

# The Truth About the Founder of Christianity

by Dr. John Ankerberg, Dr. John Weldon

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In our increasingly hectic world, it seems as if most men today have substituted convenience for truth. Despite the unhappy exchange there is nothing more important in life than finding truth, nor is there any more valued possession. Throughout history both the famous and men of letters have had some interesting things to say about truth. Consider some examples.

Man passes away; generations are but shadows; there is nothing stable but truth. (Josiah Quincy)

A sincere attachment to truth, moral and scientific, is a habit which cures a thousand little infirmities of mind. (Sydney Smith)

God offers to every mind its choice between truth and repose. (Emerson)

To love the truth is to refuse to let one's self be saddened by it. (Andre Gide)

So little trouble do men take in their search after truth; so readily do they accept whatever comes first to hand. (Thucydides)

Without truth there is no goodness. (Matthew Henry)

For most of us the truth is no longer part of our minds; it has become a special product for experts. (Jacob Bronowski)

Truth matters more than man.... (George Steiner)<sup>1</sup>

If knowing truth is in one's best interest, then the claim of Christianity to have the truth and the claim of Jesus Christ to be the truth is worth investigation.

## Introduction: Inquiring Minds

So for those who do not share our Christian worldview, why might they consider openly evaluating the Christian religion?

First, because it is good to do so. As noted, the

honest search for truth is one of the most noble philosophical endeavors of life. Plato declared, "Truth is the beginning of every good thing, both in Heaven and on earth; and he who would be blessed and happy should be from the first a partaker of the truth."

Any religion or philosophy that makes convincing claims to having absolute truth is worth consideration because only a few do. More to the point, any religion that claims and produces solid evidence on behalf of an assertion that it alone is *fully* true is worth serious consideration for that reason alone. But only Christianity does this.

The kind of existence Christianity offers in life is one of deep and abundant satisfaction, regardless of the pain and disappointment we may have to experience. Jesus claimed He would give us what we really want in life—true meaning and purpose now, and everlasting life in a heavenly existence far beyond our current comprehension. The noted Oxford scholar C. S. Lewis correctly understood one of the most heartfelt yearnings of mankind when he wrote, "There have been times when I think we do not desire heaven but more often I find myself wondering whether, in our heart of hearts, we have ever desired anything else."<sup>2</sup> Jesus declared, "I came that they might have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10) and "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies" (John 11:25). He also said, "I am the truth" (John 14:6).

Everyone likes a good adventure and, this side of death, life is undoubtedly the greatest adventure of all. The reason is obvious. Most people live their lives not knowing why they were born—or what happens when they die. Most moderns would consider it too presumptuous to claim any final answers to the mysteries of life and death. But what if, in spite of all the questions, there really were an answer? What if Jesus Christ claims He *is* the answer and that anyone who

wishes could determine the truth of His claims to their own satisfaction?

Christianity is not just intellectually credible, whether considered philosophically, historically, scientifically, ethically, culturally, etc., but from an evidential perspective, actually superior to other world views, secular or religious.<sup>3</sup> If Christianity were obviously false, as some critics charge, how could such esteemed intellectuals as those quoted below logically make their declarations?

Mortimer Adler is one of the world's leading philosophers. He is chairman of the board of editors for *The Encyclopedia Britannica*, architect of *The Great Books of the Western World* series and its phenomenal *Syntopicon*, director of the prestigious Institute for Philosophical Research in Chicago, and author of *Ten Philosophical Mistakes*, *How to Think About God*, plus over twenty other challenging books. He simply asserts, "I believe Christianity is the only logical, consistent faith in the world."<sup>4</sup> How could Adler make such a statement? Because he knows it can't rationally be made of any other religion.

Philosopher, historian, theologian and trial attorney John Warwick Montgomery, holding nine graduate degrees in various fields argues, "The evidence for the truth of Christianity overwhelmingly outweighs competing religious claims and secular world views."<sup>5</sup> How could an individual of such intellectual caliber as Dr. Montgomery use a descriptive phrase as "overwhelmingly outweighs" if it were obviously false? His 50 books and 100+ scholarly articles indicate exposure to a wide variety of non-Christian religious and secular philosophies.

The individual widely considered to be the greatest Protestant philosopher of God in the world, Alvin Plantinga, recalls, "For nearly my entire life I have been convinced of the *truth* of Christianity."<sup>6</sup> On what basis can one of the world's greatest philosophers make such a declaration if the evidence for Christianity is unconvincing?

Dr. Drew Trotter is executive director of the Center for Christian Studies at Charlottesville, VA. He holds a doctorate from Cambridge University. He argues that "logic and the evidence both point to the reality of absolute truth, and that truth is revealed in Christ."<sup>7</sup>

If we are looking for obvious truths, then perhaps we should consider the words of noted economist and sociologist, George F. Gilder, author of *Wealth and Poverty* who asserts, "Christianity is true and its truth will be discovered anywhere you look very far."<sup>8</sup>

Such accolades could be multiplied repeatedly.<sup>9</sup> While testimonies *per se* mean little, if they are undergirded by the weight of evidence, they can hardly be dismissed out of hand.

Indeed, Christianity's founder, Jesus Christ, is utterly original and totally unique when compared to every other religious leader who has ever lived.<sup>10</sup> In addition, the Christian Bible itself is clearly the most influential book in human history.<sup>11</sup> The evidence in favor of its divine inspiration and the inerrancy of its autographs is formidable, even to many former skeptics.<sup>12</sup> If Jesus Christ and the Christian Scriptures continue to exert an unparalleled influence in the world, shouldn't they be considered worthy of an impartial investigation? If objective evidence points to Christianity alone being fully true, then it seems that only personal bias can explain a person's unwillingness to seriously consider the claims of Jesus Christ on their life.

A final reason secularists and those of other religious persuasions should be receptive to Christianity is because we live in an increasingly poisonous age experientially. In our pluralistic and pagan culture, almost anyone is a viable target for conversion to a wide variety of false beliefs which are far more consequential individually than Christianity—from various cults and New Age occultism to solipsism and nihilism. Philosophies of despair and potent occult experiences can convert even those who think they are the least vulnerable: "There is a great deal of research that shows that all people, but especially highly intelligent people, are easily taken in by all kinds of illusions, hallucinations, self-deceptions, and outright bamboozles—all the more so when they have a high investment in the illusion being true."<sup>13</sup> In other words, even in this life it is the personal welfare of the non-Christian that may be at risk.

Today, most people who are uninformed about Christ tend to place Him in the same category as other great religious leaders and prophets. They assume He was no different from the rest. Most people also believe that religion everywhere is largely the same and that it doesn't make a great deal of difference what one believes. A recent poll indicated that even 42 percent of born-again Christians had apparently adopted our culture's relativistic outlook. They agreed with the following statement: "It does not matter what religious faith you follow because all faiths teach similar lessons about life."<sup>14</sup>

Those having such an outlook usually assume that all paths lead to the same God. If there is an afterlife, almost everyone is going to get there regardless of his/her beliefs, as long as he/she was not a terribly evil person. So it really doesn't matter what one believes religiously and, perhaps whether or not one believes at all.

In light of such assumptions, many people wonder if any religious prophet or leader could have final relevance for today. Aren't these prophets dead and

gone? And do their teachings really offer anything unique or special? Can't their instruction be summed up by the fundamental principles of moral living that everyone already knows? Why should anyone be interested in someone like Jesus when He lived 2,000 years ago and has no apparent relevance for today?

First, no one can logically claim to be a truly educated person if he or she does not understand who Jesus is and the influence He has exerted upon humanity. Christ's influence in the world and His claims on people's lives are unparalleled. Jesus Christ is undoubtedly the single most commanding person in the entire history of mankind. Indeed, it is not too much to say that if Jesus Christ had never been born, our entire Western Civilization would not exist as it does (see James Kennedy, *What If Jesus Had Never Been Born?* (1994). Even His death is unique.

