



# The Passion of Saint Christopher

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1 There was a persecution of Christians in time of the emperor Decius, and the holy man Christopher was taken and tortured like the others. Christopher was exceedingly wise and had observed that the Lord assisted those of the heathen who believed just as much as he assisted Christians. Now this Christopher was one of the Dogheads, a race that had the heads of dogs and ate human flesh. He meditated much on God, but at that time he could speak only the language of the Dogheads.

2 When he saw how much the Christians suffered, he was indignant and left the city. He began to adore God and prayed. "Almighty God," he said,

“give me the gift of speech, open my mouth, and make plain thy might that those who persecute thy people may be converted”.

An angel of God came to him and said: “God has heard your prayer.” The angel raised Christopher from the ground, and struck and blew upon his mouth, and the grace of eloquence was given him as he had desired.

Thereupon Christopher arose and went into the city, and immediately began to stop the offering of sacrifice. “I am a Christian,” he said, “and I will not sacrifice to the gods”.

There came a certain Baceus to him and struck him. “You may do so”, said Christopher, “for I will not strike you in return, but I forgive you, for forgiveness is the new law.”

**3** Baceus went to the king, and said: “Hail O King, I have news for you. I have seen a man with a dog’s head on him, and long hair, and eyes glittering like the morning star in his head, and his teeth were like the tusks of a wild boar. I struck him for he was cursing the gods; but he did not strike me, and said it was for the sake of God that he refrained. I am telling you this in order to know what is to be done with him, for it seems that it is by the God of the Christians that he has been sent, to help the Christians.”

“Bring him to me,” said the king. The bystanders said that a large number of men must be sent for him. “Let two hundred soldiers go for him,” said the king, “and bring him hither in chains; and if he resists you, bring his head with you that I may see it.”

**4** The soldiers then went to seek him. As for Christopher he went into the temple and drew his hair round his head in two plaits(?). He rested his head on his knee, and, after planting his staff in the ground, began to pray. “Almighty Lord,” he said, “perform a miracle through me that thy name may be praised; and let this staff send forth shoots.” The staff immediately put forth twigs, and leaves and flowers appeared.

**5** A certain woman came gathering roses past the place where he was praying. She looked into the temple and saw him seated and moaning. She went away then and told another woman that she had seen a magician lamenting loudly. While they were talking in this way, the soldiers came up to them seeking him. The soldiers heard the conversation of the women and asked them where they had seen the man they were talking about. The women gave them a description of Christopher and told them where he was. The soldiers had not the courage to go to him. At that time a company came from Asia to see Christopher.

Christopher was praying with his hands stretched out, and when the soldiers came up to him, they said: “Why do you moan in that way?”

“I moan,” he said, “for all men that do not recognize the Lord God, that is the true God who made heaven and earth.”

The soldiers said to him: “It is for you we have been sent, to take you with us in chains, in order that you may worship the gods.”

“I will go with you without chains, if you like,” he said, “for God will save me from the power of your father, the devil.”

**6** “Stay, if you wish,” said the soldiers, “or, if you like, rise and go in any direction you please, and we will say that we have not found you”. “Allow me to go to pray for a short time that the might of God may be made plain to you.”

“We cannot,” they said, “for our provisions have come to an end.”

“Give me any you have left,” said Christopher, “that I may divide it between you, so that you may see the miracle God will work in it.”

They gave him thereupon the little they had. Christopher took the remainder, and said: “Almighty God, who didst satisfy the five thousand with five loaves, bless this little portion that the soldiers may be satisfied

with it, and that thy grace may be made clear, and that all that will see the miracle may believe.”

**7** The food immediately increased and grew, so that they all ate as much as they wished. When they had seen that miracle, they believed that he had been sent by Christ. So, Christopher and the soldiers came afterwards to Antioch, and were baptized by the bishop, Babilus.

**8** Thereupon they went to the emperor Decius in the city. Christopher told the soldiers to take him to the palace in chains in order that they might not be blamed for not manacling him, for that had been the king’s command. And so, he was brought to the king.

**9** When the king saw St. Christopher he was filled with astonishment and was seized with such terror that he fell from his throne. “If it is for fear of God that you fell,” said Christopher, “it is well for you, for God will ask of you every one of them that you have harmed without cause.”

“Whence have you come?” said Decius, “and what is your name?”

