

Ready With an Answer

For the Tough Questions About God

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A Note from the Authors

Almost everyone is searching for something beyond themselves to give their lives meaning. However inadequately, many people are searching for the truth. Indeed, there probably isn't a person alive who wouldn't like to know the truth, if that were possible.

Despite the religious, political, moral and philosophical confusions of the modern age, despite the penchant to make personal preference one's truth, people know intuitively there is more to life and they secretly yearn for it.¹ We can see indications of this all around us, in cinema, art, literature, science, philosophy, politics and just about every other realm of human endeavor.

That is why we have written this book—to help people find the truth. Of course, sometimes the truth is hard to take. But of all things in life, knowing the truth is surely one of the most satisfying. Knowing the truth means that knowing that what you believe is absolutely true, and not just true for you alone, but for everybody else as well. And not just true for now, but true forever. That's the truth we are searching for and that's the truth we are talking about in this book.

Naturally, there are relativists who deny that truth exists. But what if they are wrong? "A philosophy that denies the possibility of truth is a philosophy that denies its own truth-claims. No one should take it seriously."²

This book is designed to take the reader through a progression of logical arguments that will, we hope, cause him or her to conclude there is a Truth and that it can both be known and experienced.

What makes the endeavor a bit easier is that in the end, there are only two options for explaining our existence: the natural or the supernatural, the material or the religious, however we wish to phrase it.

First, there is the supernatural or religious explanation. Is it reasonable to believe that the universe was created by an infinite God? Second, there is the natural or evolutionary explanation. Is it more reasonable to believe the universe arose by chance from nothing, as modern science claims? Interestingly enough, as we will see, even the natural explanation is a religious one, tantamount to requiring belief in the miraculous. So either way, we are forced into the realm of the religious. Further, if a great deal of scientific evidence rules *out* a naturalistic explanation for origins, we have little choice. By default we are automatically required to enter the realm of religious truth claims, at least if we want to know the truth about who we are. But who isn't at least a little bit curious at this point?

Here things get a bit more complex. The difficulty is that all religions claim to be the truth (even naturalistic ones). Of course, not all religions *can* be equally true. All might be false, or one might be true, but all cannot be absolutely true since they all clearly contradict one another. Indeed, it is somewhat startling that millions of people today claim that all religions are true. Everyone knows better. But if all religions *aren't* true, either all are false or one is true. There are no other options.

If there is only one true God, it is logical to assume there is one true religion. The purpose of this book is to see just how clearly the evidence leads us to conclude that there is only one true God and only one religion that is fully true.

If you really want to examine the case for knowing the truth, you can't afford to miss this book. For, like it or not, we all live out our lives more or less consistently with what we think is true. And, depending on what we believe is true, this has major implications for each of our lives. Further, we all die. To live our lives apart from the truth isn't healthy. And, certainly, to die without the truth cannot be in our best interests.

So, if we are currently of a naturalistic persuasion, and we already believe in one kind of miracle, perhaps it wouldn't hurt us to consider another kind of miracle along the way. And, if we are currently of a religious persuasion, perhaps it wouldn't hurt us to examine our beliefs more critically.

So where do we begin our research for the truth? Although we will discuss other religions and philosophies, our emphasis in this book will be to examine the evidence for the truth of biblical Christianity.

Why?

Simply because this is actually the most logical starting point. There is little need to examine 500 different religions in A to Z fashion (even if that were possible), when there is one religion that stands out from all the others in almost every respect.

Christianity is the only religion that is simultaneously most likely to be true and, given its claims, the easiest to disprove if false. Given this, there is no better place to begin.

If biblical Christianity proves true, then we have found the truth.

If it proves false, then the search is still on....

If nothing else, we hope this book will be a challenge to you personally to spend some time in the most important endeavor in life.

There is no greater adventure.

Part 1: Jesus Christ - The Most Unique Man in History

"You are a king, then!" said Pilate. Jesus answered, "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." "What is truth?" Pilate asked. (John 18:37-38a)

Chapter 1: Why Christianity?

"Every tiny part of us cries out against the idea of dying, and hopes to live forever."

—Ugo Betti in *Struggle to Dawn* (1949)

The Issue of Truth

In our increasingly hectic world, it seems as if most people 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:

"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)¹

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.

So for those who do not share our Christian world view, 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.

Second, 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 and Cambridge 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."² 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 really 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?

Third, 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. If Christianity were obviously false, as some skeptics 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 amazing *Syntopicon*, director of the prestigious Institute for Philosophical Research in Chicago, and author of *Truth in Religion*, *Ten Philosophical Mistakes*, *How to Think About God*, *How to Read a Book*, plus over twenty other challenging books. He simply asserts, "I believe Christianity is the only logical, consistent faith in the world."³ 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."⁴ 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."⁵ On what basis can one of the world's greatest philosophers make such a declaration if the evidence for Christianity is unconvincing, as critics charge?