His death, beyond any question of dispute, was the most famous death in human history. No other death has aroused a fraction of such intense feeling over so many hundreds of years.... Few can be passive about Jesus. No other human being has been so loved and so hated, so adored and so despised, so proclaimed and so opposed.... Yet if the records of Jesus are true, then unquestionably there is no greater truth to be found anywhere in the universe.<sup>15</sup>

Can anyone deny that because of Jesus, Christianity has become the largest religion of the world? That it has a membership of over one and one-half billion? That geographically, it is the most widely diffused of all religions? That it has positively altered individuals, countries, and cultures?

The second reason to be informed about Christ is of paramount importance to each individual personally. As we will see, Jesus Christ makes stupendous claims upon everyone's life. These claims compel us to conclude that one's relationship to Christ, or lack of it, will dramatically affect one's present and future existence. His life is far more vital to our life, as well as the life of our friends and family, than we realize. Jesus Christ is that important, and the evidence backs it up.

### What Did Jesus Claim?

The contemplation of things as they are, without substitution or imposture, without error or confusion, is in itself a nobler thing than a whole harvest of invention. —Francis Bacon

Before we proceed, let us illustrate some small portion of the impact Christ has had historically. We will do this by citing the comments of many famous and noted people—kings, scientists, poets, theologians and philosophers.

We will begin with a concise sampling of declarations made by Jesus Himself. In light of these statements, the ones that follow are all the more incredible if Jesus really were *not* who He claims. As you read the words of Jesus, ask yourself, what kind of man would say them? Remember also that even skeptics can't logically deny that the four Gospel biographies of Christ are based on accurate historical reporting and that at least three were written by those who knew Christ personally and traveled closely with Him for over three years. Due to advances in textual criticism, it must now be accepted as a historic fact that Jesus said and did what the Gospel writers say He said and did. In other words, when we read the Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—we are, in fact, reading what Jesus Himself actually said, taught and did.<sup>16</sup> Here is what Jesus said:

I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. (John 8:12)

I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies. (John 11:25)

No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. (John 3:13)

For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.... I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. (John 6:33,35)

"I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!" (John 8:58)

When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me. When he looks at me, he sees the one who sent me. (John 12:44-5)

You call me "Teacher" and "Lord," and rightly so, for that is what I am. (John 13:13)

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. (John 14:3)

...I have overcome the world. (John 16:33)

My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me. If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own. (John 7:16-17)

I and the Father are one. (John 10:30)

Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. (John 14:9)

Now, what did Jesus declare of such brazen assertions? Only that, "My testimony is valid," (John 8:14) and "I am the one I claim to be" (John 8:28) and

“...You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me” (John 18:37).

Throughout history, untold millions have believed these claims were true. Considering their nature, perhaps that is the amazing thing:

The Apostle John—“This is the disciple who testifies to these things [about Jesus] and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true.” (John 21:24)

The Apostle Paul—“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.” (Colossians 1:16-17)

Most significantly, unlike any other religious leader, Jesus frequently appealed to His ability to *prove* His claims by predicting the future or performing dramatic miracles, such as healing those born blind and raising the dead:

I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am He. (John 13:19)

Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves. (John 14:11)

If I had done among them what no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. But now they have seen these miracles, and yet they have hated both me and my Father. (John 15:24)

### What Have Others Said?

Now in light of such claims, consider what informed and great men historically and today—believers and unbelievers alike—have said about Jesus. Could all of them, down to the last man, be mistaken?

Certainly if men and women, as those listed below, felt it was vital to be informed on Jesus Christ, perhaps we should also become informed. Can you read *all* of the following statements and still believe investigating Jesus is not a worthwhile endeavor?

Blaise Pascal—Jesus Christ is the centre of everything and the object of everything, and he who does not know Him knows nothing of the order of nature and nothing of himself.

Joseph Ernest Renan—Jesus is the cornerstone of humanity. If He were taken away, it would shake the world to its foundations.

Ralph Waldo Emerson—The unique impression of Jesus upon mankind—whose name is not so much written as ploughed into the history of the world—is proof of the subtle virtue of this infusion.

Augustine—Christ is not valued at all unless He be valued above all.

Napoleon Bonaparte—I know men; and I tell you that Jesus Christ is no mere man. Between Him and every other person in the world, there is no possible term of comparison. Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne, and I have founded empires. But on what did we rest the creations of our genius? Upon force. Jesus Christ founded His empire upon love; and at this hour millions of men would die for Him.

Pope John Paul II— Christ is absolutely original and absolutely unique.<sup>17</sup>

Robert Louis Stevenson—When Christ came into my life, I came about like a well-handled ship.

Alfred Lord Tennyson—The Lord from Heaven born of a village girl, carpenter’s son, Wonderful, Prince of Peace, the mighty God.

Lew Wallace—After six years given to the impartial investigation of Christianity, as to its truth or falsity, I have come to the deliberate conclusion that Jesus Christ was the Messiah of the Jews, the Savior of the world, and my personal Savior.

H. G. Wells—The Galilean has been too great for our small hearts.

Napoleon Bonaparte—There is not a God in heaven, if a mere man was able to conceive and execute successfully the gigantic design of making Himself the object of supreme worship, by usurping the name of God. Jesus alone dared to do this.

Malcolm Muggeridge—The coming of Jesus into the world is the most stupendous event in human history.... [and] ... What is unique about Jesus is that, on the testimony and in the experience of innumerable people, of all sorts and conditions, of all races and nationalities from the simplest and most primitive to the most sophisticated and cultivated, he remains alive.... That the Resurrection happened... seems to be indubitably true.... Either Jesus never was or he still is....<sup>18</sup>

Albert Einstein—I am enthralled by the luminous figure of the Nazarene.

Sir Lionell Luckhoo—I have spent more than forty-two years as a defense trial lawyer appearing in many parts of the world.... I say unequivocally the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ is so overwhelming that it compels acceptance by proof which leaves absolutely no doubt.<sup>19</sup>

George Barlow—The example of Christ is supreme in its authority.

Vance Havner— Jesus was the most disturbing person in history.

J. M. Mason—He who thinks he hath no need of Christ hath too high thoughts of himself. He who thinks Christ cannot help him hath too low thoughts of Christ.

G. Campbell Morgan—Everything that is really worthwhile in the morality of today has come to the world through Christ.

Sholam Asch—Jesus Christ is the outstanding personality of all time.... no other teacher—Jewish, Christian, Buddhist, Muhammadan—is *still* a teacher whose teaching is such a guidepost for the world we live in.... He became the Light of the World. Why shouldn't I, a Jew, be proud of that?

William E. Biederwolf—A man who can read the New Testament and not see that Christ claims to be more than a man, can look all over the sky at high noon on a cloudless day and not see the sun.

William Ellery Channing—I know of no sincere enduring good but the moral excellency which shines forth in Jesus Christ.

Blaise Pascal—Jesus Christ is the centre of all, and the goal toward which all tends.

Joseph Ernest Renan—Jesus was the greatest religious genius that ever lived. His beauty is eternal, and His reign shall never end. Jesus is in every respect unique, and nothing can be compared with Him. All history is incomprehensible without Christ.

P. Carnegie Simpson—The face of Christ does not indeed show us everything, but it shows the one thing we need to know—the character of God. God is the God who sent Jesus.

Joseph Ernest Renan—Whatever may be the surprises of the future, Jesus will never be surpassed.... all ages will proclaim that among the sons of men there is none born greater than Jesus.

Phillips Brooks—That Christ should be and should be Christ appears the one reasonable, natural, certain thing in all the universe. In Him all broken lines unite; in Him all scattered sounds are gathered into harmony.

