

# Why Christ?

**Introduction.** Most of us assembled here today are Christians. Even those who are not Christians by the Bible's definition still embrace Christianity as their choice of religion. But why? Why not follow one of the other world religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, or Islam? All together, these other religions are larger than the huge umbrella that is Christianity.

Many of these world religions have been around a long time. Hinduism and Buddhism, which are quite similar to one another, are actually older than Christ and His church. Hinduism is older than Buddhism, which was founded about 500 BC. Islam is not as old as the Lord's church — it has been around since the seventh century AD.

Some point to these world religions and seek to marginalize Christianity by saying, "There are so many similarities between them." All claim to be the truth. Many have "sacred" books. All give instructions for life — they all teach some version of the "golden rule." All offer a "final" reward to the righteous. Therefore, they conclude that we worship the same God under different names, and are headed for the same destination.

But there are major differences between the gospel and the rest of the world religions. Because the world is becoming a smaller place, more and more we are going to be called on to show the differences and to show why Christianity is superior to all other religions. More and more we are going to meet people who embrace these other religions. More and more the young people in our Bible classes are going to be asking, "Why Christ?" Can you give them an answer?

Someone said, "The world won't allow us just to ignore these religions anymore." In our lesson we will investigate the positive proof for following Christ instead of these other world religions. We will study the uniqueness and truthfulness of Jesus and His word. We will study some of the differences that distinguishes Christ and His teachings from other religious leaders and their teachings.

## ***I. Christ And Others***

- A. Christ leaves no room for the acceptance of other religions.
  - 1. Christ did not claim to be a way to God and Heaven, He claimed to be the way to God and Heaven (John 8:24; 14:6; Acts 4:12).
  - 2. It is impossible to be scripturally inclusive (Matthew 12:30). If non-Christian religions can save, Christ's atonement was unnecessary, and He has no more of a claim on your life and on your ethical standards as anyone else.
- B. There are differences that make a difference.
  - 1. The claims and character of Christ are different.
  - 2. The proof Jesus offered is different.
  - 3. The reward that is offered is different.
- C. The history and claims of other world religions cannot compete with Christianity.
  - 1. Hinduism.
    - a) Hinduism was not founded on the teaching of one man. It developed over thousands of years and many cultures, races, and religions shaped it.
      - (1) For example, the caste system began about 1500 BC when Aryan invaders from central Asia attacked India. The Aryan gradually gained control of most of India.

- (2) They developed the caste system to limit contact between themselves and the native Indian people. Later the system became one of the major tenants of Hinduism.
  - b) The most significant non-Christian cultural shaping force, the New Age Movement, relies heavily on Hinduism to supply its religious foundation. Hinduism also underwent a renaissance in the West through the influence of Mahatma Gandhi's social reform movement. His ideas inspired Martin Luther King, Jr.
  - c) One writer said of the "Eastern" religions that they are "more a philosophy of life than religion." This is certainly true of Hinduism, as it lacks a savior or a divine revelation by which its adherents live.
2. Buddhism.
- a) Gautama Buddha never claimed deity for himself. He was agnostic. He was not sure there was a God and if so, God was of no help to man in his search for enlightenment or freedom from suffering.
  - b) He sought enlightenment by trial and error.
    - (1) He was married at age 20 but deserted his wife and son at age 29 to find enlightenment. For six years he sought it by practicing extreme forms of self-denial and self-torture. He finally decided that these methods could never lead to enlightenment and he abandoned them.
    - (2) However, one day, under a shady tree, he decided to meditate until he gained enlightenment. It came to him several hours later.
  - c) So Buddha did not claim to be God, and did not claim to receive a revelation from God.
3. Islam.
- a) Muhammad never claimed to be deity. However, he did claim to be a prophet and to have received a revelation from God — the Qur'an.
  - b) Islam denies that Jesus was the Christ, but it claims He was a prophet. However, He was not as great a prophet as Muhammad. Muhammad superseded Christ and the Qur'an superseded the New Testament.
  - c) Muhammad's character.
    - (1) He clearly used violence to promote and expand the reach of Islam. When he began to gain power, he made a treaty with Mecca that he would not attack them for 10 years, but attacked them the next year.
    - (2) He was a polygamist.
      - (a) The Qur'an allows one to have 4 wives, but he had a special revelation allowing him to have more. He had between 9 and 14 wives when he died.
      - (b) The Qur'an forbids one from marrying his daughter-in-law even if she is divorced. However, he received a special revelation allowing him to marry his adopted son's wife.
    - (3) "Historians tell us that he was at times deceitful, cunning, revengeful, cowardly, addicted to sensuality, and even a murderer" (Chamber's Encyclopedia via *All About The Bible*, p. 308).

## **II. The Claims And Character Of Christ**

- A. He claimed He was from God (John 5:22-23).
- B. He claimed His words were from God (John 14:24).
- C. He claimed He was God (John 5:17-18).
- D. He lived a perfect, sinless life (John 8:46; Hebrews 4:16; 1 Peter 2:22).