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."⁶

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."⁷

Alister McGrath, Principal of Wycliffe Hall, Oxford University, and author of *Intellectuals Don't Need God and Other Myths*, declares that the superior nature of the evidence for Christianity is akin to that found in doing good scientific research: "When I was undertaking my doctoral research in molecular biology at Oxford University, I was frequently confronted with a number of theories offering to explain a given observation. In the end, I had to make a judgment concerning which of them possessed the greatest internal consistency, the greatest degree of correspondence to the data of empirical observation, and the greatest degree of predictive ability. Unless I was to abandon any possibility of advance in understanding, I was obliged to make such a judgment....I would claim the right to speak of the 'superiority' of Christianity in this explicative sense."⁸

The noted Christian scholar Dr. Carl F. H. Henry wrote a three-thousand-page, six-volume work on the topic of *God, Revelation and Authority*. After his exhaustive analysis, Henry declared, "Truth is Christianity's most enduring asset..."⁹

Such accolades could be multiplied repeatedly. While testimonies *per se* mean little, if they are undergirded by the weight of evidence, they can hardly be dismissed out of hand. Indeed, as Norman Geisler comments, "In the face of overwhelming apologetic evidence, unbelief becomes perverse..."¹⁰

Fourth, as we will see, Christianity's founder, Jesus Christ, is utterly original and totally unique when compared to every other religious leader who has ever lived. In the words of an article in *Time* magazine, His life was, simply, "the most influential life that was ever lived."¹¹ In addition, the Christian Bible itself is clearly the most influential book in human history. As we will see, the evidence in favor of its divine inspiration and the inerrancy of its autographs is formidable, even to many former skeptics. But 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."¹² In other words, even in this life it is the personal welfare of the non-Christian that may be at risk.

Chapter 2: Great Minds Speak About Jesus

"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

Today, most people who are unfamiliar with the facts concerning Jesus 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 43 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."¹

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 seeming relevance for us today?

The Influence of Jesus

In response to this, why should non-Christians become informed on Jesus Christ? 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. That means many atheists, agnostics, and skeptics, apparently, aren't very well-educated. Christ's influence in the world and His claims on people's lives are unparalleled. As Dr. D. James Kennedy points out in *What If Jesus Had Never Been Born?*, "Jesus Christ, the greatest man whoever lived, has changed virtually every aspect of human life—and most people don't know it....Nineteen centuries have come and gone, and today He is the central figure of the human race. All the armies that ever marched, all the navies that ever sailed, all the parliaments that ever sat, all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man on this earth as much as that one solitary life."² (Indeed, on April 8, 1996 something unique happened in the history of secular publishing—all the three major news magazines, *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U. S. News & World Report* carried cover stories on the same person—Jesus Christ.)

He is undoubtedly the single most commanding person in the entire history of mankind. It is not too much to say that if Jesus Christ had never been born, you and I and this entire country, and our entire Western Civilization, would not exist as it does. The influence of Christ and Christianity in helping the poor, in the founding of America, in expansion of civil liberties, in education and science, health and medicine, economics, the family and morality, the arts, music and other areas is far greater than the average person suspects (To illustrate this influence in e.g., the founding of America, we have prepared a brief chart at the end of this chapter.)

Even the death of Jesus was 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."³

Can anyone deny that because of Jesus, Christianity has become the largest religion in the world? That it has a membership of almost two 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.

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, lawyers, members of other religions, and philosophers alike.

We will begin with a concise sampling of declarations made by Jesus Himself. (These will be examined further in the next chapter.) In light of these statements, the ones below are all the more incredible if Jesus really were *not* who He claims. In evaluating the claims of Jesus, readers should understand that even skeptics can't logically deny that the four Gospel biographies of Christ are based on accurate historical reporting and that at least two, Matthew and John, were written by those who knew Christ personally and travelled closely with Him for over three years. Luke asserts that he "carefully investigated everything from the beginning" in completing his biography (Luke 1:3) and it is generally agreed that Mark got the information for his biography directly from the Apostle Peter. For those and other reasons (see chapter 16), we know the Gospels constitute reliable historical reporting.

The kind of scholarly nonsense we find in skeptical endeavors like the "Jesus Seminar" is all too common today, and, despite its consequences in the lives of the uninformed, believer or unbeliever, only serves to discredit the skeptics own credibility and make plain his prejudices.* Due to advances in textual criticism and other areas, it is now considered an 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.⁴

*See, e.g., Michael Wilkins and J. P. Moreland (eds.), *Jesus Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents the Historical Jesus* and Gregory Boyd, *Cynic, Sage or Son of God? Recovering the Real Jesus in an Age of Revisionist Replies* (InterVarsity

What Did Jesus Claim?

Here is what Jesus said. As you read the words of Jesus, ask yourself, what kind of mere man would say them?

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)

All that belongs to the Father is mine. (John 16:15)

You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world. (John 8:23)

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. Even those in the first century who either knew Him personally or critically examined His claims, or were skeptics, believed what Jesus said.

Considering the incredible nature of such claims, 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 physician Luke — "I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning....so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught...." "After his [Jesus'] suffering, he showed himself to these men [apostles] and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God." (Acts 1:3)

Former skeptic and Jewish leader, Saul of Tarsus — The Apostle Paul even told King Herod Agrippa II that, while he formerly persecuted believers in Christ, condemning them to death (Acts 26:9-11), Jesus had now personally appeared to him, confirming Jesus' resurrection and messiahship (vs. 12-19). Paul then said, "But I have had God's help to this very day, and so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen....What I am saying is true and reasonable. The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner." (Acts 26:22, 25b-26)

The Apostle Peter — "We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty." (2 Peter 1:16)

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 or 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)

What Have Leading Thinkers and Those of Influence Stated About Jesus?

Now in light of such claims by Jesus, 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 statements in the following chart and still believe investigating Jesus is not a worthwhile endeavor?

“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.”

-Blaise Pascal, French philosopher and scientist, author of the classic work, *Pensées*

“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.”

-Ralph Waldo Emerson, American poet and transcendentalist

“Christ is not valued at all unless He be valued above all.”

-Augustine of Hippo, church theologian and philosopher

“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.” and “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.”

-Napoleon Bonaparte, Emperor of France

“Christ is absolutely original and absolutely unique.”⁵

-Pope John Paul II

“When Christ came into my life, I came about like a well-handled ship.”