Jean Baptiste Lacordaire—Whatever motives Jesus Christ might have had against calling Himself God, He did call Himself God; such is the fact.

William Quayle—This calm assumption of Jesus that He is not a sinner will take hold of the wrists of any thoughtful mind and twist them till it must come to its knees.

Leonce De Grandmaison—Either Jesus was and knew what He was, what He proclaimed

Himself to be, or else He was a pitiable visionary.

W. A. Visser't Hooft—The Christian Church stands or falls with this simple proposition: that Jesus is nothing less than God's self-communication to men, and the only certain source of our knowledge of God.

Fulton J. Sheen—If we are to find the secret of His Timelessness—the simplicity of His Wisdom, the transforming power of His Doctrine, we must go out beyond time to the Timelessness, beyond the complex to the Perfect, beyond Change to the Changeless, out beyond the margins of the world to the Perfect God.

Dorothy Day—Christ is God or He is the world's greatest liar and imposter.

Herbert E. Cory—The witnesses for the historical authentication and for the proofs of the Divinity of Jesus, from the earliest days, are far more comprehensive than the testimonies for the existence of many famous historical characters we accept without question.

P. T. Forsyth—An undogmatic Christ is the advertisement of a dying faith.

Charles Lamb—If Shakespeare should come into this room, we would all rise; but if Jesus Christ should come in, we would all kneel.

C. F. Andrews—The supreme miracle of Christ's character lies in this: that He combines within Himself, as no other figure in human history has ever done, the qualities of every race.

F. R. Barry—The Humanist suggestion that Jesus was "morally right, but religiously mistaken" defies all psychological probabilities.<sup>20</sup>

This is no mean testimony, but it could be multiplied many times over. Still, there are many people and groups today claiming false things about Jesus, and many others who reject or oppose Him. This includes liberal theologians who reject His deity, cults like Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses who claim to honor Him and accept His teachings but do not, and those in other world faiths who reinvent His message to conform to their own.<sup>21</sup> Because such misinformation is widespread today, even the one who names the name of Christ needs to be thoroughly versed on what history and Scripture teach about Him and why contrary views are incorrect.

The great Apostle Paul, himself a former skeptic of Christ's claims and persecutor of Christians, said later to the Colossians that in Christ, "are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3). He told the Corinthian Church, "For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2). Further, Paul emphasized that he had given them information he

regarded “as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures and that He appeared to Peter, and then to the twelve. After that, He appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time...” (1 Corinthians 15:3-6).

### The Verdict of History

Truth is truth/to th’ end of reck’ning.—  
Shakespeare

The truth is always the strongest argument.—  
Sophocles

As noted, today almost everyone has an opinion of who Jesus Christ is. But these opinions vary widely and are often contradictory. And contrary opinions can’t all be true. How then do we determine who Jesus really is and whether or not He truly is the person of paramount importance He claims to be? The only way is to frankly examine His claims and then see the quality of the evidence which exists to support them. It is our hope that the remainder of this article will help our readers understand the real Jesus Christ.

We can begin by noting that *history* is defined as follows: “A continuous methodological record of important or public events; past events, those connected to a person or thing... the study of past events, esp. of human affairs” (*Oxford American Dictionary*). Notice there is no declaration that miracles cannot be part of history, despite their uniqueness. So when we encounter supernatural events in the life of Christ, the only issue is whether or not they occurred. If competent eyewitness testimony indicates miracles happened, then they must be considered part of history. Obviously if God has intervened in history, then miracles could be expected. Thus the true historian should be concerned with what actually did happen, based on careful and impartial investigation of the evidence, not with upholding a bias against the supernatural.

### What Does the Bible Teach About Jesus Christ and What Did Jesus Himself Teach About Who He Was?

I am the truth. — Jesus, John 14:6

There are at least seven key things the Bible teaches about Jesus Christ, none of which are claimed as true for the founder of any other religion:

1. Jesus is the prophesied Messiah who was predicted hundreds of years in advance in the Old Testament through very specific prophecies;
2. Jesus is unique in all creation; in all religious history there has never been another like Him;
3. Jesus is virgin born, and morally perfect, i.e., sinless;

4. Jesus is God, the only incarnation of God there is or will be;
5. Jesus is the world’s only savior, who died for our sins on the cross and offers eternal salvation as an entirely free gift;
6. Jesus rose from the dead as proof of His claims;
7. Jesus is the Final Judge: He will return and personally judge every person who has ever lived at the Last Day.

In no other person of history can we see his/her life and nature prophetically outlined 400 to 1,000 years before being born; of no other individual this world has known is it possible to differentiate between their birth and origin or to speculate over their nature. In no other man do we find the audacity to specifically predict His own time and method of death and His rising from the dead. The world has never known any other truly sinless person. No one else ever claimed He would die for man’s sin and would visibly return from heaven to judge the world and decide the eternal fate of every individual.

Let’s briefly examine the above seven points.

### 1. The Bible teaches that Jesus is the prophesied Messiah predicted centuries in advance in the Old Testament.

It is one thing to wish to have truth on our side, and another to wish sincerely to be on the side of truth.—Richard Whately

The Hebrew Scriptures are unique among those of the world’s religions in that they contain scores of prophecies about a predicted future Messiah. These prophecies extend over a period of 1,000 years and many are given in specific detail. The final prophecy was given 400 years before Christ was ever born. In our book, *The Case for Jesus the Messiah*, we discuss a dozen of these prophecies in detail, proving that only Jesus Christ fulfills them, and therefore, that only He is the predicted Jewish Messiah<sup>22</sup> (cf., John 5:46). For example, in the anguished imagery of King David’s prayers, Psalm 22 accurately describes a crucifixion—yet this description is given hundreds of years before the method of execution by crucifixion was devised. No other Psalm fits the description of Christ’s crucifixion better than Psalm 22, explaining why it is the most frequently quoted Psalm by New Testament writers. Yet this Psalm was written 1000 years before Jesus was born. Jesus Himself quoted the first verse of this Psalm while on the cross. Whatever one thinks of this Psalm, no one can deny that it describes what happened to Jesus on the cross an entire millennium later: “...they have pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me. They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing” (Psalm

22:16-18; cf. Matthew 27:35).

In Isaiah 9:6-7, the prophecy of the coming Messiah concerns a child to be born who will also be God and who will have an everlasting kingdom. In the Gospels, Jesus claimed that He was that incarnate God and that He would have an everlasting kingdom (Matthew 16:28; 26:64; Luke 22:30; John 6:38-42, 62; 8:42; 10:30, 36-38; 18:36; cf., 2 Peter 1:11).

In Isaiah 53:4-12, the Messiah is prophesied to be crushed and pierced for our transgressions; that God will lay upon Him the iniquity of all mankind. In the gospels, Jesus also claims to fulfill this prophecy (Matthew 20:28; cf. 53:12). In fact, Jesus repeatedly claimed He was the predicted Messiah by continually claiming He was fulfilling Old Testament prophecies: "You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me" (John 5:39; see also Matthew 26:24, 54, 56; Luke 24:25-27, 44).

In Micah 5:2, the Messiah is said to be eternal, the ruler over Israel and that He will be born in a very specific location, Bethlehem Ephrathah. No one denies that Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem Ephrathah and none can logically deny that He claimed He was Israel's King and the eternal one (John 5:18; 8:58; Mark 14:60-63).

In Daniel 9:24-27, written 500 years before Christ is born, the Messiah is prophesied to be killed at the exact time of Christ's death.<sup>23</sup>

In Zechariah 12:10, also written 500 years before Christ, it is prophesied that Jehovah Himself will be pierced by the inhabitants of Jerusalem who will mourn over Him. The Hebrew word means pierced as with a spear, just as Jesus was pierced during His crucifixion (John 19:32,35).

