

Is Christianity Alone Fully True and Is Jesus Christ Really the Only Way to God?—Part 9

By Dr. John Ankerberg and Dr. John Weldon

The Christian Claim and the Incarnation

Now consider what the divinely inspired Bible and Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, taught about salvation:

Exodus 20:2-3—I am the Lord your God...you shall have no other gods before Me.

Isaiah 43:10-11—...before Me there was no God formed, and there will be none after Me. I, even I, am the Lord; and there is no savior besides Me.

John 14:6—I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.

John 17:3—And this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.

Acts 4:12—And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved.

1 Timothy 2:5-6—For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony borne at the proper time.

Jesus is unique in His love, holiness, authority, majesty, humility, and impact in the world. Among all the religious leaders and founders of past or present, He alone was sinless. And to be without sin means you are incapable of telling a lie and always tell the truth. When He said, “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” (John 3:16), he was speaking the truth.

When you remove Christ from Christianity there is no Christianity because Jesus is not *a* way, *a* truth and *a* life, but **the** way, **the** truth and **the** life. If we remove Mohammed from Islam, Buddha from Buddhism, Brahman and Krishna from Hinduism, etc., the religion and its teachings would remain. But Christ cannot be removed from Christianity without destroying Christianity.

Christ is unique in His incarnation, His crucifixion, His death and resurrection. He is the only one with an empty tomb because all other religious founders are still in the grave. Further, “The truly amazing thing about the Incarnation is that this doctrine of God really becoming man is proclaimed precisely by that religion which affirms an indelible distinction between God the Creator and man His creature, while all religions that assume the essential identity of God and man indignantly reject it.”¹

In what other religion in the world do we find an incarnation like this or even an incarnation at all? At best, there is the idolatrous religion of Jainism, which only claims the 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.² The only other conceivable shadow of the biblical concept of incarnation is found in Hinduism. But here the incarnations are forever cyclical, and just as forever meaningless. The Hindu gods’ incarnations are, finally, also part of the duality and *maya* (illusion) of the world and never redemptive in the sense of a propitiatory atonement. There

is no concept of incarnation in Buddhist belief unless we consider the 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 harshly 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 nothing more than myths.³

In the words of G. K. Chesterton in *The Everlasting Man*, the incarnation of Christ “makes nothing but dust and nonsense of comparative religion.”⁴ 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.”⁵

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 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?

In essence, no one can rationally deny the “stubborn fact that non-Christian religions are radically different from Christianity.”⁶ All the other gods men worship are either 1) amoral or evil—i.e., they are not holy, just and righteous; 2) impersonal—i.e., they can not love or express personal interest in one’s welfare; or 3) they annihilate their followers—i.e., they destroy one eternally rather than offer one a free gift of eternal life. Indeed, for those who want a God who is truly just and loving, who truly cares and proved His love for mankind (at the cross), a God who offers genuine personal immortality solely as a free gift, there are not 11 or 12 different choices. The simple fact is, there is only *one* choice: the biblical God.

CONCLUSION

If everyone is really searching for God anyway, this means Christians do not have to be intimidated by witnessing to friends and strangers. Christians have what others truly need—and in their heart of hearts non-Christians know it, or at least suspect it. If God says that He has made the knowledge of *Himself* clear to everyone, then there is no possibility of our being a failure, regardless of another person’s response.

Riches of the spirit are worth far more to people than riches of the world. In today’s society, in even the most wealthy country on earth, most people and families feel financially pinched. Almost every parent would say that they need more money, or at least that they could certainly use it.

But even if, like that old TV series “The Millionaire,” we could give a person a tax free check for a million dollars, what would that be in comparison to the loss of their own soul? Jesus clearly emphasized this when he 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?” (Matt. 16:26)

In conclusion, the single greatest need any person has is salvation for their soul. All other things that they *think* they need, or actually need, whether it be happiness, money, health, children, success—whatever—mean absolutely *nothing* if in the end they never inherit salvation:

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. (John 3:17)

If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for the witness of God is this, that He has borne witness concerning His Son. The one who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the witness that God has borne concerning His Son. And the witness is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may *know* that you have eternal life. (1 John 5:9-13)

Notes:

¹ Quoting Hendrik Kraemer in Culpepper, “The Incarnation in the Dialogue of Religions,” *Review and Expositor*, Christology issue, Winter 1974, p. 76.

² Robert E. Hume, *The World's Living Religions* (NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, rev. 1959), pp. 49-50.

³ See the discussion in *Ibid.*, *passim*.

⁴ G. K. Chesterton, *The Everlasting Man* (Garden City, NY: Image, 1985), p. 272.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 274.

⁶ J. I. Packer, “Are Non-Christian Faiths Ways of Salvation?” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, April 1973, p. 113.