## **III. The Proof Offered By Christ**

- A. The proof of miracles.
  - 1. Christ did miracles to validate His claims to be the Son of God (John 20:30-31).
  - 2. He was seen and verified by eyewitnesses who have given us reliable written testimony in the gospels.
    - a) The historian Josephus spoke of Jesus as One who went about doing many wonderful works.
    - b) His enemies did not deny His miracles (John 11:47). Even Muhammad did not deny His miracles!
  - 3. In contrast, some in later years claimed that Buddha could work “magic acts” but no eyewitnesses verify them. Muhammad could not perform miracles. When pressed, His followers point to the Qur’an as his miracle.
  - 4. Jesus and His followers did not claim the revelation as their miracle, they performed miracles to confirm their revelation (Hebrews 2:3-4).
- B. The proof of prophecy.
  - 1. The coming of Jesus was foretold by the Old Testament prophets. There are over 300 prophecies foretelling of the coming of the Messiah, and 30-40 give specific details of the life and death of Jesus. He Himself made prophetic predictions that came to pass (Matthew 20:17-20; 24:4-35).
  - 2. In contrast, there are no recorded prophecies of Buddha or Muhammad.
    - a) When the followers of Muhammad are asked about the absence of these prophecies in the Bible, they answer by saying they were there, but the Jews and Christians corrupted the text of the Bible and removed them.
    - b) While the claim is easy to make, there has been no evidence of corrupted text ever produced. The text of the Bible has been proven to be reliable.
    - c) Furthermore, there is no evidence that Buddha or Muhammad could predict the future in their own sacred texts. In fact, Muhammad said after his death there would arise 73 sects of Islam, but only one would survive. Muslims admit that there have been more than 73 sects and more than one has survived.
- C. The proof of the resurrection.
  - 1. Jesus foretold His resurrection and then was raised from the dead (John 2:19; Matthew 28:6). That resurrection is sustained by the reliable testimony of eyewitnesses (1 Corinthians 15:5-8). His resurrection is the only logical way to explain the empty tomb. He proved He did what He said He would and has shown He has the power to raise us (John 5:28-29).
  - 2. In contrast, the reward of Hinduism and Buddhism is nirvana — the extinction of the individual through absorption into the supreme spirit. One reaches it through enlightenment — the freedom from suffering by the elimination of all

desires. Until that time, one is reincarnated over and over in either higher or lower forms of life based on life's performance (karma). However, these two religions offer no proof of these beliefs. Islam offers a paradise of pleasure and indulgence, but again, offers no proof as does Jesus and the Bible.

#### **IV. A Difference In The Nature Of Rewards**

- A. "The one refrain running through all those sacred books is salvation by works. They all declare that salvation must be purchased, must be bought with a price, and that the sole purchase-money must be our own works and deserving" (*All About The Bible*, p. 312).
- B. In Hinduism and Buddhism, salvation is not the forgiveness of sins, but the attainment of nirvana in a graduated fashion. However, of the millions of adherents, only a relatively small amount have reach nirvana. Islam teaches that life is weighed in a balance. Good is on one side and evil is on the other — which ever is greater determines your destiny. In short, you must do enough good to earn enlightenment or your place in paradise.
- C. In Christ salvation is by grace.
  1. The Bible declares that all of mankind has sinned (Romans 3:10, 23). Christ's death was for sin, allowing us to be saved even though we have not lived sinlessly (Romans 5:8).
  2. In Christ, the offering for sin has already been made, and through repentance and remission of sins, one can be saved (Acts 2:38). This is the difference between "do and done."
- D. A Chinese man's description of his experience seeking deliverance from sin:
  1. "I was once in a horrible pit of sin, and for years I cried to Buddha for help; but he replied, 'You must deaden your consciousness and imagine that you are not in the pit.'"
  2. "Then I sought help in Confucius, and his answer was, 'You should have followed my teaching, and then you would have never fallen into the pit.'"
  3. "At last I turned to Christ, and with no words of rebuke, He descended into the pit, and with His pierced hands, brought me up out of it; and we have been walking together ever since" (*All About The Bible*, p. 310).

**Conclusion.** Why Christianity? Because Jesus is the Son of God. Because of the many infallible proofs. Because there is salvation in no other name.

Anyone who thinks that Christianity and the rest of the world religions are alike is badly mistaken. They do not all worship the same God. Hinduism claims to worship the supreme God, but through many representations (Shiva, Vishnu, Ganesha, Parvati, Hanuman, etc.). Buddha himself was agnostic and thought that if a god exists it would be of no help to man in obtaining enlightenment and receiving nirvana. Though Islam believes in Allah, he is not the God of the Bible. It also denies the deity of Jesus.

How strong is your faith in Christ? What is the difference in knowing that Jesus is the Christ and that His church is true but not obeying, and in believing in one of these false religions? Either way you are lost. Believe in Christ and obey Him!

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