If we look at the list of prophecies we discuss in our book, *The Case for Jesus the Messiah*, we see that Jesus Christ fulfilled all of them. Remember, the following are predictions made hundreds of years before He was even born:

**Genesis 3:15**—Jesus defeated Satan but was wounded during the crucifixion.

**Genesis 12, 17, 22**—He was the literal descendant of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in whom all the world was blessed.

**Deuteronomy 18**—He was the "prophet like Moses."

**Psalms 22**—He was mocked, insulted and crucified. His garments were gambled for and His bones were not broken.

**Psalms 110**—He was David's Lord.

**Isaiah 53**—He was perfectly innocent and without sin, yet He atoned for the sin of the world. He was resurrected from the dead.

**Jeremiah 23**—Because He was God and "justified many," His proper name is "Jehovah our Righteousness."

**Daniel 9**—He arrived at the specific time given by the prophecy, 483 years after Artaxerxes' decree to rebuild Jerusalem.

**Micah 5**—He was eternal, yet He was born in Bethlehem.

**Zechariah 9**—He was the King of Israel who brought salvation; He entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey.

**Zechariah 12**—He was Jehovah, He was pierced.

**Malachi 3**—John the Baptist prepared the way for Him as He suddenly came to His temple.

Had we space, there are dozens of other prophecies we could discuss that are just as specific.

- (1) He would be born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14; see Mt. 1:23).
- (2) He would live in Nazareth of Galilee (Isa. 9:1-2; see Mt. 2:23; 4:15).
- (3) He would occasion the massacre of Bethlehem's children (Jer. 31:15; see Mt. 2:18).
- (4) His mission would include the Gentiles (Isa. 42:1-3, 6; see Mt. 12:18-21).
- (5) His ministry would include physical relief (Isa. 61:1-2; see Lk. 4:16-21).
- (6) He would be the Shepherd struck with the sword, resulting in the sheep being scattered (Zech. 13:7; see Mt. 26:31, 56; Mk. 14:27, 49-50).
- (7) He would be betrayed by a friend for 30 pieces of silver (Zech. 11:12-13; see Mt. 27:9-10).
- (8) He would be given vinegar and gall to drink (Ps. 69:21; see Mt. 27:34).
- (9) He would be hated without a cause (Ps. 69:4; Isa. 49:7; Jn. 7:48; Jn. 15:25).
- (10) He would be rejected by the rulers (Ps. 118:22; Mt. 21:42; Jn. 7:48).

Who is the only Person who has fulfilled all of these prophecies—and many more?<sup>24</sup> Only Jesus Christ. There is no way to avoid this fact. Scholars Delitzsch and Gloag have rightly stated:

So far as we can determine, these prophecies refer to the Messiah only, and cannot be predicated of another. The ancient Jews admit the Messianic character of most of them; although the modern Jews, in consequence of their controversy with the Christians, have attempted to explain them away by applications which must appear to every candid reader to be unnatural... these and other predictions have received their accomplishment in Jesus of Nazareth,... the

combination of prophecies is sufficient to prove that Jesus is the Messiah;...<sup>25</sup>

In fact, as we show in our book, the calculations of mathematical probability reveal these prophecies could only have been fulfilled in the manner they were through the power and omniscience of a sovereign God. The odds of any one man fulfilling just 48 of them are 1 in  $10^{157}$ —infinitely beyond the limits of probability.<sup>26</sup>

Remember, in John 4:25-26 and Mark 14:61-64, Jesus Himself clearly claimed He was the prophesied Messiah. In order to disprove this claim, one only needs to find a single prophecy (out of scores in the Old Testament) that proves Jesus was wrong. Because no one has yet done this and because Jesus filled all of the prophecies relating to His incarnation, and because He resurrected from the dead, no one can logically deny that He was and is the prophesied Jewish Messiah.

## **2. Jesus is unique in all the creation and all religious history; there has never been another like Him.**

It is morally as bad not to care whether a thing is true or not, so long as it makes you feel good, as it is not to care how you got your money so long as you have got it.—Edwin Way Teale

Truth, like surgery, may hurt, but it cures. — Han Suyin

The average non-Christian, and even many Christians, have little understanding of how unique Jesus really is. Messianic prophecy is only a small part of Jesus' uniqueness. In all the world and throughout all history, there has never been anyone like Him. There never can be. One only needs to read His words in the Gospel to plainly see this.

Anyone who wishes can also read the world's greatest religious and philosophical literature—the *Analects* of Confucius, the *Qur'an* of Muhammad, the *Vedas* of the Hindus, the teachings of the Buddha, or of Taoism, Shinto, Zoroaster or any of the great philosophers like Plato, Socrates, Wittgenstein, Aristotle, Descartes, Hume, Bacon—or any of the greatest scientific minds such as Einstein. One who does this will realize that they all pale in comparison to the words of Jesus. One could argue that all the literature of the world combined hardly matches the quality, character, uniqueness and truth of the words of Jesus, because, compared to the words of Jesus, the words of anyone else are almost lifeless. The light bulb and sun, the glass of water and the ocean, or the atom and the universe; even these comparisons seem in ways inadequate. Indeed, one cannot gauge the gap adequately: it is a chasm that literally separates the infinite from the finite even as the words of God are

separated from the words of men. If Jesus really *is* God incarnate, then this is what one expects. Listen to the response of those who actually heard Him speak, believer and unbeliever, friend and enemy alike:

You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God. (John 6:67-69)

The Jews were amazed and asked, "How did this man get such learning without having studied?" (John 7:15)

"No one ever spoke the way this man does," the guards declared. (John 7:46)

Those with open and closed minds alike should frankly study His words if for no other reason than to prove their uniqueness. Reverent study of the words of Christ and comparison to any or all other religious teachings should logically make one a follower of Jesus.

The Bible also teaches that there is no one who has ever lived who is like Jesus. In John 3:16-18, Jesus declares:

For God so loved the world that He gave His *one and only* Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's *one and only* Son.

The words translated "one and only" are translated from the Greek *monogenes*, which literally means "one of a kind." This word emphasizes the unique nature of the one spoken of. In all human history there is no one else like Jesus because *only* Jesus is the literal Son of God. In John 5:18, where Jesus called God His (very) own Father, the Greek term means God the Father exists "in a special relation to Jesus which excludes the same relationship to others."<sup>27</sup>

Because Jesus Christ is God's only Son, the Apostle Paul discusses His supremacy and preeminence over all creation:

He [Jesus] is the *image* of the invisible God, the first born over all creation. For by Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authority; all things were created by Him and for Him. He is before all things and in Him all things hold together. And He is the head of the body, the church; He is the beginning and the First Born from among the dead, so that in everything He might have the supremacy. (Colossians 1:15-18)

The Greek word translated "image" is *eikon*. Like

the word *charakter* in Hebrews 1:3, it means Jesus is the express image of, or of identical nature with, God. Further, when Jesus is described as the first born over all creation, the word translated “first born” is *prototokos* and stands in contrast to *ktizo* (created). By using the word *prototokos*, the Apostle Paul was emphasizing Christ’s preeminence, priority and sovereignty over all creation, as the context reveals. Paul was not stating, as Jehovah’s Witnesses and some others have maintained, in the attempt to deny Christ’s deity, that Jesus literally came into existence at some point in time. If that had been His intent, He would have used appropriate Greek words teaching that Christ had a beginning.

If the Bible itself teaches that Christ is unique, that there never has been and never will be another like him; if Christ’s own teachings, actions, character and resurrection prove this is true, and if one-fourth to one-half of the world has recognized this fact to varying degrees, then the burden of proof must clearly rest with the critic to prove otherwise. Isn’t it significant that in 2,000 years no critic ever has?