-Robert Louis Stevenson, Scottish novelist and poet

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

-Alfred Lord Tennyson, English poet

“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.”

-Lew Wallace, American lawyer, soldier, and author of *Ben Hur*

“The Galilean has been too great for our small hearts.”

-H. G. Wells, English novelist and historian, author of *The Time Machine*, *War of the Worlds*, and *An Outline of History*

“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.”⁶

-Malcolm Muggeridge, English novelist and critic

“I am enthralled by the luminous figure of the Nazarene.”

-Albert Einstein, American physicist who originated the theory of relativity

“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.”⁷

-Sir Lionell Luckhoo, listed in the *Guinness Book of Records*, the world’s “most successful lawyer,” knighted twice by the queen of England

“The example of Christ is supreme in its authority.”

-George Barlow

“Jesus was the most disturbing person in history.”

-Vance Havner

“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.”

-John M. Mason, American educator; provost, Columbia College

“Everything that is really worthwhile in the morality of today has come to the world through Christ.”

-G. Campbell Morgan, British preacher, author

“Jesus Christ is the outstanding personality of all time....no other teacher—Jewish, Christian, Buddhist, Mohammedan—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?”

-Sholam Asch, Polish novelist and playwright

“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 E. Biederwolf, American educator and evangelist

“I know of no sincere enduring good but the moral excellency which shines forth in Jesus Christ.”

-William Ellery Channing, Unitarian leader and abolitionist

“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.” and “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.”

-Joseph Ernest Renan, French nationalist, and skeptic, humanist historian of religion

“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.”

-P. Carnegie Simpson

“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.”

-Phillips Brooks, Harvard-educated preacher and bishop of Massachusetts who preached before Queen Victoria

“Whatever motives Jesus Christ might have had against calling Himself God, He did call Himself God; such is the fact.”

-Jean Baptiste Lacordaire, French prelate and revolutionary

“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.”

-Bishop William Quayle

“Either Jesus was and knew what He was, what He proclaimed Himself to be, or else He was a pitiable visionary.”

-Leonce De Grandmaison

“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.”

-W. A. Visser’t Hooft, Dutch ecumenical, grand secretary of the World Council of Churches

“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.”

-Fulton J. Sheen, Roman Catholic bishop and broadcaster

“Christ is God or He is the world’s greatest liar and imposter.”

-Dorothy Day, American writer and social reformer

“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.”

Herbert E. Cory

“An undogmatic Christ is the advertisement of a dying faith.”

P. T. Forsyth, Congregationalist theologian who rejected his earlier liberalism and according to E. Brunner, became the greatest British theologian of his day

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

Charles Lamb, English essayist and critic, author of *Tales from Shakespeare*

“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.”

C. F. Andrews, Anglican missionary to India

“The Humanist suggestion that Jesus was ‘morally right, but religiously mistaken’ defies all psychological probabilities.”

F. R. Berry

All 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, religious 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.⁸ 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 invalid.

Did the Founding Fathers Believe That Christian Principles Were To Be the Basis of American Government?

Do you think our Founding Fathers believed in God and founded America as a Christian nation? The Supreme Court answered this question in 1892 and cited 50 historical examples to prove America was indeed a Christian nation. These are just a few:

Governor Bradford, in writing of the Pilgrims’ landing, describes their first act: “Being thus arrived in a good harbor and brought safe to land, they fell upon their knees and blessed the God of heaven....”

The New England Charter, signed by King James I, confirmed the goal of the first settlers to be: “...to advance the enlargement of Christian religion, to the glory of God Almighty.”

The goal of government based on **Scripture was affirmed by individual counties, such as is found in the Rhode** Island Charter of 1683, which begins: “We submit our persons, lives and estates unto our Lord Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords and to all those perfect and most absolute laws of His given us in His holy Word.”

Benjamin Franklin stood and addressed the Continental Congress with these words: “In the beginning of the contest with Britain, when we were sensible of danger, we had daily prayers in this room for divine protection. Our prayers, sir, were heard and they were graciously answered. All of us who were engaged in the struggle must have observed frequent instances of a superintending Providence in our favor....Have we now forgotten this powerful friend? Or do we

imagine we no longer need His assistance? I have lived, sir, a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth: that God governs in the affairs of man. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid?

George Washington, in his inaugural address to Congress as the first President of the nation stated: “No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the invisible hand which conducts the affairs of men more than the people of the United States. Every step by which they have advanced to the character of an independent nation seems to have been distinguished by some token of providential agency....”

One of **George Washington’s first official acts** was the first Thanksgiving proclamation, which reads, “Whereas, it is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits, and humbly implore His protection and favor...” It goes on to call the nation to thankfulness to Almighty God.

Thomas Jefferson said: “Indeed, I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, and that His justice cannot sleep forever.”

President John Quincy Adams: “The first and almost the only book deserving of universal attention is the Bible.”

Andrew Jackson: “Go to the Scriptures ...the joyful promises it contains will be a balsam to all your troubles.”

From **President Abraham Lincoln’s Proclamation for a National Day of Fasting, Humiliation and Prayer, April 30, 1863**: “We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven. We have been preserved, these many years, in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power, as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us! It behooves us, then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to prayer for clemency and forgiveness.”

The Supreme Court Decision 1892—Church of the Holy Trinity Vs. The United States: “Our laws and our institutions must necessarily be based upon and embody the teachings of The Redeemer of mankind. It is impossible that it should be otherwise; and in this sense and to this extent our civilization and our institutions are emphatically Christian....This is a religious people. This is historically true.”

President Woodrow Wilson: “...the Bible...is the one supreme source of revelation of the meaning of life, the nature of God and spiritual nature and need of men. It is the only guide of life which really leads the spirit in the way of peace and salvation.”