“I am a Christian,” said Christopher, “and Reprobus was my name before I believed, but Christopher has been my name since my baptism. My face tells that I am of the race of the Dogheads.”

“Sacrifice to the gods, Reprobus,” said Decius, “and I will give you wealth and priesthood.”

“It will be a distinction in your eyes to destroy me,” said Christopher, “and your gods will come to nothing, for they are not gods but devils.”

**10** The king gave orders that he should be taken, and his hair knotted together. This was done, and the king said: “Sacrifice to the gods and you shall live.”

“I will not,” said Christopher, “for they are devils.”

The king gave orders that his whole body should be torn with iron hooks, and that was done.

“This temporal pain has no terror for me,” said Christopher, “but you ought to fear the eternal pain that you will suffer.”

The king, in anger, gave orders that two lighted lamps should be applied to his sides. But the people said that it was not right to inflict such torture on a man of his learning, but that he should be coaxed with gentle words. The king then ordered his chains to be struck off, and it was done. “Sacrifice to the gods,” said the king “and you will be my charioteer.”

“I will be your servant,” said Christopher, “and your charioteer, and do you believe in Christ, and you will have a kingdom in heaven.”

“That is not satisfactory,” said the king, “that you should be trying to make me forsake the gods, and that I should be asking you to sacrifice to them.”

**11** “I have a good suggestion for you,” said one of the retainers to the king: “Let him be put in a separate room with two pretty and well dressed women along with him. As soon as love for the women takes possession of him, he will sacrifice to the gods.”

The king thought that the plan was a good one, and he sent for two pretty women, and they were put into a separate room with Christopher.

Thereupon Christopher prayed for long with his face to the ground. When his prayer was finished, he raised his face. As soon as the women saw him, they were filled with fear and terror, and retreated from him. “We shall die,” they said, “if we see more.”

“Why have you come here?” said Christopher. The women did not answer for fear.

**12** He repeated the question, and still, they did not answer. “Believe in my God, unhappy women,” he said.

One of the women said to her companion: “We are in great danger here; if we do not believe in his God, he will kill us, and if we do, the king will kill us.”

**13** However, one of the women, Aicilina, said: “It is better for us to believe in his God that we may have eternal life. Holy Christopher, pray for us, that God may forgive our sins.” “Only believe in the everliving God,” he said, “and I will pray on your behalf.”

During this conversation a city guard came to them and said: “Come out, you are wanted.”

When they came before the king, he asked them if they had seduced Christopher. Aicilina replied: “We have believed in his God, for in him alone is safety.” The king asked again if they had seduced him and turned him to their gods.

**14** “We believe only in the one God who is in heaven,” said Aicilina. “As for your gods, they are only stones, and can only hurt those who worship them.”

At that the king was enraged and gave orders that she should be taken and her hair twisted together, and that two stones should be fastened to her hands to break them. This was done, and Aicilina looked at Christopher and said: “Holy Christopher, pray for me.” Christopher did so; and then she died. The king ordered her body to be kept without burial.

**15** Then the other woman was brought before the king. The latter said: “Sacrifice to the gods, and I will give you great honor, and I shall have a gold statue made to you.”

“Only tell me,” said Caillica, “where am I to offer sacrifice?”

The king ordered her to be taken to the temple of the gods to sacrifice, and a herald went before her to announce that Caillica was sacrificing to the gods. The wicked people were glad of that for they imagined that she would indeed sacrifice.

So she went into the temple, and on seeing the priest of the temple and others present, she said: “See how it will be to the great god that I will sacrifice.” She then went to the place where the statues of the gods were and stood before that of Jupiter. “Jupiter,” she said, “tell thy servant what to do.” The god made no reply. “The gods must be angry with me,” she said, “since they do not answer, or perhaps they are asleep.” She then said: “If ye have any power answer, and if not, why do ye do hurt to men? God of body and soul, come to my aid.”

**16** She drew to her the statue of Jupiter, and it crumbled like wax. She also broke the other statues in the same place, saying: “If ye have any power, why do ye not save yourselves?”

**17** Then she was seized and taken to the king’s palace. “If we had not seized her,” said the soldiers, “she would not have left a single statue undamaged.”

“You promised me, wicked woman,” said the king, “that you would sacrifice to the gods, but what you did was to damage them.”

“Your gods are wretched creatures,” said she, “if a woman can hurt them. He is the true God that no-one can harm, and He is my God, and it is in Him that I believe.”