When we consider all the great religious teachers, leaders, and prophets who have ever lived, who is the equal of Jesus? Not Moses, Confucius, Buddha, or Lao Tse (Taoism), who never claimed to be anything other than sinful men. Not Muhammad, Joseph Smith, Zoroaster or Guru Nanak (Sikhism) who never gave any proof they were true prophets of God. Not Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, or Krishna who were only myths.

If we examine the specific claims of such individuals, we find none of them claims what Jesus does. In *The Qur’an* the Muslim prophet Muhammad states, “Surely I am no more than a human apostle.”<sup>28</sup> In fact, Muhammad is acknowledged as sinful and asks forgiveness from God—is even rebuked by God—several times.<sup>29</sup>

If Muhammad confessed he was sinful, Jesus claimed He was sinless. If Muhammad only claimed to be a prophet of God, Jesus claimed to be God. If Muhammad was rebuked by God, Jesus was never rebuked by God; in fact, He said, “I always do what pleases Him” (John 8:29).

The Buddha simply claimed to be an enlightened man, one who could show others how to escape the duality of this world and find eternal release from suffering in a state of individual nonexistence called “nirvana.” After his alleged enlightenment, the Buddha said he realized the importance of maintaining an attitude of equanimity towards all things because this attitude helps one to end the cycle of rebirth, attain permanent release from the human condition and “enter” nirvana:

Monks, I’m a Brahmana [enlightened being],

one to ask a favor of, ever clean-handed, wearing my last body.... I am inexorable, bear no love nor hatred toward anyone.... I have the same feelings for respectable people as for the low; or moral persons as for the immoral; for the depraved as for those who observe the rules of good conduct.... You disciples, do not affirm that the Lord Buddha reflects thus within himself, “I bring salvation to every living being.” Subhuti entertain no such delusive thought! Because in reality there are no living beings to whom the Lord Buddha can bring salvation.<sup>30</sup>

Houston Smith in *The Religions of Man* comments about the Buddha,

Notwithstanding his own objectivity toward himself, there was constant pressure during his lifetime to turn him into a god. He rebuffed all these categorically, insisting that he was human in every respect. He made no attempt to conceal his temptations and weaknesses, how difficult it had been to attain enlightenment, how narrow the margin by which he had won through, how fallible he still remained.<sup>31</sup>

If Buddha claimed merely a personal enlightenment designed to escape human nature, Jesus claimed (in His *own* nature) to *be* the Light of the world. If Buddha claimed it was wrong to consider him one who brings salvation to men because men, having no permanent reality, do not finally exist, Jesus taught that He came to bring salvation to all men and to dignify their existence eternally. If the Buddha promised to give others enlightenment so that they might find nirvana, a state of personal dissolution in the afterlife, Jesus promised to give men abundant life and eternal immortality in heaven. If Buddha had the *same* feelings for good and evil, Jesus exalted righteousness and hated evil.

Confucius said, “As to being a Divine Sage or even a Good Man, far be it for me to make any such claim.”<sup>32</sup> If Confucius denied that he was divine or even a good man, Jesus claimed He was divine and morally perfect.

We can proceed to examine all the world’s major religions in detail and never find anyone like Jesus. Not in Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, Shinto, Judaism, Zoroasterism, Islam, or any other religion. Zoroaster only claimed to be a prophet, “I was ordained by Thee at the first. All others I look upon with hatred of spirit.”<sup>33</sup> Lao-tze and Guru Nanak sum up the attitude, at one time or another, of all the great religious founders when they confessed their humanity and even their ignorance. For example, Lao-tze the founder of Taoism said, “I alone appear empty. Ignorant am I, O so ignorant! I am dull!... I alone am confused, so confused!”<sup>34</sup> Even

in the latter part of his life, Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism still struggled to achieve enlightenment and lamented over his own spiritual darkness, "I have become perplexed in my search. In the darkness I find no way. Devoted to pride, I weep in sorrow.... How shall deliverance be obtained?"<sup>35</sup>

In *The World's Living Religions*, Professor of the History of Religions, Robert Hume comments that there are three features of Christian faith that "cannot be paralleled anywhere among the religions of the world."<sup>36</sup> These include the character of God as a loving heavenly Father, the character of the founder of Christianity as the Son of God, and the work of the Holy Spirit. Further,

All of the nine founders of religion, with the exception of Jesus Christ, are reported in their respective sacred scriptures as having passed through a preliminary period of uncertainty, or of searching for religious light.... All the founders of the non-Christian religions evinced inconsistencies in their personal character; some of them altered their practical policies under change of circumstances. Jesus Christ alone is reported as having had a consistent God-consciousness, a consistent character himself, and a consistent program for his religion.<sup>37</sup>

If the claims of men mean anything, or have any implications, and, certainly they must, whether true or false, then no one else in history ever claimed and did what Jesus did.

Again, Jesus is absolutely unique in the claims He makes for Himself. He says, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12). How many other men have ever said that? Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). How many other men have ever said that? As we saw, Jesus even claimed that 1500 years before His birth, Moses wrote about Him and further, that the entire Old Testament bore witness to Him (John 6:46-47; Luke 24:27, 44).

Jesus commanded men to love Him in the exact same way that they love God—with all their heart, soul, and mind (Matthew 22:37-38). Jesus said that God the Holy Spirit would bear witness of Him and glorify Him (John 16:14). Who ever made such a claim? Jesus said that to know Him was to know God (John 14:7). To receive Him was to receive God (Matthew 10:40). To honor Him was to honor God (John 5:23). To believe in Him was to believe in God (John 12:44-45; 14:1). To see Him was to see God (John 8:19; 14:7). To deny Him was to deny God (1 John 2:23). To hate Him was to hate God (John 15:23). Did any other men in history ever made such statements?

In Mark 2, Jesus claimed He could forgive sins—something all religions concede is reserved to God alone. In John 10:28 and 11:25, He said He could give all who believed on Him eternal life. How can a mere man, indeed anyone less than God—give eternal life to creatures who die? Yet Jesus raised the dead even in front of His enemies—not in some dark alley, but before scores of eye witnesses (Luke 7:11-15; 8:41-42, 49-56; John 11:43-44). Who else ever did that? He did other miracles that amazed those who saw them.

"We have never seen anything like this!" (Mark 2:12). "Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind." (John 9:32)

In Matthew 25, He said that He would actually return at the end of the world and that He Himself would judge every person who ever lived; that He would personally raise all the dead of history and that all the nations would be gathered before Him! Who ever said that? He would sit on His throne of glory and judge and separate men from one another as a shepherd does the sheep from the goats (Matthew 25:31-46; cf. John 5:25-34). Just as clearly, Jesus taught that every person's eternal destiny depended upon how they treated Him (John 8:24; Matthew 10:32). Jesus said, "You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world" (John 8:23).

All these statements and many more like them, leave us little choice. Either Jesus was who He said He was—God incarnate—or else He was absolutely crazy. But who can believe *that*?

### **3. The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ is virgin born and sinless.**

Many people today scoff at the idea of Jesus' Virgin Birth. But the Virgin Birth of Christ is one of the most crucial doctrines of Christianity. In fact, if Jesus were *not* virgin born, there would be no Christianity. Why? First, if Jesus is not virgin born, then He was born just like every other man. This would prove He was only a man. But if so, then His claim to be God was a lie and He was self-deceived. In other words, if He was only a man, He could never be the incarnation of God, as He claimed.