In spite of the above statements, many people today say that the Founding Fathers never intended for religious principles to be part of public life or public affairs. They add: Doesn’t being a Christian nation really threaten pluralism? Interestingly, the Founding Fathers discuss that and they felt that it enhanced it.

Patrick Henry made a very clear statement: “It cannot be emphasized too often or too strongly that this great nation was founded not by religionists but by Christians; not on religions but on the gospel of Jesus Christ....It is for this reason that people of other faiths have been afforded asylum, prosperity and freedom of worship here.”

It must be concluded that our Founding Fathers *did* believe in God and founded America as a Christian nation. (For documentation see The John Ankerberg Show transcript, *Did the Founding Fathers Establish America as a Christian Nation?*)

Chapter 3: What Does the Bible Say About Jesus Christ?

"Truth is truth/to th' end of reck'ning."

–Shakespeare

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 this more lengthy chapter 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 here 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.

Seven Crucial Facts About Jesus

It is once again important to note that the Gospels constitute accurate historical reporting—we have documented some of the reasons for this conclusion in Ch. 16. It is no longer logically possible to argue that Jesus did not say and do the things His biographers recorded of Him. There are at least seven key things the Bible teaches about Jesus Christ. These stand alone; in no other religion on earth do we find anything similar:

1. Jesus is the prophesied Messiah who was predicted hundreds of years in advance through very specific prophecies;
2. Jesus is unique in all creation; in all history and religion 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 on 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. The world has never known any other virgin born and truly sinless person. No other man ever claimed to be God and convinced literally billions of people throughout history He was telling the truth. No one else ever claimed He would die for man's sin and that He personally could freely offer men *eternal* life. In no other man do we find the audacity to specifically predict His own time and method of death (to the very day) and His rising from the dead not once but many times. No man ever said He 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.

Is Jesus 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: Incredible Prophecies That Prove God Exists*,¹ we discuss over a dozen of these prophecies, at length, proving that only Jesus Christ fulfills them, and therefore, that only He is the predicted Jewish Messiah.¹ (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 also written 1000 years before Jesus was even born. Significantly Jesus 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, e.g., "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, written 700 years before Christ, 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 claims to fulfill this prophecy (Matthew 20:28; 26:28; cf. Isaiah 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, written 700 years BC, 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 Jesus Himself is put to death. (See note 2.)

In Zechariah 12:10, also written 500 years before Christ, it is prophesied that God 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 by the Roman spear during His crucifixion and had others mourn over Him (John 19:32,35). What is interesting about this prophecy is that God, as Spirit (John 4:24) cannot be physically pierced; hence this prophecy must refer to an incarnation of God.

If we look at the list of prophecies we discuss in our book, we see that Jesus Christ fulfilled all of them. (Remember, no one can logically deny that the following are predictions made hundreds of years before He was even born. Whatever one's view of the Old Testament, one fact is unassailable. The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the entire Hebrew Scriptures, was completed by 247 BC. Therefore, even critics must acknowledge these prophecies were in existence at least 250 years before Christ was 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 1:10 - 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.³

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. For example, the Bible tells us:

1. He would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14; see Matthew 1:23).
2. He would live in Nazareth of Galilee (Isaiah 9:1-2; see Matthew 2:23; 4:15).
3. He would occasion the massacre of Bethlehem's children (Jeremiah 31:15; see Matthew 2:18).
4. His mission would include the Gentiles (Isaiah 42:1-3, 6; see Matthew 12:18-21).
5. His ministry would include delivering those captive and the performing of miracles (Isaiah 29:18-21; 35:5-6; 61:1-2; see Luke 4:16-21; 7:20-23).
6. He would be the Shepherd struck with the sword, resulting in the sheep being scattered (Zech. 13:7; see Matthew 26:31, 56; Mark 14:27, 49-50).
7. He would be betrayed by a friend for 30 pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12-13; see Matthew 27:9-10).
8. He would be given vinegar and gall to drink (Psalm 69:21; see Matthew 27:34).
9. He would be hated without a cause (Psalm 69:4; Isaiah 49:7; John 7:48; John 15:25).
10. He would be rejected by the rulers (Psalm 118:22; Matthew 21:42; John 7:48).

Who is the only Person who has fulfilled all of these prophecies—and many more?⁴ Only Jesus Christ. There is no way to avoid this fact. Old Testament 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;..."⁵

In fact, as we show in chapter 12, 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.⁶

Remember, in John 4:25-26 and Mark 14:61-64, Jesus Himself undeniably claimed He was the prophesied Messiah. In order to disprove this claim, one only need 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. (For more information, see our booklet, *Knowing the Truth About Jesus the Messiah* and forthcoming book to be published by Harvest House.)

Is Jesus really unique in all creation and all religious history? Has there 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 need to read His words and of His deeds to plainly see this.

Anyone who wishes can also read the world's greatest religious and philosophical literature—the *Analects* of Confucius, the *Koran* of Mohammed, 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, Descarte, Hume, Bacon—or any of the greatest scientific minds such as Einstein. One who does this will realize that they pale in comparison to the words and deeds of Jesus. One could almost 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. It is a chasm that somehow seems to separate the infinite from the finite, even as the words of God are separated from the words of men. In John 14:10 Jesus even declares that His *words* are the works of God. (cf., John 6:63; 8:47; 12:48-50) If Jesus really *is* God incarnate, then this is what one expects. Listen to the response of those who actually heard Him speak and act, 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)

"The crowds were amazed at his teaching because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law." (Matthew 7:29)

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

Probably tens of thousands of commentaries have been written about the words and deeds of Christ and should humanity survive millennia more, tens of thousands of more will be written. That His words and deeds can never be exhausted is a testimony to their absolute uniqueness.

