventually, it was in A.D. 165 (during the reign of Marcus Aurelius) that Justin and his six friends were tried, convicted of impiety, and sentenced to death.
- Justin bravely and defiantly faced his martyrdom. As Justin was likely a Roman citizen, he was beheaded.