Further, if Christ was not virgin born, He could not have been the Savior of the world. As a man, He would have inherited a sinful nature from His parents. But if He Himself were sinful, He could not have been an atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2). If He were only a man, how could His sacrifice on the cross, the sacrifice of a mere finite being, satisfy the infinite justice of a holy God offended by human sin and evil? Only if Christ was both sinless man and fully deity could He properly serve as the atoning sacrifice for the world's sins in the face of

an infinitely holy God. Therefore, the Virgin Birth not only undergirds the doctrine of Christ's deity, it also undergirds the doctrine of Christ's sinlessness and His role as the world's Savior.

But does the Bible clearly teach that Jesus was born of a virgin? Yes. In Isaiah 7:14, written 700 years before Christ was born, it prophesies, "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel." The word Immanuel means "God with us." When Matthew describes the birth of Christ from the Virgin Mary, he declares this prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled in Jesus, "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord has said through the prophet [Isaiah]: The virgin [*parthenos*] will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call Him "Immanuel"—which means, "God with us" (Matthew 1:22-23). The Greek word *parthenos* means only one thing in the New Testament: virgin.

Because Jesus was virgin born, He was also sinless. He even challenged His own enemies to prove otherwise—"Can any of you prove me guilty of sin?," He asked (John 8:46). In John 7:18 Jesus said, "He who speaks on his own does so to gain honor for himself, but he who works for the honor of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him." The apostles who lived intimately with Jesus for three years were able to examine His life in critical detail. Their unanimous confession was that Jesus was sinless. Peter said He was "one who committed no sin" (1 Peter 1:19). The Apostle John said, "And in Him is no sin" (1 John 3:5). Even the former skeptic, the Apostle Paul, said of Jesus, "He knew no sin" (2 Corinthians 5:21). The author of Hebrews said that Jesus was "holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners" as well as "one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15; 7:26). The Roman governor Pilate, after examining Jesus, said he could find no fault in Him (John 18:38; Matthew 27:23-5; Luke 23:13). Herod concluded the same (Luke 23:13-15). Even Judas, who betrayed Him, confessed, "I have sinned in betraying innocent blood" (Matthew 27:4).

No one can logically deny reliable eyewitness testimony and the other evidence that shows Jesus is the only perfect and sinless man who ever lived. But if Jesus was perfect and sinless, shouldn't we assume that what He has to say is important to us, regardless of what we may now think about Him?

#### **4. The Bible teaches that Jesus is God—the only incarnation of God there is or ever will be.**

The high-minded man must care more for the truth than for what people think.—Aristotle

Because Jesus Himself so clearly claimed that He

was God incarnate, the other authors of the New Testament writings stress this unparalleled assertion. First, Jesus clearly claimed to be God. In John 10:30, he said, "I and the Father are one." The word "one" in the Greek (*hen*), according to Greek authority A. T. Robertson, means not just one in the sense of agreement, but that Jesus was saying He and God are "one essence or nature."<sup>38</sup>

Second, Jesus' claim to be God was understood by all men, including His enemies. Jesus said, "I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning me?" (John 10:32). The response of His enemies was, "... because you, being a man, make yourself out to be God" (John 10:33). In John 8:58, Jesus said, "Before Abraham was born, *I am*." The Greek is *ego eimi*. Jesus was referring to Exodus 3:13-14 where God identified Himself as the "I am". Jesus applied the unique divine name to Himself, not only on this occasion but many others. That His hearers understood His claim to be God is evident when they again tried to stone Him to death (John 8:59).

His continual identification of Himself with God and His ascribing to Himself divine prerogatives and attributes leave us little choice. Jesus clearly claimed He was the God of the universe: "'My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working.' For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God." (John 5:17-18)

#### **5. The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ is the world's only Savior who died for our sins on the cross and who offers eternal salvation as an entirely free gift.**

In spite of the many claims by people today that there are many saviors, many "gurus," and many ways to God, Jesus Himself taught that He alone was the way to God. He declared, "*I am the way, the truth and the life, no man comes unto the Father but by Me*" (John 14:6). He emphasized, "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep.... I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved.... I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:7-11).

Jesus clearly claimed that He was an atoning sacrifice for the world's sin, "...the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28); "This is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:28). Because Jesus is the only incarnation of God, God's only begotten Son, when He died on the cross for human sin, He became the only possible way of salvation for men and women.

In other words, no one else paid the penalty of divine justice against human sin. This is why the Bible teaches, “Salvation is found in *no one else*, for there is *no other name under heaven* given to men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). Further, “This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and *one* mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time” (1 Timothy 2:3-6). Perhaps all this is why Jesus Himself warned, “...if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins” (John 8:24).

In addition, Christ offers a salvation unlike that in any other religion. Forgiveness of sins and eternal life are *freely* given without cost to the benefactor. Indeed, Jesus claimed that He would personally raise the dead and give eternal life to those who believed on Him:

For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and *I will raise him up at the last day.* (John 6:40)

For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, *even so* the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. (John 5:21)

I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me *has eternal life and will not be condemned*; he has crossed over from death to life. (John 5:24)

I tell you the truth, he who believes *has everlasting life.* (John 6:47)

This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified *freely by his grace* through redemption that came by Christ Jesus. (Romans 3:22-24)

...he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of *his mercy* (Titus 3:5)

In the history of men, nothing like this has ever been proclaimed outside Christianity. As Martin Luther once noted, there are only two religions in the world—the religion of works and the religion of grace.

Some people may find it difficult to believe that among all the world religions, Christ alone is the way to God, and that men must believe in Him for salvation if they are to be saved. But if Jesus was correct when He said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Matthew 28:18), then no other option remains. Even a brief examination of what other religions teach indicates the necessity for such a conclusion. Regardless, this exclusivism is not as difficult as it seems at first glance, nor is it disharmonious with our general experience in life. Usually for success in an endeavor, the important things in life

must be done properly.

## 6. The Bible teaches Jesus rose from the dead.

He who does not bellow the truth when he knows the truth makes himself the accomplice of liars and forgers. — Charles Peguy

If Jesus is the only man in the history of the world to rise from the dead, then who can ignore Him? This would be foolish. After all, if what Christ claimed for Himself is really true, it means one thing—that He is Himself God and the only way to God. If, in this life, it is vitally important for each of us to find and know God personally, then it is Jesus Himself who is vitally important to us.

How do we know Jesus rose from the dead? In previous articles we examined the testimony of both former skeptics and leading lawyers throughout history and today. All concluded that the evidence for the truth of Christianity and its view of Jesus and His resurrection was compelling. The formerly committed skeptics abandoned their skepticism and embraced Christ as their risen Lord and Savior—no mean testimony. The lawyers unanimously declared the evidence for Jesus’ resurrection would stand cross-examination, even in a modern court of law. Again, no mean testimony.

Men of such skepticism and intellectual caliber as those cited simply do not believe in Christianity unless it really is true. So whether one is a Christian or a non-Christian, given the claims of Christ and the historical reality of His resurrection, one cannot logically maintain that Christ is irrelevant to one’s life.

On numerous occasions Jesus predicted His own crucifixion, down to the very day (Matthew 26:2). He also predicted His subsequent resurrection three days later (Matthew 17:22-23; Mark 8:31; Luke 18:31-33; John 2:19, 22). Before any of the events had occurred, Jesus predicted no less than ten specific prophecies about His death and resurrection, all of which came true (See *Do the Resurrection Accounts Conflict? And What Proof Is There That Jesus Rose From the Dead?*, p. 110).

Even critics agree Jesus was crucified and died at Roman hands and that the location of His tomb was public knowledge. Nor can anyone logically deny that a 1-2 ton stone was rolled over the face of the grave or that a trained military guard was set at the grave to prevent anyone from stealing the body. But again, even critics agree the tomb was found empty Sunday morning.

Further, no theory to explain this fact has ever proved satisfactory except the Christian one. In part, this is because of the numerous resurrection appearances of Christ after His death. He appeared to many different people—to disciples who did not believe it at

first, to a crowd of 500, to selected individuals. He appeared to them in many different ways, locations and circumstances. These appearances eventually compelled belief.