In fact, when we look at the *person* of Jesus and compare Him to Buddha, Mohammed, Confucius and others, it becomes difficult to even gauge the gap: the sun and the light bulb, the ocean and the glass of water, the universe and the atom. Even these comparisons seem somehow inadequate. Co-author John Weldon majored in philosophy in college for almost two years, has an M.A. degree in Christian Evidences, another Masters in Biblical Studies and a Ph.D. in Comparative Religion. Additionally, he has studied some 70 minor religions and cults. For 25 years he has examined or studied competing religions and philosophies. He asserts without the slightest possibility of ever being proven wrong that there is no one anywhere like Jesus; nothing comes close to the glory and majesty 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 Himself 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 "was even calling God His (very) own Father," the Greek means God the Father exists "in a special relation to Jesus which excludes the same relationship to others."⁷

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 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 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 firstborn 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.⁸ Further, when Jesus is described as the firstborn over all creation, the word translated "firstborn" 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?

What are some other ways Jesus Christ is unique?

First, we have already seen some of the amazing statements Jesus made that leave us few options as to His nature; He was either who He claimed, God incarnate, or absolutely crazy.

Jesus made many statements like the following which, upon reading, most people 2,000 years removed rarely understand the weight of. For example in John 14:7, Jesus says of God the Father, yet referring to Himself, "From now on you do know him and have seen him." Jesus' whole point is that the disciples have seen God the Father in His own person. Noted commentator William Barclay remarks, "It may well be that to the ancient world this was the most staggering thing that Jesus ever said. To the Greeks, God was characteristically *The Invisible*. The Jews would count it as an article of faith that no man has seen God at any time."

As the biblical scholar Leon Morris concludes: "He is claiming something far, far greater than anyone else had claimed."⁹

Consider some of the other powerful statements made by Jesus. In Matthew 12:8 He claims He is actually the Lord of the Sabbath. In other words, if the Sabbath came from God and if He can overrule the laws of the Sabbath, He must be God. In Matthew 13:41 and 24:31 He claims that He, the Son of Man, will actually send out His angels at the final judgment of humanity. In Matthew 18:20 He declares He is omnipresent—present everywhere. In Matthew 24:35 He declares that the universe would pass away but His words *never* pass away. In John 5:28-30 He claims He will raise *all* the dead i.e., literally billions, perhaps trillions of people, *Himself*. In John 12:32 He says that when He is dead He will "draw all men to myself."! Surely, no other man ever made such statements. In John 15:26 He says He will *send* God the Holy Spirit. In John 18:36-37 He declares He is a king and that His kingdom is not from this world but "my kingdom is from another place." In Matthew 25:31-34 He declares He is, quite literally, the King of the universe.

Further, consider Jesus' use of the phrase *ego eimi*. In the Gospel of John alone, the phrase *ego eimi* (I Am) is used 30 times when recording what Jesus said. What is significant is that, according to the Greek language, when you see the word *Am* you know the subject is *I*; this is not something that is immediately known in the English language, except rarely. But it happens constantly in the Greek. For example, when Jesus says "I Am the bread of life," all He really needed to say was "Am the bread of life." But what *he* wanted to do was to emphasize the subject and so he used the pronoun. This emphasis upon "I Am" instead of just "Am" is unique. What did God name Himself to Moses in Exodus 3:14? "I Am who I Am." When Jesus made these statements He was deliberately using the personal name and style of God. Further, Griffith Thomas points out, "There is scarcely a passage in the gospels without a self-assertion of Jesus coming out in connection with His teaching. His message and His claims are really inextricable."¹⁰ In other words, the only logical choice is to take all of Jesus or none of Him. To reject His claims is to reject His teachings is to reject Him.

Another unique aspect of Christ is His impact on the Roman world. It is a historic phenomenon that Jesus transformed the Roman empire and yet, by Roman standards, was a Jew, a despised Jew, a criminal Jew, and a crucified Jew. The fact that Jesus alone could begin a movement that within 300 years had literally converted the most powerful empire in the world is a miracle of history—especially since "the Jews among whom Jesus lived and died, were a strange, remote people, little understood and little liked by most Europeans of the time, more often the butt of Roman humor than of serious interest."¹¹ (So why should anyone be surprised that Jesus received such little attention in the Roman history books?) In spite of this, within three centuries the entire Roman empire had bowed the knee to Jesus. Not by military conquest as was true for Islam, but solely by preaching a message of God's love for mankind!

Another unique aspect of Jesus is that during His lifetime, He made predictions about the future that no one else would have dared to make unless they were God—and, in fact, no one else in history ever has made. With predictions like these it is impossible that, had even a few failed, the disciples could ever have trusted Jesus to be the Messiah, let alone God. The nature of these predictions are such that after the disciples heard the predictions they would have seen them proved false and *known* Jesus could not have been who He claimed. Here are some examples.

Jesus frequently told people that their friends or family had been healed, even at great distances. The Roman centurion's servant who lay at home paralyzed was "in terrible suffering." Jesus him healed immediately, "Then Jesus said to the centurion, 'Go! It will be done just as you believed it would.' And his servant was healed at that very hour" (Matthew 18:13). Concerning the Canaanite woman who begged Jesus to cure her daughter from demon possession, "Then Jesus answered, 'Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.' And her daughter was healed from that very hour" (Matthew 15:28). When Jesus was in Cana in Galilee a royal official's son lay sick at Capernaum. The official asked Jesus to heal his son and, "Jesus replied, 'You may go. Your son will live.' The man took Jesus at his word and departed. While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living. When he inquired as to the time when his son got better, they said to him, 'The fever left him yesterday at the seventh hour.' Then the father realized that this was the *exact time* at which Jesus had said to him, 'Your son will live.' So he and all his household believed" (John 4:50-53).