**18** The king ordered two iron nails to be driven through her from her soles to her neck, and a stone to be put on her neck to break it.” She looked at Christopher and said: “Holy Christopher, pray for me.” He did so, and she died. The king ordered her body to be kept without burial till the body of Christopher joined it.

**19** The king said to Christopher: “Bad is your name Reprobus and hideous is your appearance, and we prefer that you should die than that the city should be spoilt through your sorcery. Sacrifice to the gods, and you shall not be tortured.”

“Chief of idolatry and head of unbelief,” said Christopher, “I will not sacrifice to your detestable gods who are deaf and dumb; yet I should like to conduct you to the path of life that you might understand the glory of God.”

**20** At that moment the two hundred soldiers who had taken Christopher arrived and laid down their uniforms and armor before the king, and kissed Christopher’s feet. The king said: “Christopher is an enemy to me, for he has taken my soldiers from me and destroyed the gods.”

**21** The soldiers answered: “We are Christians since the day we were sent for the servant of God. He blessed our bread for us on the way and gave us the grace of God.”

“I will give you wealth,” said the king, “if you do not leave me.”

“What belongs to you,” said the soldiers, “that is, your uniforms and your arms, you may keep, but as for us, we will follow Christopher.”

The king immediately ordered them all to be put to death, and their bodies burned. That was done.

**22** Christopher was brought before the king who said to him: “You have deprived me of my soldiers, bold madman.”

“My only fault is praising God,” said Christopher.

“You shall be burned presently,” said the king.

Christopher was then bound and placed on a bed of brass, a large heap of firewood was put upon him, and thirty flagons of oil poured over it; and then a great fire was lit.

**23** When the fire had gone down, Christopher sat up on the bed and said to the bystanders: “I have seen the Master of the City, a tall man, and his face beautiful like a ray of sun light. His garments were as white as snow, there was a crown of pearls on his head, and his glory was unspeakable. There was with him a number of soldiers, and splendid was their appearance. I saw also another chief as black as jet accompanied by black soldiers, and every hair of his head was thick as an iron chain. A battle was fought between them, and the black king and his company were defeated by the glorious king. He was put in chains and his whole house was burnt and destroyed.”

**24** Now when the people saw that Christopher was alive, that not even his hair was burnt, and that he did not smell of fire, they all believed in God, and leaping into the fire drew Christopher out of it. They then said with one voice to the king: “You have been destroyed and vanquished with all your servants.” When the king heard the shout of the people, he was filled with great fear and went into his palace.

**25** Next morning the king gave orders that all should sacrifice to the gods on pain of death. Saint Christopher and all the Christians then appeared and began to praise God; and his attendants said to the king that the people had turned against him, and that unless he made a brave fight, he should himself perish. He rose from his throne and armed himself, and his soldiers also took their arms, and began to slay the Christians. Christopher kept encouraging the Christians, telling them that the kingdom of Heaven awaited them. And on that Sunday ten thousand three hundred and three of the Christians were put to death.

**26** The king had Christopher seized and bound in iron chains, and, with a stone attached to him, cast into a dry well in order that his bones might not be preserved. But when the holy man was put into the well, his chains turned to dust and ashes, and angels carried him away to the king's palace. The king was told and said to him: "Strong is your magic, Reprobus," but Christopher made to answer. The king said again: "Sacrifice to the gods and you shall not be harmed."

"Almighty God," said Christopher, "receive my spirit that it may rest in Thy glory," and he fell on his knees. The king gave orders that whosoever should not worship the gods should be put to death.

**27** Christopher was thereupon taken to the place of execution. Many Christians accompanied him and asked the executioner to allow him time to pray; and Christopher said, "Lord, give to Decius a devil to compel him to gnaw his own flesh and so die. Grant to my prayer that then Christians who are now oppressed may be succored and give this grace to my body that all who shall have any of my relics may have miracles wrought clearly for them, that they may expel devils, that all diseases may avoid them, that they be prosperous, and that their sins may be forgiven."

The angel replied: "Your wish shall be granted you, and it shall be granted you in addition, that if anyone be in need, he shall be freed from it through your intercession."

Christopher then said to the executioner: “Do as you have been ordered,” crossed himself, and stretched out his neck, and then he was beheaded.

**28** However a certain Peter gave a price for the body of Christopher and took it with him to his city. There was a stream which damaged the city, and the body was buried facing the onset of the stream, and after that the stream did no more harm to the city.