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to conclude that if Christ had died (and everyone agreed He did) and if He was seen alive by large numbers of credible eyewitnesses (and this cannot logically be doubted), then the Christian view of the resurrection is established. Indeed, for a variety of reasons, Christianity could not have arisen apart from Christ's resurrection. The very existence of the Christian religion is proof of the resurrection.

### **7. The Bible teaches that Jesus is the final judge: The One who will personally and visibly return to earth and judge every person who has ever lived on the Last Day.**

The modern world, because it is indifferent to dogmatic truth, has logically become indifferent to ethical truth —Bertrand L. Conway

Pure truth, like pure gold, has been found unfit for circulation, because men have discovered that it is far more convenient to adulterate the truth than to refine themselves. —Charles Caleb Colton

Because Jesus is God, and because He was the very one who died for the world's sin, He is also the one who will judge each man and woman who has ever lived and make the final determination of each one's destiny. This was the claim of Jesus Himself:

Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him. I tell you the truth, whoever hears my Word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live.... do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear His voice and come out—and those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned. (John 5:21-29)

Jesus also taught:

When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, He will sit on His throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on His right and goats on His left. Then the King will say to those on His right, "Come, you who are blessed

by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world...." Then He will say to those on his left, "depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels...." Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life." (Matthew 25:31-34, 41, 46)

These teachings of Jesus are why the New Testament emphasizes the fact that Christ will judge the entire world. The Apostle Paul referred to his living "In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead,..." (2 Timothy 4:1). The Apostle Peter emphasized that God "commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that He [Jesus] is the One who God appointed as judge of the living and the dead" (Acts 10:42).

Indeed, God promises each of us that the *proof* of coming judgment can be had in Christ's resurrection. In other words, the future judgment is just as certain as Christ's own resurrection: "In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given *proof* of this to *all men* by raising him from the dead" (Acts 17:30-31). Indeed, the Bible has warned all men:

We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away. For if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.... Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account. (Hebrews 2:1-4; 4:13)

In light of this, perhaps non-Christians should reconsider the "win-win wager" of the philosopher Pascal: If the Christian God does not exist, the Christian loses nothing by believing in God; if God does exist and he believes, he gains everything in eternal life.

Of course, if God exists and the non-Christian rejects Him, then everything is forfeited in hell. There will be nothing worse for the unbeliever if Christianity turns out to be true: "What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26-27)

Let's now summarize a few key conclusions and offer a final illustration of why Jesus Christ does not leave us any option other than making Him our Lord and Savior.

1. Was Jesus unique when compared to anyone else?
2. Did He establish His claim to be the prophesied Jewish Messiah and God incarnate?
3. Did He resurrect from the dead?
4. Have a large number of former skeptics and those expertly trained in evaluating truth claims and the quality of evidence declared He did?

The answer to these questions is an undeniable yes.

If Jesus is God incarnate, utterly unique, and rose from the dead as proof of His claims, then who is there that will escape a personal appointment with Him? All will either face Him as Savior or Judge. It's not an issue of what anyone *thinks*, it's entirely an issue of who Jesus is.

To establish their counterclaims, skeptics (or higher critics that run theological lotteries like the so-called "Jesus Seminar") have to provide real evidence in support of their beliefs, not merely conjecture, biased opinions or foolishness. One can only wonder why it is that in 2,000 years some of the best minds humanity can muster have never been able to prove their skeptical theories, or even to offer a reasonable defense of them? For example, look at the alternate theories put forth to explain away the resurrection—despite their cleverness they constitute, quite literally, nonsense. The problem is not that arguments against Christianity never seem convincing initially, it's that they aren't convincing at all when examined in light of the contrary evidence. Dr. John Warwick Montgomery comments about higher criticism what is also true for skeptical theories generally,

I have pointed out again and again that such "assured results" are non-existent, that redaction criticism, documentary criticism, and historical-critical methods have been weighed in the balance of *secular* scholarship and found wanting, and that the burden of proof remains on those who want to justify these subjectivistic methods, not on those who take historical documents at face value when their primary-source character can be established by objective determination of authorship and date.<sup>39</sup>

### What Options Do We Have?

Truth is tough. It will not break, like a bubble, at a touch; nay, you may kick it about all day like a football, and it will be round and full at evening.— Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr.

If Jesus was the God of this universe who visited this planet in the form of a man, then He must command our attention and respect. Indeed, our worship and obedience. It is significant that when all one's options concerning Jesus are critically examined, one can only conclude that Jesus really was God.

There are only four logical choices we have concerning Jesus Christ. As we examine the following material, the reader should decide for himself the one option *most* likely to be true: 1) Jesus Christ was a liar and deceiver. 2) He was insane, mentally ill or a lunatic. 3) He was only a legend fabricated by the disciples. 4) Jesus Christ was and is who He claimed to be—incarnate Lord and God. As we proceed to examine these four options, we shall demonstrate that the fourth alternative is the only one that a thinking person can possibly arrive at.

### 1) Was Jesus a liar and deceiver?

As far as we know, no one of sound mind has ever seriously maintained this. Even the most fanatical atheists have not said it. Jesus' ethical teachings are the highest man has and His personal moral character was unblemished. Even His enemies could not convict Him of sin, dishonesty or deceit.

It is morally impossible that someone of the highest ethical character would knowingly deceive people concerning the most vital aspect of his teaching—his own identity. Even the great nineteenth century British historian, W. E. H. Lecky, a committed opponent of organized Christianity, wrote the following sentiments about Jesus which have been repeated many times over the centuries by men of all and no religious persuasion. In his *History of European Morals from Augustus to Charlemagne* he said:

It was reserved for Christianity to present to the world an ideal character which through all the changes of eighteen centuries has inspired the hearts of men with an impassioned love; has shown itself capable of acting on all ages, nations, temperaments and conditions; has been not only the highest pattern of virtue, but the strongest incentive to its practice, and has exerted so deep an influence, that it may be truly said, that the simple record of three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and to soften mankind, than all the disquisitions of philosophers and than all the exhortations of moralists.<sup>40</sup>

Who then, can imagine that Jesus deliberately lied concerning His own nature? And is it possible that a man of such noble character and exemplary moral persuasion would frequently claim He would rise from the dead, knowing this was a lie? Contemporary philosopher and theologian John Warwick Montgom-

ery asserts, "To answer anything but an unqualified 'No' is to renounce sound ethical judgment."<sup>41</sup>

Eminent historian Philip Schaff argues:

How, in the name of logic, common sense, and experience, could an imposter—that is, a deceitful, selfish, depraved man—have invented, and consistently maintained from the beginning to end, the purest and noblest character known in history with the most perfect air of truth and reality? How could he have conceived and successfully carried out a plan of unparalleled beneficence, moral magnitude, and sublimity, and sacrificed his own life for it, in the face of the strongest prejudices of his people and age?<sup>42</sup>

No one can logically maintain Jesus was a liar and deceiver. Alternative one is ruled out.