If Jesus had never really healed these and hundreds of other individuals, don't you think everyone would have known it? It would have proved Jesus false. Instead, their accuracy is more evidence of His deity.

Jesus also predicted momentous things about His own future and things about others, both of great weight and little import. On many occasions He predicted His own trials before the authorities and His own suffering and death by crucifixion (Matthew 17:12). In Matthew 26:2 He accurately foretold His crucifixion would happen exactly two days later. He accurately predicted He would be betrayed in Jerusalem (by Judas, his own disciple), to Jewish leaders who would condemn Him to death, turn Him over to the Gentiles who would mock, flog and crucify Him. Yet He would be raised from the dead (Matthew 20:18-19; 26:21-25; Mark 10:33-34, cf., Matthew 12:4-7; 17:9). In Matthew 20:28 and 26:28, He predicted He would be dying for the sins of the world. In Matthew 24:4-44 He has the boldness to make numerous detailed predictions concerning the events surrounding His claimed return to earth and at the end of history. Even before the Sanhedrin, under solemn oath, He declared He was the Messiah and that He would return again: "The high priest said to him, 'I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.' 'Yes, it is as you say,' Jesus replied. 'But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.'" (Matthew 26:63-64).

In Matthew 26:56, Luke 4:21 and elsewhere He claimed to be the fulfillment of extremely specific prophecies. In Matthew 24:2 and Luke 19:41-44/21:6, He predicted the destruction of the massive Jewish temple in Jerusalem. Here He was predicting the military siege by the Roman commander Titus that was literally fulfilled. As the NIV study note for Matthew 24:2 comments concerning His prediction that not one stone of the temple would be left on top of the other, "Fulfilled literally in AD 70, when the Romans under Titus completely destroyed Jerusalem and the temple buildings. Stones were even pried apart to collect the gold leaf that melted from the roof when the temple was set on fire....Excavations in 1968 uncovered large numbers of these stones, toppled from the walls by the invaders."

Consider His prediction to His own disciples. In Matthew 17:24-27, to pay the Roman taxes, He told Peter to go to the lake, take the first fish caught, open its mouth and there, in the fish's mouth, Peter would find a four drachma coin, the exact tax amount required! What do you think Peter, a fisherman, thought of this?

Despite their protests, He predicted in Matthew 26:31 and Mark 14:27 that *all* the disciples would forsake Him. In Matthew 26:34, despite Peter's staunch protests, He predicted Peter would disown Him three times. In Luke 5:4-7 He predicted to Peter that a great amount of fish would be caught after an entire night of not catching even a single fish. In Luke 10:17-20 Jesus promised the disciples that He had given them power over demons and, elsewhere, promised them that they could perform miracles in His name. Is there anyone who thinks that the disciples could not easily have determined such claims were false? Either they could do these things or they couldn't. And obviously, they couldn't do them before they met Jesus.

In John 20:27 *after* Jesus has died, we have the account of Thomas placing his hand into Jesus' sword wound and his fingers into Jesus' crucifixion wounds. Does anyone think that Thomas wouldn't have denied this claim far and wide if it were false?

In John 11:3, 11-14 Jesus predicted Lazarus' death and resurrection four days before it occurred! We are told in verses 18-19 and 45-46 that *many* believers *and* unbelievers saw Lazarus come back from the dead and saw the grave clothes unwrapped from him. How easy it would be for something like this to be proven wrong and for the word to get out that the foolish Jesus *tried* to raise the dead but couldn't. But no one could deny that these things really happened.

Does anyone think that the account of Jesus raising Lazarus and other people from the dead would not have been denied far and wide if these things never really happened and the apostles had reported them falsely? But again, even the Jewish leaders who were Jesus' enemies couldn't deny them:

Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, put their faith in him. But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin. "What are we accomplishing?" they asked. "Here is this man performing many miraculous signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation." (John 11:45-48).

In John 21:5-6, after Jesus had risen from the dead, we read, "He called out to them, 'Friends, haven't you any fish?' 'No,' they answered. He said, 'Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.' When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish" (John 21:5-6). Again, the disciples had not caught a single fish all night (v. 3). Jesus does the same miracle after His death and resurrection that He did when He was alive. What could be more convincing as to Jesus' deity to a group of fishermen?

In John 10:11-18 and 16:16-20, 32, He gives very specific information concerning His death and resurrection and what will flow from it. And in John 7:33/8:21 and elsewhere He tells the Jews that they will try to find His body but will be unable to do so, e.g., "Jesus said, 'I am with you for only a short time, and then I go to the one who sent me. You will look for me, but you will not find me...'" (John 7:33). And in John 8:21, "Once more Jesus said to them, 'I am going away, and you will look for me...'" Obviously they would look for His body in an attempt to disprove the disciples' claims that Jesus had resurrected from the dead. And just as obviously, they never found it.

Now the point of all this is to give some sense of how easy it would have been for Jesus to have been proven wrong on so many different occasions. He predicted something here, but it never happened. He tried to do a miracle there but couldn't. Why would anyone write all the things we

find in the Gospels, miracle after miracle after miracle, if they were obviously false and could so easily be proven false by talking to the crowds who followed Jesus? These things either happened or they didn't. If they happened, Jesus is who He claimed to be. If they didn't, we would have known it once and for all 2,000 years ago.

Finally, if we look at the other miracles of Jesus we also see how utterly unique He was. The chart on page 1596 of the NIV study Bible lists Jesus' miracles and their reporting in the different gospels: He healed a man with leprosy, Peter's mother-in-law, the Roman Centurion's servant, two men from Gadara, a paralyzed man, a woman with bleeding, two blind men, a man mute and possessed, a man with a shriveled hand, a man blind, mute and possessed. He healed a Canaanite woman's daughter who suffered greatly, a boy with a demon, two other blind men (one named), a deaf mute, a man possessed in the synagogue, a blind man at Bethsaida, a crippled woman, a man with dropsy, ten men with leprosy, the high priest's servant, the official's son at Capernaum, the sick man at the pool of Bethesda, and a man born blind. He had complete control over the forces of nature. He calmed storms, walked on the water, fed 5,000 people here, 4,000 people there from just a few loaves and fish. He withered a fig tree, turned water into wine, produced miraculous catches of fish, etc. He even brought the dead back to life including Jairus's daughter, the widow's son at Nain, and Lazarus. And, as the Apostle John emphasizes, those were only a few of Christ's miracles (John 21:25).

Is there anyone else in human history who did miracles like this? Again, if Jesus never did these miracles and yet the early apostles and Christians falsely claimed He did, don't you think everybody would have known the claims were false since all the miracles were claimed to have been done publicly, often with large crowds around? When Jesus Himself claimed that the miracles proved His claims to be God and Messiah, don't you think this would have proven Him a fraud had they never really occurred? To those who skeptically asked if He was the Messiah, "Jesus answered, 'I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me,...'" and "Jesus said, 'I have shown you many great miracles...For which of these do you stone me?'" and "Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does. But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father" and "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" and "If I had not 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 10:25, 31-32, 36-38; 14:11; 15:24).

The truth is that Jesus hasn't left us any choice.

What about the founders of other world religions?

"The truth is always the strongest argument."

–Sophocles

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 Mohammed, 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 mythical deities. Not Mahavira (Jainism) or the leaders of Sufism (e.g., Jalal-ud-Din Rumi)—or the founder/leader of any other religion the world has

known—has ever been like Jesus. Neither animism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Mormonism, Shinto, Sikhism, Sufism, Taoism, Zoroastrianism or any other religious belief outside Christianity has anything that can even be slightly compared to Jesus.

Thus, if we examine the specific claims the founders of the great religions, we find none of them claims what Jesus does. In *The Koran* the Muslim prophet Mohammed states, "Muhammad is naught but a messenger" and "Surely I am no more than a human apostle."¹² In fact, several times in *The Koran*, Mohammed is acknowledged as sinful, asks forgiveness from God, or is even rebuked by God.¹³

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

Consider the Buddha as a more in-depth illustration. The Buddha simply claimed to be an "enlightened" man, one who could show others how to escape the futility 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."¹⁴

Noted professor of religion 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."¹⁵

Clive Erricker, a lecturer and prolific writer in the field of religious studies with a special interest in Buddhism, writes of the Buddha in *Buddhism*, "Indeed, he did not even claim that his teachings were a unique and original source of wisdom;....[Citing John Bowker in *Worlds of Faith*, 1983] Buddha always said, 'Don't take what I'm saying [i.e., on my own authority], just try to analyze as far as possible and see whether what I'm saying makes sense or not. If it doesn't make sense, discard it. If it does make sense, then pick it up.'"¹⁶

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 personal 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.”¹⁷ 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. Zoroaster only claimed to be a prophet, “I was ordained by Thee at the first. All others I look upon with hatred of spirit.”¹⁸ 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!”¹⁹ 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?”²⁰

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.”²¹ 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.”²²

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. 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 exactly 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 religious founders 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 ever did that?

He did other miracles that amazed those who saw them:

“Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind.” (John . 9:32)

“We have never seen anything like this!” (Mark 2:12).

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. 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). 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*?

Was Jesus Christ virgin born and sinless?

“Before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit.” - Matthew 1:18

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, neither could He 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. This is why the virgin birth of Christ is an absolutely essential doctrine.

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* has only one meaning: 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, and that of others, was that Jesus was sinless. The Apostle 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 eye-witness testimony and other evidence that shows Jesus is the only perfect and sinless man who ever lived. But to be without sin means one is incapable of lying or of deceiving others. This means Jesus was incapable of having any kind of unethical attitude or act. Nor could He have any ersatz philosophical bias because He could always, only, proclaim the truth. If Jesus was sinless, then logically, what He said about Himself must be true. Again, 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?

Is Jesus Christ really God? Is He the only incarnation of God there is or will be?

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

—Aristotle

In what other religion in the world do we find an incarnation like that of Jesus—or even an incarnation at all? At best, there is the idolatrous religion of Jainism which claims, unconvincingly, an incarnation (from a polytheistic heaven) of its god and founder, Mahavira. But, in fact, Mahavira himself denied theism and condemned the practice of praying to or even having discussions about God. The only other conceivable shadow of the biblical concept of incarnation is found in Hinduism. But here the incarnations are of mythical gods, forever cyclical, and just as forever meaningless. According to the influential *advaita* school of Vedanta the Hindu gods' incarnations are, finally, also part of the duality and *maya* (illusion) of the world and thus never redemptive in the sense of a true propitiatory atonement. There is no concept of incarnation in Buddhist belief unless we consider the later Mahayanists belief in an alleged Buddha nature supposedly inherent in all men to be an "incarnation" of a mythically deified Buddha. Judaism has no incarnation; in Judaism the idea of Jesus as the incarnate Son of God is adamantly rejected. Taoism has only an impersonal principal, the Tao, as an ultimate reality and no need or place for an incarnation. In Sikhism, Guru Nanak taught that God is unborn and non-incarnated; in Parsism (Zoroastrianism) the god Ahura Mazda is not incarnated and in Islam the thought of an incarnation is blasphemous. In Confucianism, Confucius acknowledged himself as only a sinful man, although he was later worshipped. But he was never incarnate. Of the 11 or 12 classical world religions, there is no concept of incarnation except in Jainism and Hinduism and both of these involve only myths.