## 2) Was Jesus a lunatic, a man so deluded He must be classified as mentally ill?

Was Jesus mentally ill or psychotic? Mental illness or psychosis is defined as an inability to identify reality and to distinguish it from fantasy. The fifth edition of *Introduction to Psychology*, describes psychosis in this way: "the psychotic has to some extent given up [his personal] struggle [to cope with reality] and *lost contact with reality*. He may withdraw into his own fantasy world... frequently his thought processes are disturbed to the extent that he experiences delusions (false beliefs) or hallucinations..."<sup>43</sup>

For someone to be convinced that he is God when he is only a man is the height of psychosis. Was Jesus so psychologically crippled that He had deceived Himself into believing that He was God Incarnate—even though He was only a deluded man? But what insane man could ever deliver a self-portrait and teachings that are the epitome of mental health? Psychiatrist J. T. Fisher observes:

If you were to take the sum total of all authoritative articles ever written by the most qualified of psychologists and psychiatrists on the subject of mental hygiene, if you were to combine them and refine them and cleave out the excess verbiage—if you were to take the whole of the meat and none of the parsley, and if you were to have the unadulterated bits of pure scientific knowledge concisely expressed by the most capable of living poets, you would have an awkward and incomplete summation of the Sermon on the Mount. And it would suffer immeasurably through comparison. For nearly two thousand years the Christian world has been holding in its hands the complete answer to its restless and fruitless yearnings. Here... rests the blueprint for successful human life with optimum mental health and contentment.<sup>44</sup>

Dr. John Warwick Montgomery further explains:

But one cannot very well have it both ways: if Jesus' teachings provide "the blueprint for successful human life with optimum mental health," then the teacher cannot be a lunatic who totally misunderstands the nature of his own personality. Note the absolute dichotomy: if the documentary records of Jesus' life are accurate, and Jesus was not a charlatan, then he was either God Incarnate as he claimed or a psychotic. If we cannot take the latter alternative (and, considering its consequences, who really can follow this path to its logical conclusion?), we must arrive at a Jesus who claimed to be God Incarnate simply because *he was God*.<sup>45</sup>

No man can logically maintain Jesus was psychotic. Alternative two is ruled out.

## 3) Was Jesus a legend invented by the disciples?

This assertion is hardly worth a glance. Everyone but a few diehard atheists agree He was not. No less an authority than the *Encyclopedia Britannica* points out, "These independent [*non-Christian*] accounts prove that in ancient times even the opponents of Christianity never doubted the historicity of Jesus, which was disputed for the first time and on inadequate grounds by several authors at the end of the 18th, during the 19th, and at the beginning of the 20th centuries."<sup>46</sup>

This theory requires that the disciples falsely invented Jesus' teachings and lied about His Resurrection. Such men must be classified as deceivers or lunatics. But this is impossible because none of the disciples had either the motive or the ability to invent Jesus. There was no reason for them to do so, nor were they capable of inventing such a being portrayed in the Gospels. No one could invent such a being. Historian Philip Schaff again argues:

This testimony [of the disciples], if not true, must be downright blasphemy or madness. The former hypothesis cannot stand a moment before the moral purity and dignity of Jesus, revealed in his every word and work, and acknowledged by universal consent. Self-deception in a matter so momentous, and with an intellect in all respects so clear and so sound, is equally out of the question. How could he be an enthusiast or a madman who never lost the even balance of his mind, who sailed serenely over all the troubles and persecutions, as the sun above the clouds, who always returned the wisest answer to tempting questions, who calmly and deliberately predicted his death on the cross, his resurrection on the third day, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the founding of his Church, the destruction of

Jerusalem—predictions which have been literally fulfilled? A character so original, so complete, so uniformly consistent, so perfect, so human and yet so high above all human greatness, can be neither a fraud nor a fiction. The poet, as has been well said, would in this case be greater than the hero. It would take more than a Jesus to invent a Jesus.<sup>47</sup>

Again, the disciples would not and could not have engaged in such deliberate fraud. First, they did not expect their Messiah to rise from the dead; and once Jesus was crucified, they had abandoned their hopes that He was their Messiah. Further, their own Jewish ethical code and moral character would have prevented such a massive conspiratorial deception. But even if we thrust aside their ethical standards, the disciples were psychologically incapable of such fraud when they had no motive. As Montgomery points out, Jewish Messianic speculation was at variance with the Messianic picture Jesus gave of Himself; therefore, He was a singularly poor candidate for actual deification on the part of the disciples. Finally, the disciples' own Jewish faith would have prohibited them from deifying Jesus unless the resurrection had already proved beyond any question that it was true.

It is impossible that the historical evidence for the Resurrection could ever have been manufactured or invented.<sup>48</sup> Alternative three is ruled out. Only one alternative remains.

#### **4) Was Jesus Lord and God?**

It is impossible to maintain that Jesus was either a liar, a lunatic, or a legend. Our only option is that He was both Lord and God. This is why the famous Oxford scholar C. S. Lewis concluded:

The historical difficulty of giving for the life, sayings and influence of Jesus any explanation

that is not harder than the Christian explanation, is very great. The discrepancy between the depth and sanity and (let me add) *shrewdness* of his moral teaching and the rampant megalomania which must be behind his theological teaching unless he is indeed God, has never been satisfactorily gotten over. Hence, the non-Christian hypotheses succeed one another with the restless fertility of bewilderment.<sup>49</sup>

Elsewhere, Lewis expands on the idea and shows why the non-Christian really has no logical alternative but to accept that Jesus is God:

"I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God." That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon; or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.<sup>50</sup>

In conclusion, the very claims of Jesus Himself are evidence for His deity. No man in his right mind would make such claims unless He knew they were true. Little is left to the skeptic but to accept that Jesus was who He claimed He was. Indeed, had He *not* resurrected, we would not have the option of discussing His identity. For many reasons, His name would have dissipated into the mists of historical obscurity 2,000 years ago.

## Notes

- 1 Unless otherwise indicated these citations were taken from various books of contemporary or historical quotations, i.e., Rhoda Tripp (compiler), *The International Thesaurus of Quotations*; Ralph L. Woods (compiler and ed.), *The World Treasury of Religious Quotations*; William Neil (ed.), *Concise Dictionary of Religious Quotations*; Jonathan Green (compiler), *Morrow's International Dictionary of Contemporary Quotations*.
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- 3 See, e.g., our *Encyclopedia of Cults and New Religions* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1999).
- 4 As cited in an interview in *Christianity Today*, November 19, 1990, p. 34.
- 5 John W. Montgomery (ed.), *Evidence for Faith: Deciding the God Question* (Dallas: Word, 1991), p. 9.
- 6 Alvin Plantinga, "A Christian Life Partly Lived," in Kelly James-Clark (ed.), *Philosophers Who Believe* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), p. 69, emphasis added.
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- 9 For testimony of skeptics' conversion to Christianity based on the evidence for the resurrection of Christ, see *Do the Resurrection Accounts Conflict? and What Proof Is There That Jesus Rose From the Dead?* (Chattanooga, TN: The John Ankerberg Theological Research Institute, 1990); Also see the articles in *The Ankerberg Theological Research Institute News Magazine*, Vol. 2, no. 3, March 1995, Chattanooga, TN and Vol. 2, no. 4, April 1995.
- 10 See our *Ready With An Answer* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1997).
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- 14 Cited by Douglas Groothuis, "When the Salt Loses Its Savor," *Christian Research Journal*, Winter 1995, p. 50.
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- 16 See our *Do the Resurrection Accounts Conflict and What Proof is There Jesus Rose from the Dead?*
- 17 Pope John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), p. 42.
- 18 Malcolm Muggeridge, *Jesus: The Man Who Lives* (NY: Harper & Row, 1978), pp. 7, 184, 191.
- 19 Sir Lionell Luckhoo, *What Is Your Verdict?* (Fellowship Press, 1984), p. 12 cited in Ross Clifford, *Leading Lawyers Look at the Resurrection* (Claremont, CA: Albatross, 1991), p. 112.
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- 21 See e.g., our "Facts On" series on Mormonism, Jehovah's Witness, Islam.
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- 35 In Hume, p. 95.
- 36 Hume, p. 283.
- 37 Ibid., pp. 285-286.
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- 39 John Warwick Montgomery, *Faith Founded on Fact* (NY: Thomas Nelson, 1978), p. 47, emphasis added.
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