In the words of G. K. Chesterton in *The Everlasting Man*, the incarnation of Christ "makes nothing but dust and nonsense of comparative religion."²³ Thus, Chesterton was right when he asserted that only the Apostles have good news for the rest of the world: "Nobody else except those messengers has any Gospel; nobody else has any good news, for the simple reason that nobody else has any news."²⁴

This is the gospel, the good news—that we can know God. The Creator of the universe is, obviously, worth getting to know. As J. I. Packer states, "Knowing God! Is there any greater

theme to study? Is there any nobler goal to aim at? Is there any greater good to enjoy? Is there any deeper longing in the human heart than the desire to know God? Surely not. And Christianity's good news is that it can happen! That is why the Christian message is a word for the world. To know God is the biggest and best of the blessings promised in the gospel."²⁵

If the incarnation is true, then men can know God. Jesus Himself declared, "This is eternal life, to know Thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3, NAS). Further, if the incarnation is true, men have no other option than to know Christ and accept His claims on their life. People cannot refuse the claims of God on their life and think it will never matter. If Jesus is the only incarnation of God ever to appear, He absolutely must be listened to (cf. John 3:16, 18; 10:1-13, 25-30).

Adherents of other religions often claim that their religious founders are unique, but the uniqueness is either invented or contrived. Where is the proof of uniqueness? There is none because the founders of other religions all acknowledge themselves as sinful men, despite the subsequent worship or deification not infrequently given them by their followers. Certainly one might at least ask whether or not such embellishment is fair. Is it expressing adequate reverence for one's own religious founder to make him into something he never claimed to be, and, indeed, would probably be horrified to learn of?"²⁶

Because Jesus Himself so clearly and uniquely proved that He was God incarnate, the authors of the New Testament writings frequently stressed 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."²⁷ 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". As we saw, 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). Jesus, the perfect man, was the incarnation of God.

Is Jesus Christ the world's only proven Savior who died for our sins on the cross and who offers eternal salvation as an entirely free gift?

"Jesus Christ is the centre of all, and the goal toward which all tends."

—Blaise Pascal

In spite of the many claims by people today that there are many "saviors," many "gurus," and many paths to God, Christianity teaches that Jesus alone is the way to God. Why? First, because Jesus Himself taught that only He 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).

Second, Jesus clearly claimed that He was an atoning sacrifice for the world’s sin when He said, “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) and “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 all the dead and give eternal life to those who had 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 biblical Christianity. As Martin Luther once correctly noted, there are finally only two religions in the world—the religion of works and the religion of grace. Only biblical Christianity is a religion of grace because only biblical Christianity is a revelation from God.

Some people may find it difficult to believe that among the different 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. It's not a matter of what we might personally wish to believe; it's a matter of what really is true. Regardless, even a relatively brief examination of what other religions teach indicates the necessity for such a conclusion. In our *Knowing the Truth About Salvation—Is Jesus Christ as the Only Way to God?*, we discuss this

issue in more detail. We show that this exclusivism is not as difficult a concept as it seems at first glance, nor is it disharmonious with our general experience in life. Usually, for success in any endeavor, the important things in life must be done properly—especially if there are consequences for doing things wrong. Jesus is the only way to God, whether we like it or not.

Did Jesus Christ actually physically rise 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 really is the only man in the history of the world to rise from the dead, then who can ignore Him? How do we know Jesus rose from the dead? No other credible alternative exists, as we will see in chapters 5-8. In these chapters we will examine 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 skepticism and intellectual caliber as those cited simply do not believe in Christianity apart from sufficient evidence. So whether one is a Christian or not, given the claims of Christ and the historical reality of His resurrection, one cannot logically maintain that Christ is irrelevant to one's life. Indeed, if Christ truly rose physically from the dead, it means that a free gift of eternal life is available to anyone who asks for it.

So how do we know He rose from the dead? 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 made no less than ten specific predictions about His death and resurrection, all of which came true.²⁸

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, as we see in chapter 7, 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, as the accounts reveal.

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 eye witnesses (and this cannot reasonably be doubted), then the Christian view of the resurrection is established. Indeed, for a variety of reasons, Christianity could not have come into existence apart from Christ's resurrection. The very existence of the Christian religion is, literally, historic proof of the resurrection. Why? Because we have shown in Chapter 5, apart from the resurrection, the Christian religion could never have begun.

Is Jesus 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

No man can claim to determine the eternal destiny of his fellow creatures. But this is just what Jesus claims. 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:

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 everyone:

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 brilliant Christian philosopher Blaise Pascal: If the Christian God does not exist, then because of its positive teachings, the Christian loses nothing by believing in God; but 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 an eternal hell. There will be nothing worse for the unbeliever if Christianity turns out to be true. As Jesus warned, “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)

In our next chapter, we will offer a final illustration of why Jesus Christ does not leave us any option other than making Him our Lord and Savior. Before doing that let us summarize a few key points and offer our conclusion:

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 physically 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?²⁹

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 who believes they will escape a personal appointment with Him after death? At that moment, each of us 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 just 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 seem to offer a convincing 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. In fact, Dr. John Warwick Montgomery's comments on higher criticism could equally be applied to 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.”³⁰

Jesus Christ claimed to be God, and the facts support Him. In our next chapter we will show why even critics of Christianity, if they are fair with the evidence and allow logic its due, have little choice other than to conclude that Jesus is God.